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Intra-household Decision Making Arrangements and Food Security in semi-arid Ghana

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Abstract

Agricultural decision making is crucial in navigating household food insecurity, especially in the context of increasing climate variability. In smallholder farming contexts in Ghana and other parts of Sub Saharan Africa (SSA), decision making is often the culturally ascribed role of the male family head. Yet joint decision making has the potential to leverage the diverse knowledge and capacities of all household members in improving farming decisions. Using a cross-sectional survey involving 1100 smallholder farmer households, we examined the association between intra-household decision making arrangements and food security in semi-arid Ghana. Results from the logistic regression analysis indicate that households that practiced joint decision making (OR = 1.67; $p \leq 0.01$) had significantly higher odds of being food secure compared to households that practiced sole decision making. Other factors that were significantly associated with smallholder households' food security included household size (OR = 0.58; $p \leq 0.05$) and education (OR = 0.17; $p \leq 0.001$). The findings demonstrate that coexistence and cooperation in household decision making may offer prospects for optimizing resources for household food security. It is, therefore, essential to promote women's involvement in household decision making. Nonetheless, engaging only women may further widen the gender divide and inequality in household decisions. Therefore, a gender transformative approach inclusive of both women and men in a comprehensive dialogue on equality in household decision making and control of productive resources should be employed.

Keywords: smallholder farmers; intra-household; decision making; Ghana; food security