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Translocality and smallholder farm sustainability: A case study of rural households in Arochukwu, southeast Nigeria

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Abstract

Smallholder farmers in sub-Saharan Africa face increasing challenges that influence sustainable agricultural development. Among the problems eliciting policy debate in rural areas in the southeast region Nigeria, labour migration is a problem. This study contributes to the policy discussion, by assessing how translocality influences the economic, social, and environmental sustainability of smallholder households in Arochukwu, the southeast region. The study used a mixed method to analyse data from 241 migrant households in the area of origin, and 50 migrants in the area of destination. The Sustainability Assessment of Farming and the Environment (SAFE) theoretical framework was employed to develop indicators for economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainability. Data Envelopment Analysis (DEA) was used to generate a sustainability index, while extended beta regression was used to analyse the influence of translocality on farm sustainability of the rural households. The qualitative results reinforce the problem of shortages to the workforce due to migration, which also influences the amount of land cultivated. The livelihood of the people in the region is also influenced by migration, as well as exchange of food, goods, and money. Empirical evidence suggests a divergent and significant relationship between translocality and farm sustainability, with translocality positively influencing social sustainability, and negatively influencing environmental sustainability. The results also revealed that farm size positively influences the economic sustainability of smallholder farmers in the area. Notably, extension service was also a significant determinant of both social and environmental sustainability, underscoring the potential of translocality, as a tool for dissemination of sustainable agricultural practices, to enhance farm sustainability, rural livelihoods, and agricultural development in the region.

Keywords: Farm sustainability, smallholder farmers, translocality

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