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Gender roles in agroforestry: Challenges and opportunities in Dodoma region, Tanzania

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Abstract

This study evaluates the gender roles in agroforestry (AF) technologies in the semi-arid Dodoma region of Tanzania, specifically focusing on women's contribution to tree intercropping combined with different soil and water harvesting technologies. We assessed various factors highlighting women's involvement in farm activities, allocated land for AF, decision-making (e.g., crop type selection and farm income control), land entitlement and ownership, and perception of the level of AF integration with indigenous knowledge. Using stratified random sampling, between August and September 2022, 315 households (HHs), consisting of 167 females and 148 males, from five villages were interviewed. Out of these, only 21 % were female-headed HHs. The findings indicate a difference in land allocation for AF technologies between male-headed and female-headed HHs, with male-headed HHs significantly ($p < 0.05$) allocating more land to AF. Additionally, only 22 % of females are entitled to land. The study also finds a significant association ($p < 0.05$) between gender and the perception of the level of integration of AF with indigenous knowledge, with male farmers perceiving a higher level of AF integration (30 %) than female farmers (17 %). Female farmers mentioned high capital cost, lack of skilled labour, and lack of know-how as factors for low AF integration with local knowledge. Although it was not our study's primary objective, the study revealed a lack of gender diversity in the agricultural extension services provided in the region, as there were no female extension workers in the five study villages. Despite this, female farmers were involved in a greater diversity of farm activities than male farmers, and decision-making for crop type selection and farm income control was mainly joint. Programs prioritising the inclusion of women in AF technologies are crucial to ensure sustainable and equitable agricultural development, thereby improving rural livelihoods. Empowering female farmers by addressing land entitlement issues, increasing credit access to female farmers, and involving more female agricultural extension workers are key to enhancing women's involvement in promoting the adoption of AF technologies and improving gender equity in the agriculture sector in the study region.

Keywords: Agroforestry, female farmers, indigenous knowledge, land entitlement