Small farm horticulture and the agricultural transformation in Africa: the case of Cameroon

Urbanization leads to the transformation of small farm agriculture: Rural nonfarm activities come along with greater population densities and higher purchasing power. In this context, urbanization provides incentives for intensification among small family farms as it generates larger and closer consumer markets for farmers.

Method and results

We analyse horticultural activities among small scale farmers facing increasing population densities (175 inhabitants per km² in our study area, against 34 inhabitants per km² for Cameroon). Two series of surveys were conducted in 1995 and 2004 among 300 households of a rural town and its local food market.

The rise of the rural nonfarm economy. The rural nonfarm economy affects the agricultural sector, making horticulture more profitable. The results also suggest that in just a decade, a drastic transition turned a predominantly farming economy into a nonfarm economy both at household and trade levels. This transition led to the emergence of population sub-groups consisting of specialized farmers and wholesalers. These trends raise the issue about sustainable intensification pathways.

Future prospects

The coexistence of a high collection of heterogeneous small subsistence farms and small commercial farms should solve the critical issues of employment, incomes and sustainable food security in Developing Countries. The challenge is to make sustainable the various intensification processes occurring for urban horticulture.

References