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Land tenure, investment and adoption of Sawah rice production technology in Nigeria and Ghana: A qualitative approach

Oladele O. I.1*, Kolawole A.2 and T. Wakatsuki3

1Department of Agricultural Economics and Extension, North–West University Mafikeng Campus, South Africa.
2C/O Hirose Project International Institute of Tropical Agriculture Ibadan, Nigeria.
3Faculty of Agriculture, Kinki University, Nara 332-7204, Japan.

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This paper explores the linkages among land tenure, investment and adoption of Sawah rice production technology in Nigeria and Ghana. Focus group discussion was held with farmers adopting Sawah technology; in all the villages where Sawah rice technology had been introduced. The study found that in Nigeria, land tenure system was predominantly through inheritance, while those on hired land had an average period of about 3 years as the tenancy period, while in Ghana land tenure system was based on lease and sharecropping. Farmers reported that the use of secured renting is a coping strategy with the land tenure problem in order to ensure the sustainability of Sawah technology. The farmers were also of the opinion that, investment in Sawah technology is worthy and with higher returns on the long run. The study recommends that issues of land tenure rights must be properly ascertained by farmers, in order to enhance continuous adoption and sustained profit from Sawah technology.

Key words: Sawah technology, land tenure, investment, adoption, secured rent.

INTRODUCTION

Land-use patterns in Africa have developed in close relationship with land tenure patterns and conversely, land-use change can alter land tenure relations. Land tenure system refers to the relationship between a tenant and landowner in the acquisition, occupancy and use of a piece of land. In more specific terms, land tenure systems are the customary, legal or otherwise institutionalized relations between government, society, groups and individuals regulating the ownership and control of land and rights and duties accompanying such relations (Gyasi, 2005). Many steps to improve the management of natural resources require long term investments (IFPRI, 1999). Farmers will however, make these investments only if they have sufficiently secure and long term rights to their land to ensure that, they will reap the benefits of their investments. Access and security of land is an important requirement for the smooth development of an economy, particularly in an agricultural based economy like Ghana. It has been noted that, it is through the working of the tenure system that people engaged in agriculture try to establish their initial (income) routes and the security of such routes into the national income flow (Augustinus and Deininger, 2006).

Baland and Platteau (1996) and Gyasi (2005) suggest that, the factors that influence access to farmland may be summarized as: unavailability of land/shortage of land, lack of funds for purchase or rent of land/lack of purchasing power, right of inheritance, presence of conflicts and disputes, the type of land use existence of efficient land rental and sales markets, the custom and tenure system of a locality, gender, residence status, among others. Irrespective of how land is acquired, what is important to induce investment is, according to Deininger (2003), that security of access should be credible. The factors that may influence security of farmland would include: title to land, right to bequeath, right to cultivate the land as long as desired/right to use the land for investment options, income/initial wealth

*Corresponding author. E-mail: oladele20002001@yahoo.com.
The relationships between land tenure, agricultural investment and production have been thoroughly studied in Africa and there is ample evidence as a basis for the development of improved land policies in support of food security. The land tenure issues that affect food security include manifestations of unequal distribution of land, sub-optimal utilization of land and insecure tenure. The stability of tenure, rather than ownership, may be more important in encouraging farmers to invest in soil productivity and adopt sustainable land-use practices. Migot-Adholla et al. (1990) revealed that the investment behavior of farmers depends on the security of land tenure. Thus, farmers are considerably more likely to improve lands they own, or for which they have long-term use rights, than lands they operate under short-term use rights. Farmers’ ability to recover investments in soil productivity do tend to be less certain when they collectively own the land or operate it under a lease agreement (de Janvry and Sadoulet, 2005).

To explore relationship between property rights and technology adoption in small holder agriculture, the literature suggests that the three important dimensions of property rights are exclusivity, security and transferability (Kagwanja, 2006; Kameri-Mbote, 2006). The exclusivity dimension refers to the way that relationships among potential right holders are defined. It is generally hypothesized that, the degree of exclusivity has a positive effect on the incentive to produce, invest and adopt technology. The greater the exclusivity, the greater is the incentive to adopt technologies that are fixed to the land. Also, Baland and Platteau (1996) suggest that, there may be circumstances in which less exclusive land rights may help people to pool the risks associated with new innovations or technologies. Feder and Feeny (1993) distinguish different possible effects of insecure property rights on technology adoption and noted that, rights of short duration provide a direct disincentive for farmers’ to undertake investments in land. Similarly, when the breadth or assurance of rights is inadequate, local rules may not protect an individual’s claim to benefits from investments. Whether breadth or assurance is hypothesized to be linked to technology adoption depends upon the specific technology/property rights context such as the payback period of the technology. The transferability of land rights, including rental, bequest, temporary and permanent gift, and sale, may affect technology adoption in three ways. First, restrictions on transferability may reduce the incentives of current residents to adopt technologies likely to generate benefits beyond their likely tenure. Place et al. (1994) described key components of tenure security to be freedom from interference from outside sources, continuous use, and ability to reap the benefits of labor and capital invested in the resource. Figure 1 illustrates the relationships between the tenure security and land investment.

It is generally accepted that, at least in sub-Saharan Africa, there are both direct and feedback relationships between property rights and technology adoption. The property rights that govern the use of a particular plot of land will affect farmers’ adoption and use of technology on that land. Also, the adoption and use of technology has feedback effects on property rights. Otsuka and Kalirajan (2006) found that, customary land institutions have evolved toward individualized systems in order to provide appropriate incentives to invest in tree planting. This is may be related to the changes occurring along a continuum from communal to individual to rented/shared
land. Customary land tenure systems, under which often farmers do not hold title to the land they cultivate, have been charged with failing to provide farmers with adequate incentives to adopt new technologies that could enhance production.

However, theories and empirical evidence on the role of land tenure are mixed. Smucker et al. (2000) indicated that, there is no definitive relationship between tenure and technology adoption by peasants in Haiti; peasants are preoccupied more by political and economic insecurity than insecure tenure, and rather than tinkering with formalizing tenure, policy makers should prioritize other more fundamental rural sector reforms. Majority of Haitian peasants claim land ownership through formal and informal procedures, but the question of whether peasants feel secure enough to adopt agricultural technologies and invest in their land is yet unanswered. Zhang and Owiredu (2007) reported that, the total amount of land owned and/or cultivated by farmers, and use of government extension services by the farmers have a significant positive influence on the adoption of plantation establishment in Ghana. Manyong and Houndékon (2000) noted that, security over land was among the factors that significantly affect the adoption of technology, with a high marginal effect on the probability of adoption. The predominance of land tenure systems that provide secure property rights, namely the traditional acquisition of land through inheritance or gift mode and the gradual development of a land market, facilitated a quick spread of the Mucuna planted fallows in the southern part of Benin Republic (Manyong and Houndékon, 2000).

Introduction of Sawah rice production technology in Nigeria and Ghana

Sawah rice production technology refers to improved man-made rice-growing environment through eco-technology with leveled rice field surrounded by bund with inlet and outlet connecting irrigation and drainage. Figure 2 shows the pattern of Sawah in the inland valleys in Nigeria and Ghana. Sawah fields are the system adaptable to a lowland ecosystem but require eco-technological skills, including those for minimum changing of topographical and ecological features, such as both land leveling, bunding and irrigation/drainage systems. Wakatsuki et al. (2001) reported that, the potential of Sawah based rice farming is enormous in West Africa in order to stimulate the long awaited green revolution. This is predicated on the fact that, the agro-ecological conditions of the core region of West Africa are quite similar to those of northeastern Thailand, which is one of the rice centers in that country.

Ten to twenty million ha of Sawah can produce additional food for more than 300 million people in future. The Sawah based rice farming can overcome soil fertility problems through the enhancement of the geological fertilization process, conserving water resources, and the high performance multi-functionality of the Sawah type wetlands. The term Sawah refers to leveled and bunded rice fields with inlet and outlet connecting irrigation and drainage (Wakatsuki et al., 2001). The main goal of Sawah projects in West Africa by Japanese institutions is the development of sustainable production systems of the whole watershed, which allows intensification and
Sawah rice production technology for different Sawah models; the returns by the second year of rice cultivation ranges from -245 to 535 USD, for different Sawah models; the returns by the second year of rice cultivation when the Sawah structures developed in the first year were retained ranges from 1135 to 1625 USD.

**METHODOLOGY**

The study was carried out in Nigeria and Ghana, and covered 12 fields in Nigeria with 80 farmers; while in Ghana 11 fields in 5 villages (Adugyama, Biemso No 1, Biemso No 2, Fediyeya and Attakrom) were covered with 70 farmers. The field locations in Ghana are in the Ahafo Ano South District. Ghana is located on West Africa's Gulf of Guinea only a few degrees north of the Equator on Latitude: 5°36'N, Longitude: 0°10'E. This area, known as the “Ashanti,” produces most of the country’s cocoa, minerals, and timber. The climate is tropical with two distinct rainy seasons; in the south, May to June and August to September in the north, the rainy seasons tend to merge. The choice was necessitated by the fact that, all Sawah development projects have concentrated on the Ahafo Ano South Districts. Kumasi is a major town neighboring the project sites and major watersheds in the area.

In Nigeria, most of the fields covered are in Bida area of Niger state, while a village (Pampaida) was covered in Kaduna State Akure in Ondo State. Villages covered in Bida area include Shabamaliki, Ejeti, Ekapagi, Nasarafu, Etsuzegi and Gadza. Bida has a clayey loamy, sandy soil, under the guinea savannah ecology and is 137 m above sea level and lies on longitude 6°01'E and latitude 9°06'N in Niger State of Nigeria. A qualitative approach (Focus Group Discussion) was used to elicit information from rice farmers adopting Sawah technology in December 2009 in all the villages where Sawah rice production technology had been introduced and adopters of Sawah technology were organized into focus group discussion with 10 farmers in each group.

**RESULTS**

Focus group discussion was held with 16 farmers in each group in 5 villages in Nigeria and 5 villages in Ghana with 14 farmers in each group. Issues for discussion included their socio-economic characteristics, continued adoption of Sawah technology, land tenure issues, and investment on Sawah plots.

**Socio-economic characteristics**

The socio-economic characteristics of Sawah technology adopting farmers shows that in Nigeria, majority of the farmers were above 40 years of age having quranic form of education, belonging to at least one farmers group and had been farming for about 12 years. Majority of the farmers are Nupe, with rice as the most preferred crop for production as rooted in their culture. In Ghana, rice farmers adopting Sawah technology are predominantly above 45 years with most farmers having attended primary school, belonging to farmers groups, with an
average of 16 years in terms of farming experience. The farming system is cocoa and oil palm based and majority of farmers were Ashanti and Zongo tribes. Fu et al. (2009) reported similar socio-economic characteristics among rice farmers in the inland valley of central Nigeria.

**Land tenure**

In Nigeria, land tenure system was predominantly through inheritance, while those on hired land had an average period of about 3 years as the tenancy period, with a rent rate of 180 USD per year, while in Ghana land tenure system based on lease and sharecropping. The average tenancy period is 2 years with a rent rate of 136USD per year. The probability of adopting the Sawah technology increases, if the plot is acquired through inheritance, by purchasing, having long tenancy period and if the rent paid is low. Oladele and Wakatsuki (2009) findings on the pattern of land tenure among rice farmers in Nigeria and Ghana were similar.

**Secured tenure rights**

The short duration of tenancy as stated by farmers in different focus group discussion, necessitated the further probing into how farmers were coping with the level of investment on their land; since the technology requires high level of investment in the first year and the retention of such a plot for a longer period. Farmers reported that, the use of secured renting by farmers is a coping strategy with the land tenure problem, in order to ensure the sustainability of Sawah technology. In most rural communities in Ghana and Nigeria traditional rulers and chiefs are the custodians of land. The land is an indicator of wealth and power and is not easily marketed in rural areas. So, secured renting is as good as inheritance in that, the use of the land is guaranteed for a long period of time. Even in places where there was disagreement and eventual displacement, the Sawah structure, bunds and canals were retained and rice is cultivated by another set of farmers. In most cases farmers had prevented this through secured renting of 5 years and above. Farmers stated that the number of farms under rent decreased overtime, while those under secured rent increased. The stability of tenure is very important for farmers to invest in land development and management practices.

**Investment on Sawah plots**

All farmers agreed that the first year of Sawah development is labour intensive and that huge money; labour and time were required for the development. The farmers were also of the opinion that, the investment is worthy and with higher returns on the long run. They also stated that, the investment varies with the type and location of lowlands where the Sawah plot was established. Majority of the farmers stated that, it was wasteful and uneconomical to establish new Sawah sites every season and thus, they had to develop the coping strategy of securing their tenancy through formal agreement for at least a period of 5 years; although longer periods were desired. Kolawole et al. (2011) reported similar findings on investment on Sawah rice farming in Nigeria.

**Continued adoption of Sawah technology**

Many farmers in the discussion groups affirmed that, their continuous adoption of the Sawah technology depend on many factors out of which land tenure is critical. They also explained that, since the reward for their investment through high rice yield as demonstrated by the technology is hinged on the availability of the developed land for continuous cultivation, securing long tenancy period will be favourable to them. It has also been established in literature that, land tenure affects adoption of technology among farmers (Migot-Adholla et al., 1990; Manyong and Houndékon, 2000). Farmers based their argument on the fact that, profitability is reduced for farmers without land security. Fu et al. (2009) reported that, land tenure is one of the factors that may increase the propensity to abandoned adoption among rice farmers in the inland valley of central Nigeria.

**Conclusion**

Land tenure rights impacts substantially on the adoption of Sawah technology, particularly land development in the first year do not encourage opening of new lands for Sawah technology every planting season. The willingness of farmers for continuous adoption is skewed toward farmers that have land security. Farmers also reported that, power tiller availability –a component of the technology and socioeconomic variables such as knowledge of the technology, information, age, educational level and household size affect adoption. It therefore implies that, the issues of land tenure right must be properly ascertained by farmers, in order to enhance continuous adoption and sustained profit from Sawah technology.

**REFERENCES**


