

Analysis of the Evolution of the Behavior of Land Users Linked to the Surge in the Prices of Cash Crops: Case of the Northeast Region of Madagascar

Authors : Zo Hasina Rabemananjara

Abstract : The North-East of Madagascar is the pillar of Madagascar's foreign trade, providing 41% and 80% of world exports of cloves and vanilla, respectively, in 2016. For Madagascar, the north-eastern escarpment is home to the last massifs of humid forest in large scale of the island, surrounded by a small scale agricultural mosaic. In the sites where this study is taking place, located in the peripheral zones of protected areas, the production of rent aims to supply international markets. In fact, importers of the cash crops produced in these areas are located mainly in India, Singapore, France, Germany and the United States. Recently, the price of these products has increased significantly, especially from the year 2015. For vanilla, the price has skyrocketed, from an approximate price of 73 USD per kilo in 2015 to more than 250 USD per kilo in 2016. The value of clove exports increased sharply by 49.4% in 2017, largely to Singapore and India due to the sharp increase in exported volume (+47, 6%) in 2017. If the relationship between the rise in prices of rented products and the change in physical environments is known, the evolution of the behavior of land users linked to this aspect was not yet addressed by research. In fact, the consequence of this price increase in the organization of the use of space at the local level still raises questions. Hence, the research question is: to what extent does this improvement in the price of imported products affect user behavior linked to the local organization of access to the factor of soil production? To fully appreciate this change in behavior, surveys of 144 land user households were carried out, and group interviews were also carried out. The results of this research showed that the rise in the prices of annuity products from the year 2015 caused significant changes in the behavior of land users in the study sites. Young people, who have not been attracted to farming for a long time, have started to show interest in it since the period of rising vanilla and clove prices. They have set up their own fields of vanilla and clove cultivation. This revival of interest conferred an important value on the land and caused conflicts especially between family members because the acquisition of the cultivated land was done by inheritance or donation. This change in user behavior has also affected the farmers' life strategy since the latter have decided to abandon rain-fed rice farming, which has long been considered a guaranteed subsistence activity for cash crops. This research will contribute to nourishing scientific reflection on the management of land use and also to support political decision-makers in decision-making on spatial planning.

Keywords : behavior of land users, North-eastern Madagascar, price of export products, spatial planning

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