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Factors that Influence Farmers’ Perception of the Causes and Indicators of Land Degradation in Cameroon

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Abstract

Land degradation is regarded as a major issue in developing countries such as Cameroon, yet there is still a paucity of information on the smallholder farmers’ perception of land degradation. The objectives of this study were to examine farmers’ perception of the causes and indicators of land degradation and to analyse factors that influence their perception of land degradation in Tiko municipality, Cameroon. The data were collected using focus group discussion and a semi-structured questionnaire involving 122 respondents. The data analysis was done using descriptive statistics and binary logistic regression. The results of this study showed that 89.3 % of the farmers were aware of the land degradation problems on their farms. A considerable number of the respondents identified water erosion (50.8 %) and low soil nutrients (44.3 %) as very serious causes of land degradation, while wind erosion was the least identified (33.6 %). In addition, most of the participants identified lower yields (72.2 %) and decreased vegetation (36.9 %) as the most important indicators of land degradation. The binary logistic regression model results indicated that socio-demographic characteristics (total household members, education), farm attributes (farm size), biophysical attributes (lower yields, soil texture, wind erosion), institutional characteristics (group membership), and information sources (radio) increased the likelihood of farmers perceiving their land as degraded. Furthermore, the model indicates that having more education, having a large farm, being a group member, an increase in household size, and the more severe the problem of wind erosion is, the higher probability of farmers’ perceptions of their land as degraded.

Keywords: Cameroon, land degradation, perception, smallholder farmers