Gendered agricultural development through climate-smart agriculture: Analysis of its effects on Ethiopian women smallholders

Kjønnsrelatert landbruksutvikling gjennom klimasmart landbruk: Analyse av effekter for kvinnelige etiopiske småbrukere

Philosophiae Doctor (PhD) Thesis

Mesoret Tsige Abebe

Norwegian University of Life Sciences
Faculty of Landscape and Society
Department of International Environment and Development Studies
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ABSTRACT
Climate-smart agriculture (CSA) could provide opportunities for farmers to increase production and income by developing their resilience to climate change impacts. Successful adoption of CSA necessitates addressing socio-cultural, economic, political and technological and climate-related constraints. This thesis is a synthesis of four research papers which examine the effects of CSA on women smallholders in southern and south-central Ethiopia. A concurrent mixed method design that uses 543 participants was applied to examine the gendered constraints that limit women’s uptake of CSA technologies and whether the use of CSA improves unequal gendered production relations and women’s livelihoods. This thesis further investigates the degree to which gender-mainstreaming narratives of agricultural policies in Ethiopia have been implemented. Qualitative and quantitative data collections were employed using survey, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and document analysis. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, t-test, Pearson’s chi-square test and binary logistic regression. Thematic and narrative analysis methods were used to analyze qualitative data. The four separate but interrelated papers in this thesis conceptualized problems using the contested agronomy framework, postmodern, third world and standpoint feminist theories, the sustainable livelihoods framework and the gender and development approach.

The findings demonstrate that, despite women smallholders’ involvement, many gendered and other social, economic and political constraints restrict women smallholders’ involvement and success in CSA. Problems are multidimensional and complex as they relate not only to patriarchal norms but also to the wider economic, social and political situations of the country. The agricultural development model that prioritizes production maximization as the main goal in the agricultural policies, the weak institutionalization and implementation of the gender-mainstreaming narratives of agricultural policies, restrict women smallholders’ success in the use of CSA technologies. Lack of access to credit, extension, land, skill trainings, restricted membership in cooperatives and water user associations and restricted mobility were found to be major gendered constraints. By allowing only men to inherit land, patriarchal norms provide a relatively better position for men in gendered bargaining for controlling production outcomes. Violence against women further affects intra-household gendered bargaining over production outcomes. Women’s involvement in CSA has not improved their access to the human, social, financial and physical capitals. Institutional strategies are not designed to implement the gender-mainstreaming narratives of agricultural policies at the local level. There are no synchronized efforts among vertical and horizontal government structures and agencies to implement gender mainstreaming in agriculture.

Agricultural development should be implemented by considering individual farmers’ entitlement to development. Identifying and addressing patriarchal norms that sustain gendered intra-household unequal production relations and improving women’s access to and ownership of land could enhance equitable gendered production relations. Since land in current Ethiopia is controlled by the state, smallholders cannot use land for collateral which thereby limits their involvement in off-farm diversification. If women had the opportunity to be involved in the off-farm investments, they would be able to improve their access to agricultural inputs required for the proper use of CSA. Women smallholders’ locally specific needs (practical gender needs) and the patriarchal norms in the customary laws that constrain improvement in women’s agricultural livelihoods (strategic gender needs) should be identified and addressed. Agricultural policies should incorporate viable technical strategies that could enhance the operationalization of the gender-mainstreaming narratives at the local level. Because norms that are based on gender identity are not the only cause of gender inequality in agriculture, the practical gender needs of women, as well as problems associated with women’s multiple contextual realities and identities that are affecting the implementation of gender mainstreaming in agriculture, need to be identified and addressed. Establishing a collaborative approach between the structures and agencies responsible for putting gender-mainstreaming policies into practice, could enhance the proper use of CSA by women smallholders.