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Factors Influencing Ghanaian Maize and Cassava Farmers Decision to Transition to Larger Farm Sizes

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Abstract

In Ghana, farm expansion to medium-scale farm sizes has mostly been due to farm expansion from small farm sizes of 2 hectares or less and the entry of few urban elite who acquired farmland for commercial agricultural production. These emergent farmers control about 32 % total farmland and the trend is projected to increase in coming years, hence the need to analyse and understand the transition process to inform policy decision making. In this paper, we examine the characteristics of these emergent farmers and the factors that influence their decision to transition to larger farm sizes. 232 cassava and maize farmers who had land holdings of not less than 1 hectare and had farmed a minimum of 5 years were interviewed. The findings from the study suggest that farm expansion is a gradual process which took an average period of 10 years. Farmers reinvest profit from both farming and non-farming activities. Also, farmers decided to increase their farm size over time based on their own farmer experience, available resources and understanding of production cycle and market dynamics. Farmers' access to extension advisory services from agricultural extension is a key factor accounting for their decision to transition. In addition, farmers resorted to other forms of sourcing for agricultural extension services mostly from other farmers to learn from their experiences. This reflects the need for pluralistic approaches to extension service delivery and integrating farmer knowledge in agricultural extension systems. Also, farmers who practised mono-cropping, had a large number of dependent, and used hired labour services are likely to transition to larger farmer sizes over time.

Keywords: Cassava, farm size, farm transition, farmer decision, Ghana, maize