



Intensive subsistence agriculture and sustainable livelihood in the Democratic Republic of Congo: a case of small-holder farmers in South Kivu Province

by

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Introduction

The study assessed the effect of intensive subsistence agriculture on the sustainable livelihood of smallholder farmers in South Kivu province, eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, guided by the agricultural intensification theory. The study contained eight chapters. Chapter one was on the introduction, chapter two reviewed the literature, chapter three discussed the methodology, chapter four was on historical and philosophical aspects of the study variables, while chapters five, six, and seven focused on the analysis, interpretation, and discussions of findings on subsistence agriculture and its effect on smallholder farmers' socioeconomic statuses, the effect on sustainable livelihoods, and the relationship between intensive subsistence agriculture and socioeconomic statuses of smallholder farmers. Chapter eight focused on the contribution of the study to existing knowledge,



conclusion, and recommendations.

Study objective


The objectives of the study included: examining the effects of subsistence agriculture on smallholder farmers' socioeconomic statuses; analysing the effects of smallholder farmers' socioeconomic statuses on sustainable livelihood; and establishing the relationship between the intensive subsistence agriculture practised and the socio-economic statuses of smallholder farmers in terms of sustainable livelihood.

Methodology

The study used a cross-sectional and case study design and employed a mixed-methods approach, which entails the integration of quantitative and qualitative data. The study used a sample size of 389 smallholder farmers. Data collection was conducted using a questionnaire, key-informant interviews, and focus group discussions. Data were analysed quantitatively using statistical analysis and qualitatively using thematic analysis.

Key findings

The study revealed that the education level of household head ($\beta = 0.205$, $p = 0.001$) and income status ($\beta = .371$, $p < 0.001$) were statistically significant (p-value less than 0.05 and 0.000). The interpretation is that the subsistence agriculture practised negatively affects socioeconomic statuses, mainly the education level of both male and



female and income statuses. The results also revealed that the education level of wife ($\beta = .085$, $p = 0.016$) and household income status ($\beta = .371$, $p < 0.001$) were statistically significant (p-value less than 0.05 and 0.000). The interpretation is that the education level of a wife and household income status slows down livelihood sustainability among farmers.

The study further revealed that of the subsistence types of agriculture practised in the study area, only intensive subsistence agriculture was statistically significant ($\beta = 0.265$, $p < 0.001$). This means that sustainable livelihoods are highest when intensive subsistence agriculture is integrated with improved incomes of the farmers compared to when it is integrated with the education levels of the household heads.

Key recommendations

To avoid a vicious cycle of poverty and natural resource degradation in South Kivu, the study recommended that Provincial and National Governments should introduce an education system based on local realities; improve agricultural extension services; and improve distributive justice and capabilities in agricultural intensification projects and programmes.

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