

Peasant Institutions and an Indifferent State - Why the Farmer Driven Innovation Process of Shallow Groundwater Irrigation Farming in Northern Ghana Could spread that Easily

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Climate change and land degradation are increasingly challenging the conditions for rain-fed peasant agriculture in Northern Ghana. Furthermore, population pressure has led to a more continuous farming of available agricultural lands and thus has also increased the problem of land degradation. Crop failure and decreasing yields that result from these environmental changes have caused further impoverishment of what was already Ghana's poorest region. In the past, youth often opted for migration to Ghana's wealthier south in order to supplement meagre agricultural livelihoods. However, since the mid-1990s thousands of North-Ghanaian farmers have started to develop or to adopt a special form of irrigation farming (shallow groundwater irrigation (SGI)) in their home region for vegetable gardening, which is mainly made up of tomato cultivation. Although on the one side North-Ghanaian SGI farmers are facing a rough competition with Burkinabe tomato farmers on the fresh tomato market and on the other side global trade imbalances do not allow to open up a serious Ghanaian tomato processing industry as a second market channel, the farmer-driven SGI development has made a big contribution to diminish poverty and to decrease out-migration. This presentation wants to analyse the underlying factors of the rapid expansion of SGI farming, which are mainly reciprocal solidarity bonds between farmers that allow the accessing of land, labour and knowledge for rather symbolic prices as well as a relative indifference of the Ghanaian state towards this form of peasant production.