

Master thesis by Théo Martin


Smallholdings or agro-industries: which model for oil palm development in Cameroon?



This thesis presents the results of an agro-economic analysis carried out in the district of Ngwei, in southern Cameroon. Historical data, technical-economic data as well as qualitative and geolocation-based data were collected through different types of investigation and a bibliographic review. The aim of the study was to assess the sustainability of different oil palm production systems. The analysis of historical data explains the current diversity of farmers. As a result of the economic crisis of the 1980s, the lack of urban employment fostered the return of many young people to their village of origin. Following the decrease of investment opportunities in the cities, urban elites developed plantations in their villages. An agribusiness also emerged, with a high capital investment and a large surface area. All these farms have an unequal access to production factors. This results in contrasted socio-economic and environmental performances. Results show that family farms are better at reaching the objectives of sustainable development because of a higher productivity and a lower forest conversion. Strangely, the only agribusiness in the district receives six times more public support than all family farms together. The continuous development of the agribusiness challenges the peaceful coexistence with family farming as it takes up most of the land reserves. A balanced and equitable collaboration between the two business models would definitely be the best choice.

Key words

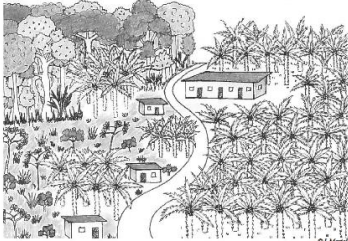
Oil palm, rural development, sustainable development, agro-business, family farming



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