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Land tenure and agricultural crimes: Empirical evidence from rural Tanzania

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Abstract

Land tenure and agricultural crime are major concerns in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). While around 26 % of landholders perceive their land tenure insecure, crime has been reported as one of the country's most pressing issues. There is a lack of empirical linkage between land tenure and agricultural crime. This article provides evidence of agricultural crime, a subject that has received little attention in the literature so far by giving answers to the following questions; (1) who is more vulnerable to agricultural crime victimisation between individual and family land owners? (2) Does secure land tenure decrease agricultural crime? This study uses primary household data collected in 818 households from rural Tanzania. Two dimensions of crime (dummy of crime victimisation and crime frequency) were investigated. In estimation we used double lasso regression; a double-selection lasso logistic model for victimisation, and a double-selection lasso poisson model for crime frequency. We also used propensity score matching (PSM) in measuring the effect of land tenure and tenure security on agricultural crime. The results show that 35 % of households are victimized at least once in a year. We find that on average crime results in a loss of 95.8 USD from agriculture per victimized household per annum. Most crimes take place between April and August which is the harvesting period in the study area, and 63 % of crime events happen in the fields. Furthermore, individual landowners have an 8–12 % higher probability of being victimized compared to family landowners. Similarly, individual landowners are victimized more frequently than family landowners. In addition, land tenure security (land title) significantly reduces the probability of crime victimisation and crime frequency. Promoting rural safety and lessening the bureaucratic process in the provision of certificates of customary rights of occupancy (CCROs) in rural Tanzania are integral to reducing agricultural crime events.

Keywords: Agricultural crime, agriculture, land tenure, land tenure security