

# Ageing and Livelihood Capital Endowments of Cocoa Farming Households. A Case Study from Alto Beni, Bolivia

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## Introduction

- ❖ The ageing of rural populations negatively affects agricultural productivity and impacts the socio-economic structures of rural communities<sup>1</sup>
- ❖ In Alto Beni, Bolivia, 70 % of the cocoa producers are over 50 years old<sup>2</sup>
- ❖ The ageing of cocoa farmers has the potential to make cocoa farming less productive and hence further accelerate migration to urban areas.
- ❖ This study aims to describe the problem of ageing cocoa farmers in Alto Beni, how coping with old age is linked to households' livelihood capital endowment, and proposes measures to address the problem of ageing.

## Methodology

Field research in Alto Beni, Bolivia from Sept. to Dec 2019 (Figure 1):

- ❖ Livelihood survey of 120 people from cocoa producing households
- ❖ 11 semi-structured interviews with agronomy students, graduates, representatives of the local and national government and representatives of two cocoa cooperatives to understand their perspectives on the ageing of cocoa farmers in Alto Beni



Figure 1: The study area is located within the red circled area, (Geology, 2020<sup>3</sup>)

Description of survey sample:

- ❖ 68% of household heads were aged 50 or older
- ❖ 80% of farmers who had stopped working lived with one of their children's families
- ❖ 76% of the farming households belonged to a cocoa cooperative – either to the big cooperative El Ceibo (1200 members) or the small cooperative Apaet (30 members)

## Results & Discussion

### Drivers behind continuing cocoa farming in old age

- ❖ Cocoa farmers work as long as their health permits.
- ❖ Insufficient financial resources and low basic pension.
- ❖ Old-aged farmers who live with their children are taken care of.
- ❖ However, elderly farmers living alone belong to the most impoverished group in Alto Beni, with the lowest livelihood endowments.

### Obstacles preventing younger generations from entering cocoa farming

Younger generations often prefer other sources of income to cocoa farming. The reasons for this are presented in Figure 2.



Figure 2 : Reasons why the younger generations are withdrawing from cocoa farming

### Comparison of El Ceibo, Apaet and not associated households

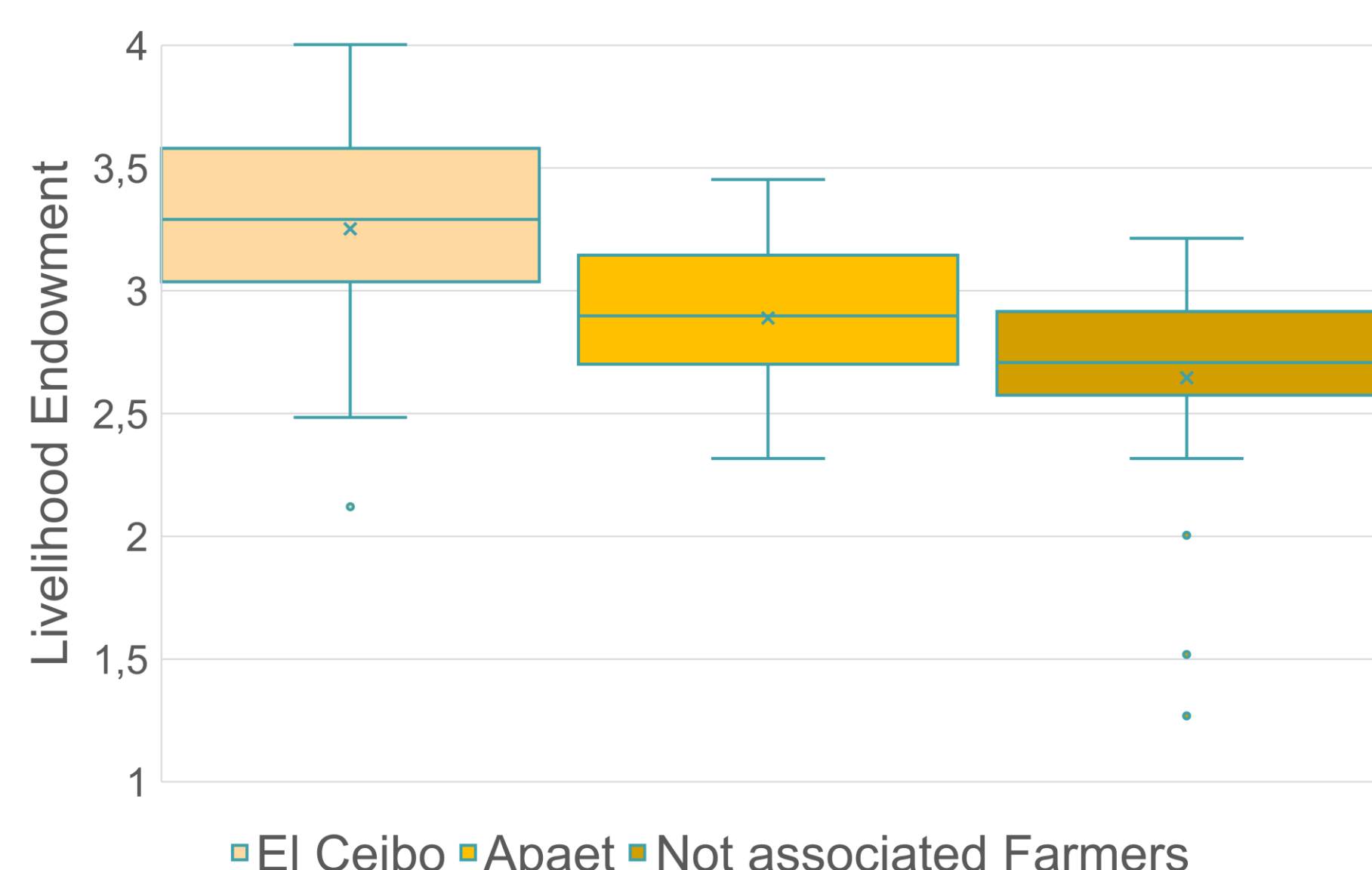


Figure 3 : Household membership of a cooperative and livelihood capital endowments (n = 120)

### Livelihood assets and dealing with old age

- ❖ Households are better off if they are members of a cooperative (see Figure 3).
- ❖ A household's livelihood asset endowment - social, natural, physical, human and financial capital – is, at best, only weakly related to successfully coping with old age (i. e. planning retirement and securing farm succession; see Figure 4).
- ❖ Structural problems such as low incomes, the (perceived) absence of prospects in cocoa farming and a lack of provisions for old age all have a greater influence on how cocoa farmers deal with ageing than their households' livelihood capital endowment.

### Farm succession

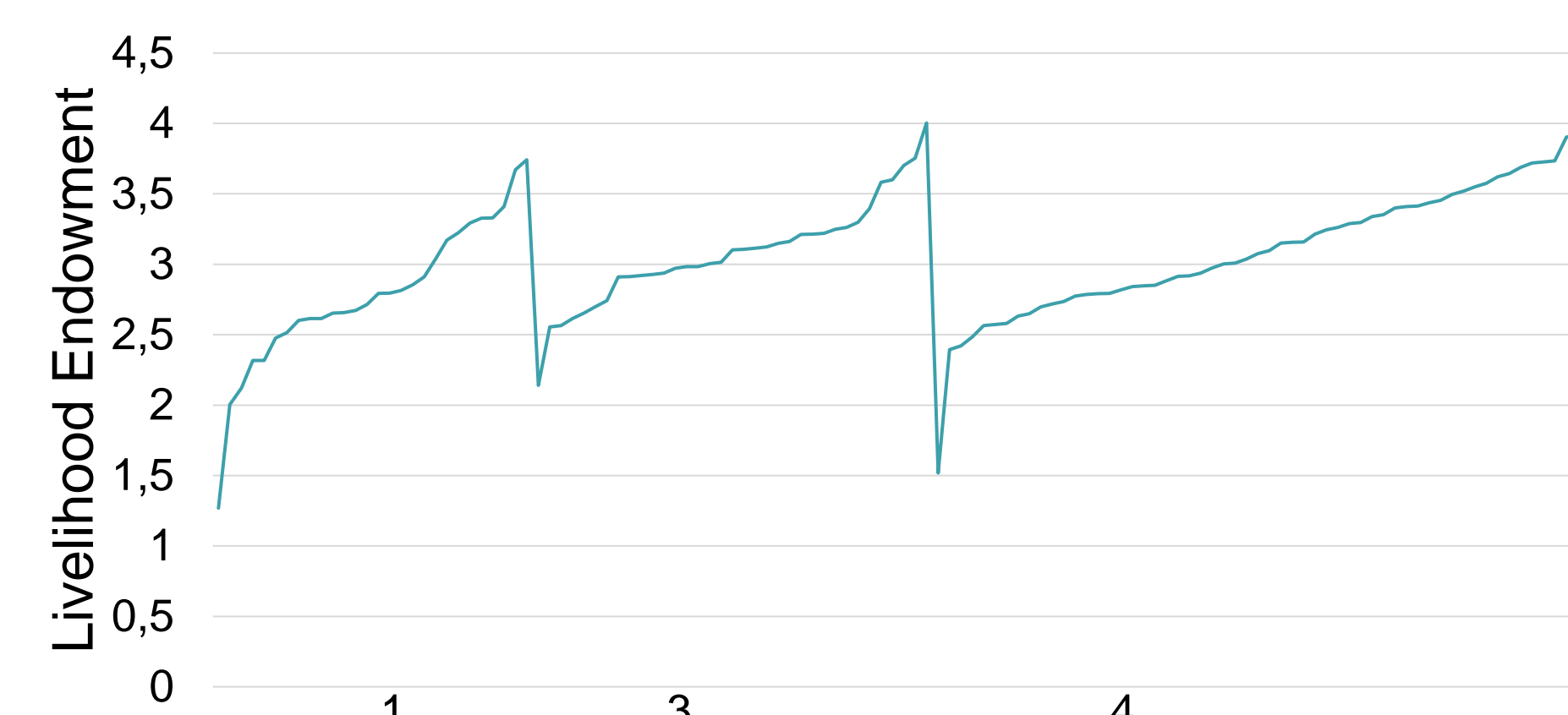


Figure 4: Farm succession depending on livelihood capital endowment, n = 120 (1 = No successor, 2 = Internal family interest (no cases registered), 3 = The head of household knows a possible successor, 4 = Family internal successor secured); Spearman Correlation with SPSS  $r = .214$ ,  $p = .019$

### Measures to combat over ageing

- ❖ Training/education in more efficient cocoa farming practices and promotion of innovations
- ❖ Higher and more stable cocoa prices e.g. through the creation of new markets
- ❖ Transparency along the entire cocoa value chain
- ❖ Retirement planning education and empowerment
- ❖ Political measures (national cocoa plan; support for the elderly)

## Conclusion

The main reasons for the over ageing of cocoa farmers are:

- ❖ lack of prospects for the young
- ❖ no formal support for the elderly
- ❖ low cocoa bean prices and inefficient cocoa farming

Better-off households do not plan better for old age than other cocoa farming households. Measures need to be implemented and action taken by different actors in the cocoa value chain and at different political levels in order to deal with the problem of old age in cocoa farming.

