



Tropentag, September 20-22, 2023, hybrid conference
“Competing pathways for equitable food systems transformation:
Trade-offs and synergies”

Intrinsic drivers of land abandonment in Africa: A case study of Nigeria

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Abstract

Land abandonment is a burgeoning global phenomenon, with increasing interest not only in its causes, but also in its implications for global food security, the environment, and ecosystems. Much research, particularly in Europe, Asia, and North America, has focused on and highlighted the broad extrinsic drivers of land abandonment. However, there is limited research on this topic in Africa and much less on the intrinsic drivers of land abandonment globally. This study examines both the extrinsic and intrinsic drivers of land abandonment in Africa, using Nigeria as a case study, focusing on the behavioral aspects and how they influence the decision to abandon agricultural land. Therefore, this research examines the role of place attachment in the decision to abandon land. A multi-stage sampling design was used for this study. The first stage involves randomly selecting 3 out of the 6 geopolitical zones in Nigeria; the second stage involves randomly selecting 1 state from each of the selected geopolitical zones. The third stage involves the purposive selection of 3 rural or peri-urban areas from the respective local governments of the selected states, comprising 16 local governments. The fourth stage randomly selects 50 farmers in each of the selected local governments, totaling 450 respondents. Data were collected using a semi-structured questionnaire and analysed using binary logistic regression models. Focus group discussions and key informant interviews also provided further insights and qualitative data on the behavioural aspects influencing land abandonment. Temporary land abandonment was prevalent in the study areas, characterised by the cessation of agricultural activities on the land for some time to allow the land to rest or regain lost nutrients. Preliminary findings from the data analysed show that both extrinsic variables (age, level of education, farm income, number of crops grown, livestock, problems with flooding, access to subsidies, practice of mechanised farming) and intrinsic variables (respondents being born in the community, respondents' willingness to sell their land, problematic experience of hiring labour and level of satisfaction with farming experience) have a significant impact on the likelihood of abandoning their agricultural land.

Keywords: Africa, behavioural, land abandonment, Nigeria, place attachment