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“Can agroecological farming feed the world?
Farmers’ and academia’s views”

Let’s agree to disagree. Female influence in household decisions and adoption of modern wheat varieties

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Abstract

Dynamics in intra-household decision making are often neglected when studying the adoption of agricultural innovations. Also, agricultural extension systems tend to address male farmers when promoting agricultural technologies. However, households’ farm management choices frequently result from negotiations between female and male farmers, which differ in terms of individual bargaining power and personal interests. A better understanding of the linkages between gender roles in decision-making and related household adoption decisions could enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of public extension systems and uptake rates of modern innovations in smallholder agriculture. In this study, we use survey data from 1088 wheat producing households in Ethiopia to analyze the linkages between female bargaining power in household crop farming decisions and the uptake and turnover rate of recently released wheat varieties. We proxy female bargaining power by the levels of her partaking in household crop variety decisions and agreement between spouses thereon. In contrast to most quantitative studies analyzing technological change, this study relies on a survey that was addressed separately to female and male household heads from the same household, allowing to capture different perceptions on intra-household decision making, as well as perspectives on wheat variety choice and seed acquisition channels. To account for observed and unobserved heterogeneity that may simultaneously influence the level of bargaining power of the female household head and the decision to adopt modern wheat varieties, we employ Inverse Probability Weight Regression Adjustment (IPWRA) and instrumental variable estimators for robustness checks. Results suggest that an increased level of female influence in household crop choices is positively associated with the adoption dynamics of rust resistant varieties and decreased varietal age. We conclude that dynamics in intra-household decision making may offer valuable insights for designing and implementing strategies to enhance the uptake of agricultural technologies among smallholder farmers.

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