



Tropentag, September 11-13, 2024, hybrid conference

“Exploring opportunities ...
for managing natural resources and a better life for all”

Identifying positive deviance cases to improve forest landscape restoration and well-being of smallholder farmers In Togo, West Africa

KOSSI HOUNKPATI^{1,2}, HAMZA MOLUH NJOYA¹, KOSSI ADJONOU², KOUAMI KOKOU², STEFAN SIEBER¹, KATHARINA LÖHR¹

¹*Leibniz Centre for Agric. Landscape Res. (ZALF), Sustainable Land Use in Developing Countries, Germany*

²*University of Lomé, Forestry Research Laboratory, Climate Change Research Centre (CRCC), Togo*

Abstract

Over the past decade, Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR) has been increasingly recognised by the scientific community, governments and local populations for its potential to restore ecological integrity and improve human well-being in deforested or degraded landscapes. This long-term process of FLR includes different types of land use and restoration activities, from the promotion of assisted natural regeneration of forests to tree planting and agroforestry systems. However, until now, it still difficult to determine the real impact of these practices on the various dimensions of human well-being. Studies appear limited, while the living conditions of local populations, mainly smallholder farmers, remain precarious. Nevertheless, in the same supportive environment where most smallholder farmers face well-being challenges, some overcome these challenges and outperform their peers using creative and contextually adapted solutions. This study assesses the existence of such positive deviance practices among smallholder farmers in Togo. In the context of the three-dimensional framework of human well-being and aligning with the positive deviance approach, four dimensions of performance are measured: the material well-being of smallholders, their relational well-being, their subjective well-being and the diversification of the FLR practices adopted. Based on a survey of 494 smallholders in ten cantons of Tchamba Prefecture in Togo in 2022, the best performers are identified by comparing absolute performance with the performance that would be predicted given the smallholders' favourable environment. The difference is combined into a relative performance vector for each smallholder farmer, then used to calculate the Pareto optimal. As such, smallholder farmers are identified as being more competitive than their peers across all four dimensions and appear to be able to make trade-offs. In-depth qualitative interviews are then conducted with positive deviant smallholders to identify the reasons behind their outperformance. The objectives of this study are to identify the cases of positive deviance among smallholder farmers and to examine the reasons behind their better performance. The results will help to inform FLR strategies through implemented innovations, to guide specific policies for human well-being and to enhance performance in similar FLR contexts. Positive deviances are also meant for possible up and outscaling to support FLR effectiveness.

Keywords: Human well-being, impact of FLR, positive deviance, restoration, smallholder farmers, Togo

Contact Address: Kossi Hounkpati, Leibniz Centre for Agric. Landscape Res. (ZALF), Sustainable Land Use in Developing Countries, Eberswalder Straße 84, 15374 Müncheberg, Germany, e-mail: kossi.hounkpati@zalf.de