Agricultural livelihoods of rural youth in the drylands of Midelt, Morocco: An assessment of realities, viewpoints, challenges, opportunities and aspirations

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School of Agricultural, Forest and Food Sciences HAFL
Agenda

1. About the research
2. Findings
3. Implications
1. About the research
Background

- Research study commissioned by the CGIAR Research Program (CRP) on Dryland Systems
- Organized through Young Professionals for Agricultural Development (YPARD)
- Coordinated by BFH-HAFL
- Conducted between September 2015 and June 2016
- Carried out in the Midelt Province, Morocco
Rationale – why?

- Insufficient knowledge/research around youth and agriculture
- General assumption that farming is unattractive ... 
  - Neglecting of agriculture, ageing farming system
  - Increasing youth populations
  - Rural outmigration of youth
  - High youth unemployment
  - Particularly dry areas affected
- ... BUT the sector's future depends on young people's engagement
- Youth are too heterogeneous to be seen as one 'social category'

- Youth must be seen as opportunities
- Agriculture and related sectors as an opportunity:
  - Employment
  - Reducing rural outmigration
  - Inclusive economic growth
- What are the aspirations of youth? Is agriculture part of it? How?
- Context-specific knowledge about different youth needed to account for different situations
- Close 'gaps' between realities and aspirations to engage youth in the agricultural sector
Goal – what?

Provide a diagnostic analysis of the realities, viewpoints, challenges, opportunities and aspirations of rural, farming youth … … AND determine possible entry points for support and intervention aiming at improving their livelihoods

- Covering all three agricultural livelihood systems (ALSs) of dry areas:
  - Pastoral
  - Irrigated
  - Rainfed
The research site

- Midelt Province, Morocco:
  - Population: 50,000/250,000 (town/province)
  - Rural area between Middle and High Atlas Mountains → rain-sheltered position
  - Agriculture is main employer
  - Fragmented smallholder farming systems
- “All” three ALSs very important

Source: Ezilon.com Regional Maps 2015
Methodological tools of the research

- Multi-perspective
- Purposive sampling:
  - Youth:
    - Agricultural background
    - 15-30 years old
    - 30 youth interviews per ALS
  - Identification of the “right” key informants and influencers

In-depth youth interviews (106)

- Literature review
- Further secondary data
- Key informant and influencer interviews (34)
- Focus group discussions (6)
Multi-perspective sampling:

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Methodological tools of the research:

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2. Findings
Findings:
“What are the realities and viewpoints of youth in the three agricultural livelihood systems?”

- Very limited decision making
- No professional/vocational training
- Low educational attainment
- No formal interest groups
- Small land and livestock holdings
- No value added in agriculture
- Limited income opportunities
- Perception of agriculture is not per se negative
- Migration is a controversial issue
Findings:
“What are the realities and viewpoints of youth in the three agricultural livelihood systems?”

Gender gaps AND gaps between ALSs

- Realities and viewpoints
- Very limited decision making
- Small land and livestock holdings
- No value added in agriculture
- Groups
- No professional/vocational training
- Low educational attainment
- Opportunities
- Perception of agriculture is not per se negative
- Migration is a controversial issue

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Findings:
“What are the challenges faced by youth from the three agricultural livelihood systems and which solutions/opportunities do they perceive?”

### Challenges
- The unfulfilled basic needs:
  - Low educational attainment, no professional/vocational training
  - Absence of rural infrastructure – above all roads – has multidimensional impacts
- State of and limited access to productive resources, i.e. land, water, finance
- No formal interest groups means that support remains inaccessible
- Social inequalities and limited decision making confine the youth

### Solutions/opportunities
- Directly linked to challenges
- Fundamental requirements for any other opportunity:
  - Fulfillment of basic needs
  - Securing/improving productive resources
- Youth’s identified opportunities:
  - Development of post-harvest infrastructure and value added activities based on local agricultural production
  - Rather vague ideas
Findings:
“What aspirations do youth from the three agricultural livelihood systems have and do their aspirations correspond to the perceived/existing opportunities?”

- Youth may want to combine rurality with modernity – i.e. envision viable farming futures – but are unable to overcome current challenges

- Opportunities – structural organization of the local agricultural sector, post-harvest infrastructure and value added activities, crop and market diversification – may be matched with youth’s aspirations, but require support
3. Implications
Implications
Context-specific conclusions and recommendations

1. Further research:
   - Study/improve local ALSs
   - Impact studies for feasibility/cost-benefit of support options
   - Social action research for organizational development

2. Improve basic infrastructure/education:
   - Fostering school attendance
   - Improve/expand educational offer
   - Improve other basic infrastructure, including roads, health care, etc.

3. Improve local agricultural and professional/vocational training
   - Promote the limited existing opportunities
   - Supply decentralized on-the-field training
   - Integrate agricultural and professional/vocational aspects in school curricula

4. Capacity development and support of interest groups:
   - Support organizational development
   - Introduce mentorship programs for youth
   - Develop youth skills and know-how for empowerment

5. Direct support for the agricultural sector:
   - Development of post-harvest infrastructure and value added activities
   - Structure the sector, diversify crops/markets, support access to productive resources
   - Improve local ALSs
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Supporting livelihoods of the local rural youth
## Implications

**General conclusions and recommendations**

1. Findings highlight the diversity of youth – research, policy and decision makers and support programs must take account of that diversity:
   - Different youth must be recognized

2. Research was a first and context-specific assessment only:
   - Further research recommended
   - Impact, success and sustainability of possible actions remain unclear

3. Similar approaches to be replicated and scaled up and out:
   - Inform decision and policy makers about requirements in other contexts
   - Young people must have a say how they envision their futures
   - Enable cross-comparisons
   - Further scientific experiences – achieve best practice to draw from

4. Categorically pair diagnostic assessments with concrete actions
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▶ Photos: Alessandra Giuliani, Nicole Perkins, Bastian Mengel
Youth and Agriculture in Rural Drylands – YPARD video

Short Film: Morocco: Youth of the Drylands – CGIAR video
Thank you for your attention
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Time for questions