

The Impact of Conflict on Access to Agricultural Inputs in Merka District of Lower Shabelle Region of Southern Somalia

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this article was to investigate the existing challenges of crop production for farmers in the Afgoye District of Lower Shabelle, Somalia. The focus was on farmers' attitudes toward existing or not constraints to their crop production, what the experts have seen and what is far from their perception. Sixty farmers and academic experts distributed questionnaires and interviews about the constraints of crop production other than agricultural disciplines. This paper used descriptive survey research, which facilitates an easy connection between past constraints and challenges in crop production. The questionnaire was comprised of the following two parts: Part one, demographic variables, and Part two, objective-related questions. The study found that both major and minor constraints exist for Somali farmers. The major constraints include unstable weather, water scarcity, pests damaging crops, and poor transportation, and minor constraints such as inability to access and use seeds and fertilisers, lack of capital to buy, and inadequate investment in irrigation, which makes farmers very vulnerable to drought, and there is less knowledge and skill of all farmers. The finding with the highest percentage that was challenged in Afgoye farmers was "there is fear of gunner and thieves in the farmers", and 75 per cent of respondents strongly agreed. The second question with the highest score is "There is fear of conflict between rebels and government", and 61.7 per cent of those selected strongly agreed.

Key terms: Agriculture, conflict, impact, input, Somalia.

INTRODUCTION

Since the first food aid programs in Western Europe under the Marshall Plan, there has been a raging debate and a deep controversy in development literature on the economic effects of food aid in recipient countries. Food aid advocates argue that food aid can benefit the recipient economies in many ways by including, but not limited to, increasing available resources to foster growth and development and reduce income inequality by generating employment for the poor through food-for-work programs, and granting them access to food at concessional prices (Farzin, 1991).

However, critics of food aid argue that it has increased the dependence of developing countries on food imports. The dumping of surplus production for free or at nearly no cost to poorer nations means that the farmers from such countries either cannot produce at competitive prices or lose the incentive to produce entirely (leading, over time, to the deterioration of the infrastructure of production). They also claim that food aid is inefficient, that it often fails to reach the poorest, and has high administrative costs (Kirwan & McMillan, 2007).

In the early 1970s, Somalia was self-reliant in agricultural production, but from the mid-1970s onwards, it became increasingly dependent on food imports and food aid (Farzin, 1991). When the civil war broke out, agricultural machinery that was part of the agricultural modernisation programs was destroyed, and production came to a halt. These issues, coupled with the unpredictability of production due to changes in climate patterns and the inability of the international community to properly coordinate aid, led to war-related famine and a humanitarian emergency of the 1990s (Auvinen & Kivimäki, 2000). Three decades later, the situation has worsened. Severe food insecurity levels are expected to rise due to the same recurring issues, such as climate unpredictability, protracted conflict and displacement (FAO & WFP, 2020). This thesis aims to reconcile the food aid debate by focusing on the farmers on the ground in the Afgooye district, lower Shabelle region, in Southern Somalia, also referred to as one of the breadbaskets of Somalia. The study aims to obtain their perspectives based on experience on what it is they believe is causing food insecurity in the country

and to determine whether food aid is the central factor that is causing the perpetuation and persistence of food aid, thereby sealing the country's dependence on it entrapping it in a food aid cycle.

Objectives of the Study

1- To evaluate the impacts of conflict on access to agricultural inputs in the Merka District of the lower Shabelle Region of southern Somalia

Research Questions

2- What were the impacts of conflict on access to agricultural inputs in the Merka District of the lower Shabelle Region of southern Somalia?

Hypothesis

- 1- General efforts to resolve conflicts and ongoing crises in the Somali nation are very slow.
- 2- Several factors were the reason for not resolving the disputes, such as:-
 - Armed conflicts and insecurity
 - Slowness in the good role of religious scholars
 - The traditional Somali law has retired
 - The ability to negotiate within the clan is very low
 - Lack of education, skills and experience

LITERATURE REVIEW

Land Conflicts and the Building of a New State

By placing land management under the institution of chieftaincy, the colonial state intensified competition among the various incumbents of traditional leadership roles and centres for control of land and its resources. The fixing of territorial boundaries over which traditional authorities were made trustees greatly reinforced the link between political authority and authority over land. These land conflicts constitute sites of debate over the social meaning of property and the place of the past in contemporary struggles over governance and the distribution of resources¹². These also reveal processes of social exclusion, deepening social divisions, and class formation, and they are deeply implicated in the shaping of nation and citizenship across Africa.

Competition over land in Africa is not new, but it has become pervasive and is associated with deepening social differentiation among land users. Similarly, government programmes of decentralisation that entail the demarcation of new or amended districts

have tended to create or resurrect rivalries among traditional authorities and to enable such authorities to capture the benefits of decentralised forms of management.

As alluded to in a previous section, the Somali independent state was not very concerned with land policy. Yet, different processes transformed the economic and political landscape in the mid-1970s and converged to intensify the competition for land. Agricultural land became more valuable in relation to other sources of investment and speculation. The collapse of the relations with the Soviet Union due to the war in the western Somali region signed the end of most of the industrial sector in Somalia. Years were needed to replace plants and buy new equipment. In the early 1980s, the Saudi ban on livestock exports meant that earnings from that sector collapsed. High inflation rates also encouraged investment in durable assets. Eventually, the abolition of price control on grains and the spiralling demand for fruits and vegetables in urban centres also became significant incentives to buy land.

The shift to the West in the Cold War also meant a return of international institutions that campaigned for a more "rational" development policy. Foreign aid especially in the farming sector was too big to be ignored either in terms of farming facilities or bank loans to expand agricultural land. Overseas remittances and the increasing inequalities of revenues in the urban society accelerate the process of class formation and therefore the interest to invest in commercial farms.

Especially after 1979, the growing concentration of state powers among a limited sector of the population had many implications. Some who were excluded from political power had the opportunity to accumulate wealth as far as it did not come directly from state resources. Dir, Rahanweyn, and Hawiye wealthy people could easily invest in the agricultural sector based on the assumption that their wealth would not create new political aspirations. This system was amplified in the 1980s for at least two reasons: corruption and nepotism developed into a system where even low-middle-class people could get property titles without fulfilling the legal conditions. The authoritarian nature of the regime and the

"routinisation" of coercion also meant that the eviction of people from their land was not seen as a major breach.

In the 1980s, the urbanisation of Somali society grew even faster than before, notably because of the growing differences between livelihoods in the countryside and the main cities and insecurity. This process intensified regional migrations in the country and created new consumption demands or grievances that impacted the country's natural resources. In the very last years before the outbreak of the civil war in southern Somalia, the situation was getting out of hand. While land appropriation required a number of legal steps and checks and balances, the whole system seemed to split into autonomous agencies: staff at the Ministry of Agriculture could overrule certain decisions, elders and local administrators were bought for a pottage of lentils, and the banking sector had lost even the will to check its loans were rightly directed if not reimbursed. One should remember this period because structural adjustment programs failed recurrently, but no one in the international community wanted to take the lead to start asking simple questions about the accuracy of figures at the Central Bank and corruption that had emptied all rules and regulations.

The violence that erupted throughout the first years of the civil war had deep roots in the contempt the populace was kept in the last years of the regime: inequalities were growing steadily, and the only option left was to get into an informal economy that either eventually benefitted to the regime or was providing the means for armed rebellions to open new frontlines in the country. The key issue for the new state in Somalia is to think deeply about this history of misappropriation and marginalisation and find a better way to reconcile people and relaunch a land policy that could respond to different challenges, either in terms of security, social status or food security.

METHODOLOGY

The researcher used a mixed methodology, specifically the Quantitative and qualitative data on development was collected concurrently and analysed separately. The data was then merged at the interpretive stage. Mixing meant that the researcher drew conclusions

that reflected what was learned from the combination of results (Creswell, 2007).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Using frequency, percentages and correlation, the researcher sought to establish the extent to which

Respondents agreed with a various statements on the the impact of conflict on access to agricultural inputs in Merka District of the lower Shabelle Region of southern Somalia. (Oso & David, 2008). The response modes and scoring are as follows: strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree.

Table 1. The Inability of Farmers to Access and Use such Seeds and Fertilisers

Question 1:		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	33	57.5	57.5	57.5
	Strongly Agree	16	27.5	27.5	27.5
	Neutral	7	10.0	10.0	10.0
	Disagree	4	5.0	5.0	5.0
	Total	60	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 1 shows the respondents' responses to the second question, which asked that "Somali women promote peace in family, community and society". 57.5 per cent of the respondents agreed that Somali

women promote with a frequency of 23 while 27.5 per cent strongly agreed of a frequency of 11, 10 per cent were neutral, 5 per cent disagreed and there were not respondents strongly disagreed.

Table 2. Factors Caused Lack of Capital to Buy Seed or Fertilisers

No	Factors causing lack of capital to buy seed or fertilisers or other farm operations decline in Marka District, Somalia.						Total
	Variables	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	
1. Lack of security	Frequency	38	10	7	3	2	60
	Percentage	69.5%	15.2%	9.6%	3.8%	1.9%	
2. Poor Marketing	Frequency	22	27	5	5	1	60
	Percentage	38.5%	48%	5.8%	5.8%	1.9%	
3. Lack of Infrastructure	Frequency	18	21	10	9	2	60
	Percentage	30.8%	36.5%	15.4%	15.4%	1.9%	
4. Without Government Facilities	Frequency	24	20	7	5	4	60
	Percentage	42.3%	34.6%	9.6%	7.7%	5.8%	
5. Land Disputations Problems	Frequency	5	16	9	13	17	60
	Percentage	5.8%	26.9%	13.5%	23.3%	30.8%	

Section 2: Factors Caused Banana Export's Decline in Marka District, Somalia

Tables Interpretation

This section comprises five factors that caused the decline in banana exports in Marka, Somalia. They are Lack of security, Poor marketing, Lack of Infrastructure, Government facilities, and Land disputation Problems. As the table indicates, the majority (69.3%) of the respondents answered that a lack of security caused the decline in banana exports.

Forty-eight per cent of the respondents agreed that poor marketing caused the decline of banana exports in Marka, Somalia. Also, 36.5 per cent of the respondents agreed that a lack of infrastructure caused the decline in banana exports, while 42.3 per cent of the respondents strongly agreed that government facilities caused a decline in banana exports in Marka, Somalia. Finally, 30.8 per cent of the respondents refused or strongly disagreed that land

disputations problems caused the decline in banana exports in Marka, Somalia.

Water scarcity, floods, shortage of agricultural services, and repairs of canals are secondary motives for diminished production and/or dislocation. Deficiency of equipment and services created that farmers are incapable to clear the shrub in riverine areas, and waterways silt up.

The chief cash crops produced in Somalia nowadays are sesame, lemon, and banana, with large profits to be prepared when demand is high. Creating large profits involves obtaining and combining land and having usable employment. There was non-existence of a systematised market, low demand during the production period, expensiveness of developed varieties and disease were topmost recognised problems by banana producers. And also a main constraint is the lack of infrastructure and equipment to store bananas, so as to usage them throughout times of shortage.

In Conclusion, the majority of the respondents accepted that those factors above mentioned were caused banana export's decline in Marka district, Somalia.

Discussion

Challenges and constraints have had a bad effect on production for a long time. Since then, several studies have been conducted in various countries, focusing on the major and minor challenges facing crop production. Therefore, this study aimed to examine challenges to crop production in Somali farmers in the Afgoye district. The study found both major and minor constraints existed in the Somali farmers; the major constraints include unstable weather, water scarcity, pests damaging crops, poor transportation, problems relating to land tenure and ownership, fear of conflict between rebels and government, and also there are some people who are looting crops when it harvested. The study also found minor constraints such as the inability to access the use of seeds and fertilisers and lack of capital for inadequate investment in irrigation, which makes farmers very vulnerable to drought; there is less knowledge and skills for all farmers, such as high postharvest crop losses caused by poor storage structures and inadequate access to pesticides, inadequate market access for both crops

and vegetable products and unavailability of crop chemicals etc.

The important finding with the highest percentage that was challenged by Afgoye farmers was "There is fear of gunner and thieves in the farmers", and 75 per cent of respondents strongly agreed. The second question with the highest score is "There is fear of conflict between rebels and government", and 61.7 per cent of them strongly agreed. That is real fear and open-ended questions—what is the primary challenge after natural disasters; mostly, they said security. The other challenges facing farmers were decreasing levels of groundwater, the river's serious problems, the inability of the farmers to access and use such as seeds and fertilisers, crop damage by pests (insects, birds and pork), and a percentage of 48.3 per cent, 45 per cent and 38.3 per cent strongly agreed respectively.

This study uncovered some of challenges that exist in the local Afgoye district, as researcher liked to suggest some points to the farmers, agronomists and official government.

- 1) Must get first peace and security in local communities and prevention of conflicts and make negotiation to rebels.
- 2) Farmers must as a matter of necessity adopt local climate change, and must try to make strategies for the development all basic needs of the production.
- 3) Government must interfere farmers and make continuous research to improve their productivity and to correct their errors. Also government is responsible for rebuilding of roads and continues monitoring climate changes.
- 4) Government must be make strategies for reducing both constraints to crop production in Somali farmers at Afgoye and other related places.

The researchers that are willing to undertake further studies in this area are advised to investigate factors effecting soil towards the occurrence of drought and also to increase the target population of the study with more than one district.

Summary

The findings of the study show that despite the recognition of the Lower Shabelle riverine area as the cereal basket of Somalia, mismanagement and disputes over irrigation infrastructure, persistent

droughts, declining river levels and increased river siltation continue to hamper agricultural production. Moreover, generational shifts in institutional and socio-political arrangements on land tenure continue to constrain agricultural production in the Lower Shabelle riverine area. The lower Shabelle riverine area is characterised by two overlapping livelihood systems: pure riverine (crop-dependent) areas and riverine (livestock-dependent). Two cropping cycles (Gu-Hagaa and Deyr seasons) drive agricultural production of maize and sesame. As such, agricultural labour (60 per cent of the available labour days) provides the main source of income for poor households, followed by crop sales, collection and sale of bush products. The maize harvest in two seasons sustains poor households for about 5-6 months. Access to formal education and health facilities is limited. Most of the health services are run by NGOs, with MCH programs and health posts being less common, hence major factors that contribute to the critical level of malnutrition. About two-thirds of the land in the riverine areas is cultivated, with 90 per cent of this under irrigation. About 85 per cent of the irrigated land is under gravity-fed systems, and the remaining 15 per cent is pump-irrigated (particularly in the Afgooye district). In addition, supporting findings from the satellite imagery analysed in this report have shown a decrease in cultivated areas with maize and sesame. Hence, River level and rainfall performance are the key factors that determine the lower Shabelle riverine production system.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion: The main evidence is a complete crop failure and severe effects of income from the agricultural works, which would play a vital role in accessing food and nonfood essentials - leading to the high proportion of riverine households not having access to food and other nonfood essentials; increased mal-nutrition and mortality rates of displaced and host community. In mid-2011, the food security situation in Lower Shabelle deteriorated, and famine was declared. The main causes included poor rainfall and low river levels, reduction in per capita cropped area, reduced harvest (production shock), ineffective irrigation infrastructure, import bottlenecks (trade constraints), poverty, limited off-farm employment opportunities (labour constraints), transfer failures (limited humanitarian access and

insecurity), trade constraints and an influx of a substantial/significant number of an already weakened and vulnerable population from neighbouring regions in search of food, employment opportunities and to access humanitarian assistance. In response, most households resorted to distress coping strategies such as sale of productive assets, intense collection and sale of bush products, portering in the main towns (migration) and seeking construction employment, distressed seeking of social support from relatives, increased seeking of loans and credit, reduction in the number and meal portions consumed in a day, intensification of charcoal burning and sale, high preference for cheap food items and increased seeking of food aid, other forms of humanitarian assistance and even begging.

Recommendations: From the consultations with key informants and resource persons, the opportunities suggested for improving agricultural production and development in the Lower Shabelle riverine area are summarised below:

- The irrigation infrastructure should be rehabilitated to cover more areas within the riverine area in order to reduce river and canal siltation and improve water availability for irrigation farming. This is a developmental priority for the government in partnership with humanitarian/development agencies as well as local non-governmental organisations.
- There is a need to strengthen the capacity to monitor and detect early warnings in weather patterns and disseminate information to prepare farmers for appropriate responses. The establishment of weather observation networks will enable the collection of real-time climatic data to be used alongside the Request for Evidence (RFEs) to provide timely early warning information in terms of weather patterns. This effort requires investment, and thus, the government of Somalia should work in partnership with development/humanitarian organisations and donors to mobilise resources that will facilitate capacity training and installation of station observation networks and climate communication equipment.
- Considering that agriculture in the Lower Shabelle riverine area is highly dependent on rainfall conditions in the Shabelle river basin (particularly in the Ethiopian highlands), when river levels decline, even functioning irrigation canals cannot guarantee good crop

production. It was established from the study that dam construction projects implemented by the Ethiopian government in the upstream areas of river Shabelle could partly be contributing to the drop in river levels downstream. As a result, the government in Somalia could work with development agencies to initiate research activities that, on one side, optimise the efficiency of irrigation canals and, on the other side, explore opportunities for harnessing groundwater resources for use in agricultural production, especially during times of prolonged dry spells and drought. By the same token, there is a need to promote investment programmes designed to improve river water management through the construction of micro-dams for harvesting and storing water from river Shabelle, which can be used for on-farm irrigation when there is drought.

- Agriculture-based intervention programmes should be designed by the government in partnership with development agencies and implemented through local NGOs and farmers to enhance farm mechanisation (ploughing) in order to increase agriculture production. Increased focus on more targeted productive investments and social protection programmes should aim at cushioning short-term livelihood shocks while at the same time offering long-term opportunities for poverty reduction. These programmes could also be linked with agribusiness projects that subsidise input costs to smallholder farmers who cannot afford to own modern agricultural machinery. Through such efforts, agriculture can be key towards raising agricultural productivity, improving rural incomes, enhancing food security and reducing unemployment and poverty.

- In the Lower Shabelle riverine, knowledge of agricultural production exists, but the institutional and human capacity to support knowledge transfer that can accelerate the adoption of new technologies for increased agricultural production is inadequate. In view of this, the government and humanitarian agencies should design programmes that promote and adopt technological innovations needed to boost productivity and adapt to emerging challenges

(climate change) facing food production. This push for location-specific technological innovations should be amplified across the entire agricultural supply chain, from the use of inputs and planting crop varieties that are tolerant to drought, diseases/pests and floods to reducing postharvest losses. This will contribute towards enhancing self-sufficiency (in terms of food security), building livelihood resilience and enhancing sustainability.

- There is a need to emphasise sustainable farming methods that increase productivity, reduce soil erosion and enhance environmental conservation. These could be implemented through agricultural extension services (agricultural information centers or farmers field schools), as this will contribute towards enhancing sustainable livelihoods.

- In order to increase agricultural diversification and expansion of agricultural labour opportunities, there is need to popularise the re-introduction of horticulture farming and extensification of plantation farming.

- The promotion of handicrafts, off-farm income-generating activities, and petty trade is essential in order to improve the income and food security of poor households.
- Roads, most of which are rendered impassable during times of heavy rain, need to be rehabilitated. This will improve the transportation of farm produce to the markets, ease the trade flow of goods and services, and open up the rural farming areas for development and accessibility in case of humanitarian crisis. Improving transport infrastructure by constructing culverts and bridges will ensure the smooth flow of goods and services.

- Considering that access to health services is a serious problem, responsible government agencies in collaboration with health intervention organisations should combine efforts to improve access to and provision of healthcare, particularly in the rural areas.

- Expanding and improving access to education by providing and improving educational infrastructural facilities, raising the quality of teaching and learning for effective outcomes, and focusing investment on vocational and technical education.

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