



Tropentag, September 14-16, 2022, hybrid conference

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

Why do small-scale farmers resist change? Preliminary results from Utengule / Usangu, Tanzania

MARTIN SCHLOSSAREK¹, LENKA SUCHÁ², TOMÁŠ OUHEL¹

¹*Palacký University Olomouc, Dept. of Development and Environmental Studies, Czech Republic*

²*Global Change Research Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Czech Republic*

Abstract

Tanzania’s agriculture has grown rapidly over the last two decades and plays an essential role in the national economy. Despite structural shifts resulting in the increased productivity of large-scale agriculture, small-scale subsistence farmers are still the backbone of agricultural production in the country. Also, the poverty rates among the small-scale subsistence farmers are high, hence any increase in their profit has a strong poverty-reducing effect. Although government (mainly through agriculture extension officers), NGOs, and other stakeholders put a lot of effort into convincing farmers to switch to “more desirable” and evidence-based modes of farming, they often fail to make the difference. In this study, we focus on evaluating the intervention on improvement of the farming knowledge and practices of bean growers in the southwest Tanzania, that is based on the combination of training of farmers and the provision of samples of improved seeds. Members of three local cooperatives have participated in the mixed methods research (semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation, and panel study based on four waves of questionnaire). We observe various farming strategies, such as usage of recommended seeds and fertilisers, germination tests, regular spacing, etc. We explore farmers’ strategies and practices in three perspectives: (1) previous strategies applied before the intervention, (2) strategies planned for the upcoming season as expressed immediately after the intervention, and (3) strategies being used during the season after the intervention. Having preliminary data for one of three cooperatives, we observed that farmers have a nuanced approach to the trainers’ recommendations (some were refused, others accepted but not implemented, while the rest were accepted and implemented). Reasons for refusals and failures in implementation vary and include financial distress, labour shortage, and the unsuitability of recommendations to the local conditions. In further stages of data collection, we plan to dig deeper into why farmers do not implement recommended practices (including root causes such as demographic factors). The aim is to utilise our findings to propose efficiency-increasing changes in the intervention and curriculum of the training.

Keywords: Agricultural change, beans, intervention, small-scale farming