



Women selling vegetables in Yayu market place, Ethiopia.

RELATIVE DEPRIVATION AND OCCUPATIONAL CHOICES OF RURAL YOUTH IN AFRICA

Seventy percent of the youth in sub-Saharan Africa work in agriculture. A sizeable reduction in youth involvement in farming will have a detrimental impact on agricultural outputs. Besides considering factors such as the availability of land, conditions on the labor market and lack of opportunities, youth decide on their occupation on the basis of their relative deprivation. Relative deprivation is the individual assessment of one's situation (or life satisfaction) in comparison with the peer group. This research tries to understand how relative deprivation works exactly and what effects it has. Economically, relative deprivation measures the gap between the individual's income and the income of all richer individuals around. It can also be measured on the basis of households compared with other households.

Youth do not find agriculture uninteresting. But when thinking about whether to stay or to leave, they consider their relative economic position as well as their wealth

disadvantages. This explains partly why middle-class youth are more likely to choose livelihoods outside agriculture than their counterparts from the poorest and richest households. Development policies that aim at the redistribution of rural resources could even worsen youth out-migration if they result in an increase in local inequalities. Agriculture may become the work place of the left-behind, especially male youth, because better-off households invest in education and non-farming activities while the most deprived groups could be locked in agriculture. This, in turn, also damages agricultural productivity.

Governments need to invest in generating employment for youth, in entrepreneurial training schemes and agribusinesses. Forward and backward linkages between agriculture and non-agricultural professions need to be improved. Deprived households require special consideration in this regard.



Focus group discussions with youth

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