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Household Livelihood Strategies and Livestock Dependence in Rural Tanzania: Implications for Poverty Reduction

SIRAK BAHTA, FRANCIS WANYOIKE, ISABELLE BALTENWECK, NILS TEUFEL, MARK VAN WIJK

International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), Kenya

Abstract

The majority of the Tanzanian population (about 67 %) reside in rural areas and depend mostly on agriculture as a source of livelihood. While the literature on sources of livelihoods in rural Tanzania abounds, these studies have commonly relied on simple descriptive statistics to investigate the implications of livelihood strategies on welfare in households. This study used the sustainable livelihood framework to evaluate the effect of livelihood strategies on the welfare of Tanzanian livestock farm households. We have used data from 824 farm households to apply a rigorous methodology that follows a three-stage procedure, which ranked the outcomes from different livelihood strategies, identified factors that constrain households' entry into high-income earning livelihood strategies, and finally explored the relationship between the identified livelihood strategies and household characteristics with poverty (poverty probability index (PPI)).

We present sub-groups of households so as to better contrast types of livelihoods and compare a number of the sub-groups' characteristics and actions. We provide commentary and explanation regarding livelihood strategy and its direct and indirect connections to poverty. In general, the results suggest that households that rely on livestock or mixed farm activities are relatively better off than households that fall into only or mostly crop activities. This is particularly true for income per adult equivalent per day levels within the 0.1–1\$ range, accounting for about 66 % of sample households. The multinomial (MNL) regression analysis results show that market orientation, education level, land size, low rainfall, and non-farm income determine the household's choice of livelihood strategies. Finally, the generalised linear model results showed that compared to the base livelihood strategy (slightly livestock dependent), the moderate livestock dependent (MLD) livelihood strategy, or diversified or crop-livestock mixed livelihood strategy, significantly reduces poverty. Recommendations include partnerships and facilitating actions that support crop-livestock mix livelihood strategy in association with improving market orientation and efficiency in Tanzanian smallholder farm households.

Keywords: Livestock, Poverty, sustainable livelihoods approach, Tanzania