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Accounting for heterogeneities in the adoption of organic farming: Evidence from Benin

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Abstract

Not all farmers are expected to be early adopters of innovations, especially those of a radical type. In order to understand the potential adopters’ profiles, organic standards promoters should try to work with attributes affecting the decision to adopt organic farming early, lately, or not to adopt it. In this regards, we analyse the factors behind the adoption of organic farming by accounting for heterogeneities in the adoption stages. We conduct the study in two major cotton-growing areas in Northern Benin. A sample of conventional and organic cotton farmers was surveyed randomly in 14 representative villages. We collect cross-sectional data about farmers’ characteristics, motives for conversion, perception, and attitudes. We use both qualitative and quantitative analyses and show that the factors driving the adoption of organic cotton differ across adoption stages. We demonstrate that social identity influences cotton production and guides the choice of the production methods. Receiving price premium, preserving farmer’s health, avoiding pesticides handling and obtaining better farm profit are the most important motives. While most early adopters care more about their health, as they are older and more vulnerable to disease, late adopters are guided by price premium. Profit orientation and environmental awareness are the main drivers for all groups of adopters, and adopters are less information seeking-oriented than non-adopters. Early adopters have a smaller farm and higher livestock units than late adopters, and they are actively in contact with advisory services. Consequently, policymakers promoting innovation can take into account those attributes when targeting farmers at different adoption stages as a way to increase the adoption rate.

Keywords: Dietary diversity, farm households, food security, organic farming, treatment effects