

SEASONALITY OF SMALLHOLDER FARMER'S CASH FLOW IN TANZANIA

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This past summer I spent ten weeks conducting my field practicum in Kilosa, Tanzania for the Master of Sustainable Development Practice Program (MDP). There I worked with the Tanzania Forest Conservation Group (TFCG), a leading NGO in community-managed forest conservation in Tanzania. My fieldwork consisted of surveying farmers on the crops they are cultivating, the prices they receive for their crops, their non-farm business activities and their cash flow. But what do farmers have to do with forests? Approximately 75% of Tanzania's population is engaged in agriculture, and expansion of agricultural land is a main driver of deforestation in Tanzania. Rural farmers in Tanzania also face higher poverty rates than the national average and are particularly vulnerable to climate change.

TFCG is working to reduce farmers' poverty and vulnerability to climate change in order to decrease deforestation due to agricultural expansion into community-owned forests in the Morogoro region of Tanzania. Their work includes: creating community forest management groups; training community members to monitor forest loss using GPS; training village leaders and community members in sustainable charcoal practices; developing Village Savings and Loans (VSL) groups to increase farmers' access to credit; and creating farmer groups to increase farmer incomes and agricultural productivity.

With my excellent TFCG partners Michael Nilongo, Peter Mtoro and Charles Leonard we came up with a plan to survey 15 farmers per project in five of their village projects (20% of the TFCG farmers group per village) to gather baseline data on crops grown, the timing of crop sales, and crop prices. TFCG recognizes the challenges that farmers face in accessing markets and receiving fair prices for their crops. Nearly all of the TFCG farmers sold their crops to middlemen traders, and the prices

they received could vary widely even within the same month and village. This information will give TFCG a baseline, which can be used to evaluate the benefits of different market access strategies.

I also looked into the seasonality of farmer's revenue and costs, since it could have important implications for their vulnerability to climate change. In my preliminary results I have found that the majority of TFCG's farmers' revenue comes from a few crops in the months from March to June. Dependency on a few crops and months for the majority of their income for the year could increase their vulnerability to extreme weather events such as droughts or floods that are predicted to increase in frequency with climate change. Therefore there may be an opportunity for TFCG to encourage non-farm income generating activities to diversify farmers' livelihoods and increase their resiliency to climate change. These preliminary results were presented at

the International Conference of Sustainable Development in New York in September 2016. In the coming months, I plan to continue my analysis of the data I collected and I will present my final field practicum report next semester.

Lacey Harris-Coble is a second-year student in the Masters in Sustainable Development Practice Program. Her field practicum was supported by the MDP program, the Center for African Studies, and the Tanzania Forest Conservation Group.

