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Policy Making in a Federal Context: Views from the Regions on the Future of Agricultures in Ethiopia

Amdissa Teshome & Stephen Devereux

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A typical statement on policy making process in Ethiopia:

“Policy making and implementation in Ethiopia today are strongly influenced by a long history of centralised, hierarchical systems of control under Imperial rule and nearly two decades of military rule by the Derg. The EPRDF has successfully met many of the challenges but *in spite of significant political, administrative and financial decentralisation, the centralised and controlling legacy remains an important factor.*”

~ Michael Halderman, FAO, 2004



OBJECTIVES OF THE REGIONAL CONSULTATION:

- To develop and test an inclusive model for policy dialogue
- To generate indicative policy ideas and trends on the future of agriculture



PROCESS

4-step process for Regional Consultations work:

- **Step 1: Consult community**
- **Step 2: Validate/enrich findings at regional workshops**
- **Step 3: Inform policy makers and the general public**
- **Step 4: Engage/influence the policy process**

These steps are neither mutually exclusive or linear.



METHODOLOGY AND COVERAGE

- Qualitative/participatory approach
- Regional sample reflects the national profile. Woreda and community selection not statistically representative but designed to give *indicative ideas and trends*.
- **6 Regions**: Tigray, Oromia, Amhara, Benshangul–Gumuz, Afar, SNNPR. Corresponding 6 regional workshops.
- **22 Woredas**: 3–5 per region;
- **77 Focus Group Discussions**: 678 participants, cross-section of community members: “yesterday’s farmers, today’s farmers, and future farmers”.
- Framework: Pathways for agriculture/pastoralism



(1) Intensification

- **[Policy push: 1960s CADU; 1970s WADU; 1990s PADETES]**
- Nonetheless, there is a consensus that intensification is still at its infancy mainly because rate of adoption is very low
 - prices are too high (due to removal of subsidy)
 - markets are not sufficiently liberalised

Prospects for intensification:

- There is a need to take intensification seriously.
 - Improve access to fertiliser and seeds. (i) Liberalise marketing; (ii) Reintroduce subsidies? (iii) Set adoption targets
 - Identify and promote high-value crops (find more niches like flowers), but: (i) environmental impact assessments are needed, (ii) investing back into the rural community is crucial.



(2) Diversification (*within and outside agriculture*)

- **[Limited policy attention in the past, but this is changing.]**
- There are examples of diversification (within agriculture) in Amhara, Tigray and Oromiya.
- SNNPR is the most diversified region but not as market oriented as one would like.

Prospects for diversification:

- (i) PASDEP focus is on diversification within agriculture;
- (ii) Overall, the speed of diversification is not satisfactory due to various constraints (technical and institutional).
- (ii) More attention is needed to off-farm sources of income (e.g. trade and marketing, rural non-farm employment).



(3) Commercialisation(s)

- [Policy push: 1960s, 2000s]
- Eternal dilemma: Large vs small farm commercialisation?
- The government is convinced it can promote both.
- However, small farmers face numerous constraints to commercialise [see *Future Agricultures parallel session*].
- Prospects for commercialisation:
 - (i) Commercialising smallholders is expensive; no scale economies
 - (ii) Commercialisation may make land consolidation inevitable.
 - (ii) Co-operatives offer another route for smallholders.



(4) Depopulation (*urbanisation, resettlement and migration*):

- **[Policy push: 1980s, 2000s]**
- Easing pressure on highlands and making use of unutilised land through resettlement
- ‘Depopulation’ was not liked as a concept but the end result was felt inevitable. *“We can’t continue citing 85% rural population!”*
- SNNPR has most experience in migration, but recently migration does not pay as much as it used to. Some reverse migration.
- In Tigray the Ethio–Eritrea war stopped cross–border seasonal migration. Recently the development of small towns in the region and other areas have created opportunities.
- Prospects for depopulation: Inevitable but also variable among the regions (see Fig. 1)

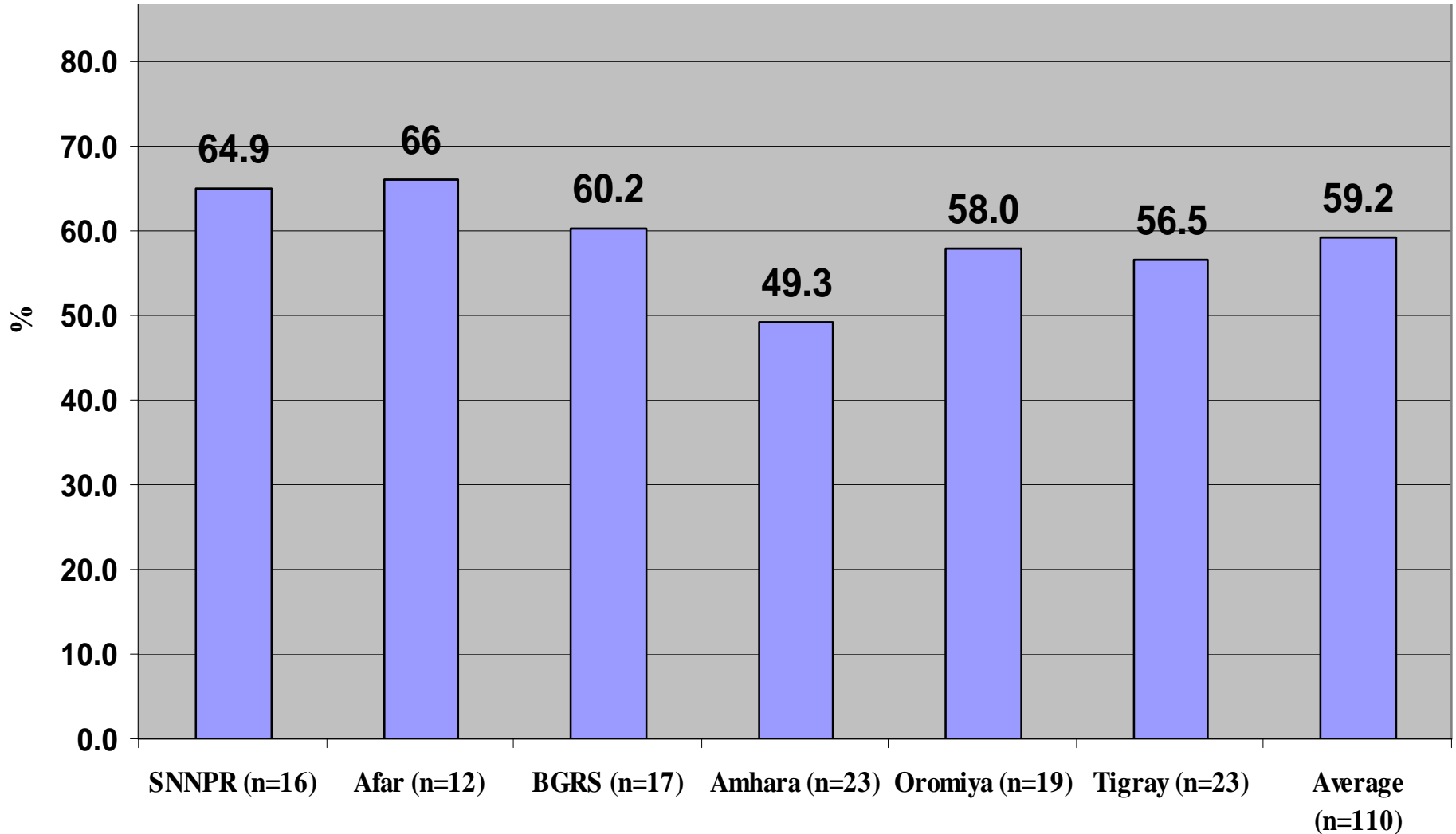


PATHWAYS FOR PASTORALISM

- Sustaining pastoral livelihoods
- Diversification within and outside pastoralism
- Promoting export trade
- Finding alternative livelihoods (dropping out)



**Figure 1: Proportion of the population expected to depend on agriculture
20–25 years from now**





CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES (1)

Education and agriculture

The relationship is rather complex. To mention but a few observations:

- Lack of literacy constrains investment in technology uptake.
- School children and youth have no desire to stay in farming. Children out of school indicated that they have no option but to stay.
- Today's educated generation never went back to agriculture because *"We were told education is a way out of poverty so we escaped!"*
- Parents are happy that more children are going to school, but they reject full-day education (re: demand for children's labour).
- In some areas we found school dropouts doing well – diversifying and well integrated into the market. In others, educated farmers were lacking ambition – they are satisfied with what they have. Why this difference?



CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES (2)

Gender and Agriculture

- Women's burden increases with diversification.
- Women empowerment is a major issue in all the regions, but more so in Afar and Benshangul.
- The importance of girl education is indisputable but concerns were expressed from mothers and girls that this has increased women's burdens.



CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES (3)

Existing Government Programmes & Agriculture

- There is high concentration of efforts on food insecure areas (history of food aid). Ensuring food security is desirable and urgent. But we need to think beyond food security.
- There is also a need to pay equal (if not more) attention to the “relative food secure” (“high potential”) areas.



CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- Top–down policy process is not God–given for Ethiopia. Genuine bottom–up process is possible. The government should make genuine community consultation not a one-off event but a culture of policy–making, and move away from high–level “conference style” consultations.
- Potentials and constraints to agricultural transformation are well known. *However, the contradictions and conflicting objectives are not articulated in Ethiopian policy circles.* The government should focus its attention to resolving these contradictions.



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Thank you