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

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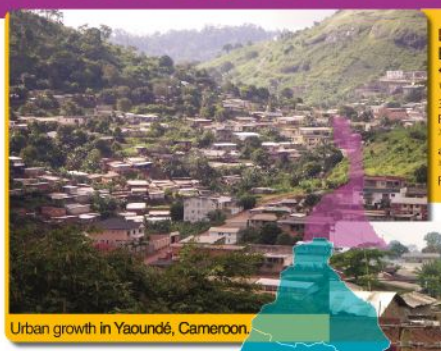
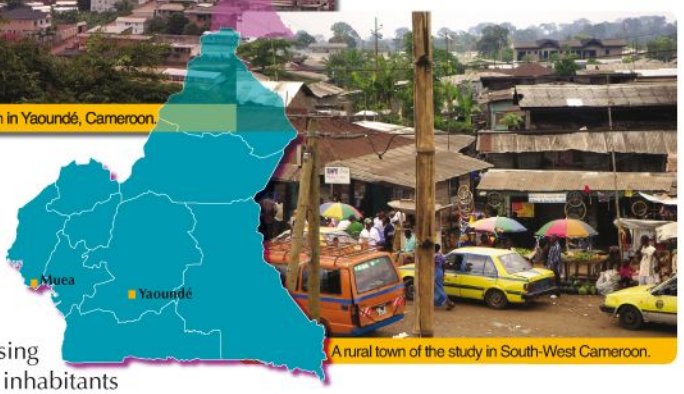
THE urbanization process leads to the transformation of small farm agriculture: Rural nonfarm activities come along with greater population densities and higher purchasing power. In this context, urbanization provides incentives for intensification among small family farms as it generates larger and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



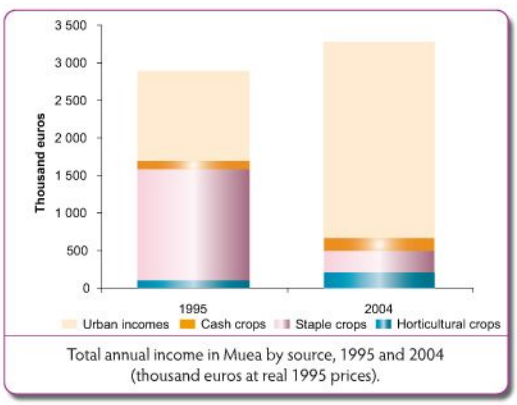
Urban growth in Yaoundé, Cameroon.



A rural town of the study in South-West Cameroon.

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.



Total annual income in Muea by source, 1995 and 2004 (thousand euros at real 1995 prices).

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.

RECYCLING WASTES.
Waste disposal in a lowland area in Yaoundé (Cameroon, 2005). Composts in a waste recycling process can contribute as alternate input substitutes for agrochemical inputs.

IMPROVING PRODUCTION AND REDUCTION OF YIELD LOSSES DUE TO PESTS.
Intensification by using nets against insects, shelters against rain, and soilless crops to prevent from soil-borne disease (Cameroon, Benin, Gabon).

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.

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