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Impacts of HIV/AIDS on labour allocation and agrobiodiversity depend on the stage of the epidemic: case studies in Ethiopia

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Abstract

This paper examines the impact of HIV/AIDS on labour allocation, crop choice and agrobiodiversity in Jimma Zone, south-western Ethiopia. The study comprised a survey of 205 farm households and an in-depth analysis of four rural households. HIV/AIDS caused households to increase sharecropping their land and led to more crop species grown in the home garden. The results show that the impact of HIV/AIDS on labour allocation and crop diversity depends on the stage of the disease and on which family member is (or members are) affected. Also labour allocation plays an important role, because of the options of having sharecropping contracts or opportunities for off-farm labour. The role of land tenure system in expanding the labour allocation and income-generating options has implications for intervention strategies in the various phases of the disease, both for men and women.

Additional keywords: case study, crop diversity, labour organization

Introduction

Empirical evidence suggests that farm households adjust their resource allocation patterns in response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Households under HIV/AIDS stress tend to reallocate labour towards quick-return non-agricultural activities (Loevinsohn & Gillespie, 2003) and divert labour from productive activities to increased caregiving (Rugalema, 1999; Drimie, 2003; Loevinsohn & Gillespie, 2003). HIV/AIDS-affected households also resort to sharecropping their land (Drimie, 2003; Bishop-Sambrook *et al.*, 2006). Other effects include a decrease in number of crops grown as a result of a reduction in area cultivated (Barnett & Whiteside, 2002), abandonment or underutilization of land (Drimie, 2003; Loevinsohn & Gillespie, 2003; Gillespie & Kadiyala, 2005), favouring less