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Social capital and agricultural technology adoption among Ethiopian farmers

Nizam A Husen¹, Tim K Loos¹ and Khalid H A Siddig^{1,2,3} N K Tiwari¹, Priyanka Sharma¹ and S F A Zaidi²¹University of Hohenheim, Germany²Humboldt University of Berlin, Germany³Khartoum University, Sudan

Despite the recent efforts to increase agricultural productivity in Ethiopia, food insecurity remains a major challenge in the country. Improving smallholders' productivity requires the adoption of suitable agricultural technologies and practices. Previous researches highlighted the importance of socio-economic factors; but widely overlooked the role of social capital in technology adoption and its potential to create collective actions, reduce transaction costs, relax supply side constraints, and disseminate information. Using socio-economic data of 398 farming households, we assessed social capital, using a probit model, as a determinant for soil and water conservation practices (SWC) such as terraces, bunds and agro-forestry as well as adopting productivity enhancing technologies (PET) such as fertilizers and improved high yielding seed varieties. We found that members of Iddir (informal funeral group) were more likely to adopt SWC (18.2%). For the case of PET, Iddir members were 12.8% less likely to adopt. Being members of Jarsumma (informal conflict resolution) increased the likelihood of SWC and PET adoption by 12.87% and 17.8%, respectively. Therefore, we recommend that technology transfer should consider the different types of social capital as an alternative policy option to the prevailing top down approaches in order to improve smallholder livelihoods.

abbamili@mail.com