

RESEARCH PEARLS | FEDU PEARL #20

In our series “Research Pearls” we are providing first-hand insights into our dynamic and powerful diaries research. Early on in the research, during the second biweekly interview, we asked several questions related to agricultural practices. Some surprising outcomes are discussed in this Research Pearl.

Agricultural Practices

In total around two out of three respondents (64%) reported to be “active in agricultural production”. So who are the people who carry out agricultural production?

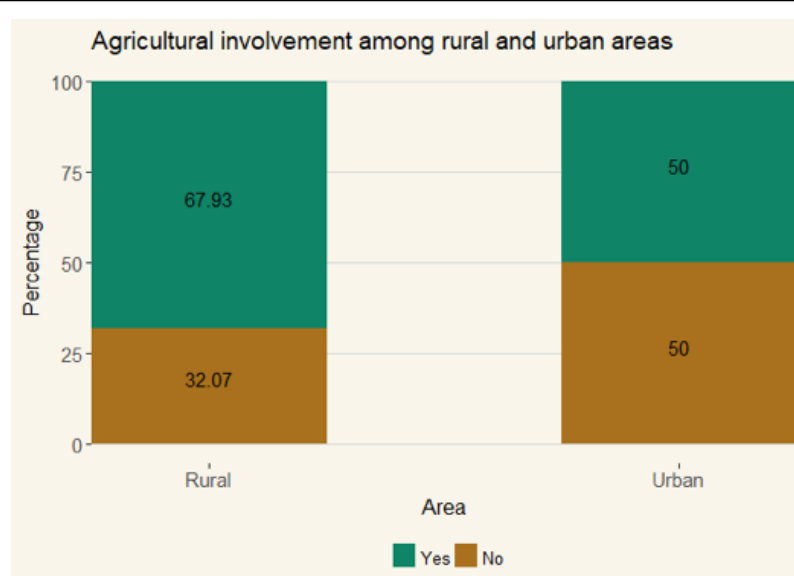


Figure 1: Agricultural involvement among regions

While we expected that practically none of the urban people would be involved in agricultural production and practically all rural people would, the findings are less extreme than assumed. It turned out that the difference between urban and rural is relatively small (68% in rural areas and 50% in urban areas).

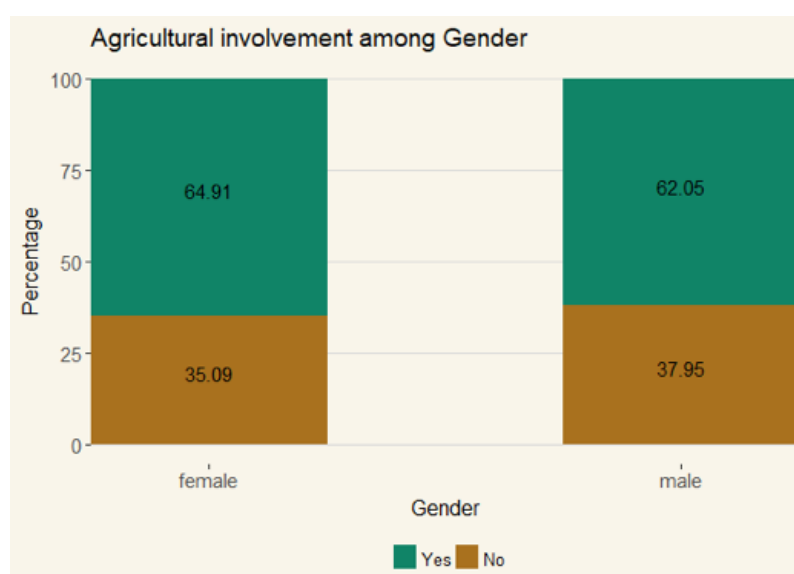


Figure 2: Agricultural involvement among gender

Difference between genders is also very small, with women displaying a slightly higher involvement in agricultural production (65% of women vs. 62% of men).

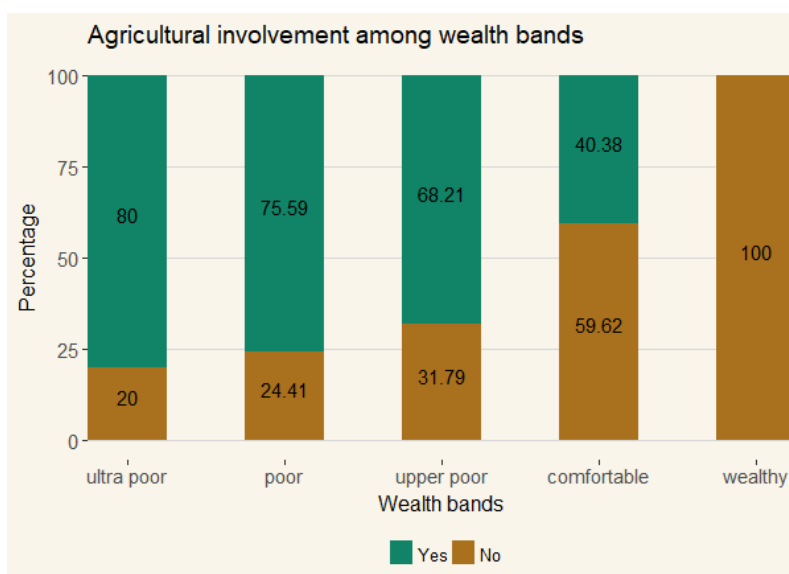


Figure 3: Agricultural involvement among wealth bands

Agricultural involvement across wealth bands varies greatly, with the richest two bands, “comfortable” and “wealthy”, being involved in agriculture respectively 42% and 0% agriculture, while the poorest two bands, “poor” and “ultra poor” displaying 76% and 80% involvement.

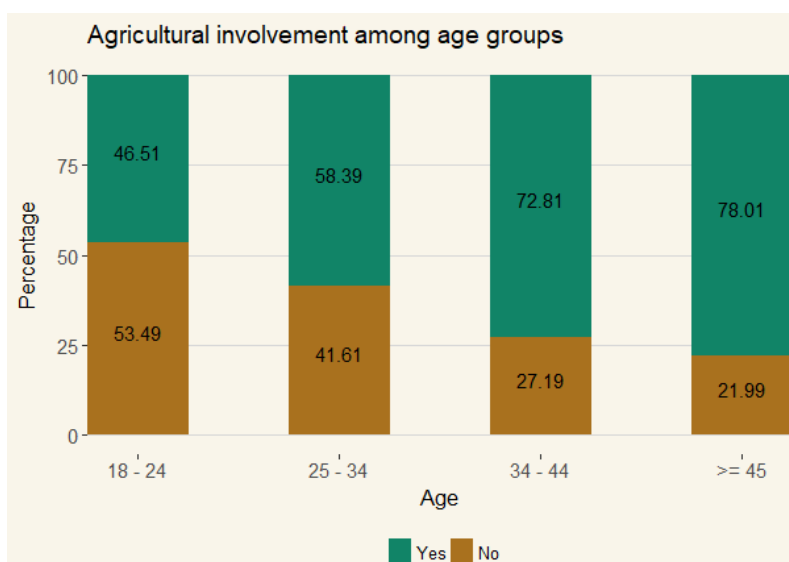


Figure 4: Agricultural involvement among age groups

Similarly, there is a strong variation in agricultural production involvement across different age groups. Younger people are considerably less involved in agricultural production than older ones. Within the youngest age group (18-24) the involvement is even less than one in two (47%). Within the ascending age groups agricultural production involvement increases gradually, with the age group “45 years and older” revealing an involvement of 78%.

“Subsistence farming” was the primary agricultural strategy that people followed. For instance, most of those involved in agriculture were “producing for own consumption” (84%) and “growing a range of crops” (63%). The strategies that were applied by less than half those active in agriculture included further strategies that are typical for subsistence farmers, namely “selecting crops that can be harvested year round” (34%), and “raising multiples of livestock” (32%). Others are arguably strategies of farmers who move away from pure subsistence farming, namely “renting additional land” (34%), “applying pesticides” (29%) and “specializing in one cash crop” (28%). Surprisingly, “applying artificial fertilizer” is mentioned by 25% of those active in agriculture, which means it is less often used than “pesticides”. L-IFT has seen quite a different pattern in Ghana where applying artificial fertilizer is wide spread while pesticide use is rare. This low incidence of artificial fertilizer use appears to be a feature in Uganda since also in previous research there usage of artificial fertilizers revealed to be quite low. “Using high yield varieties” is not widespread either, only 24% of those active in agricultural production reported this strategy.

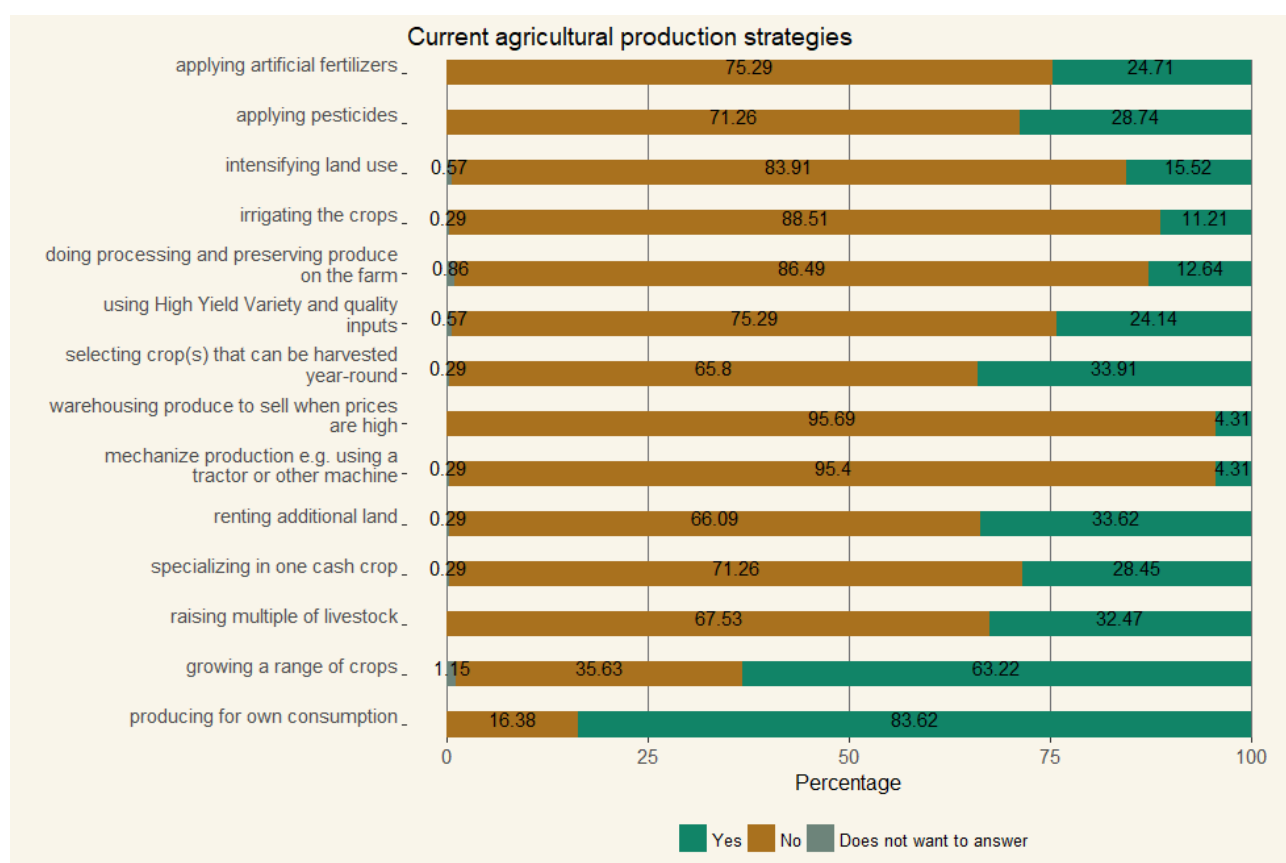
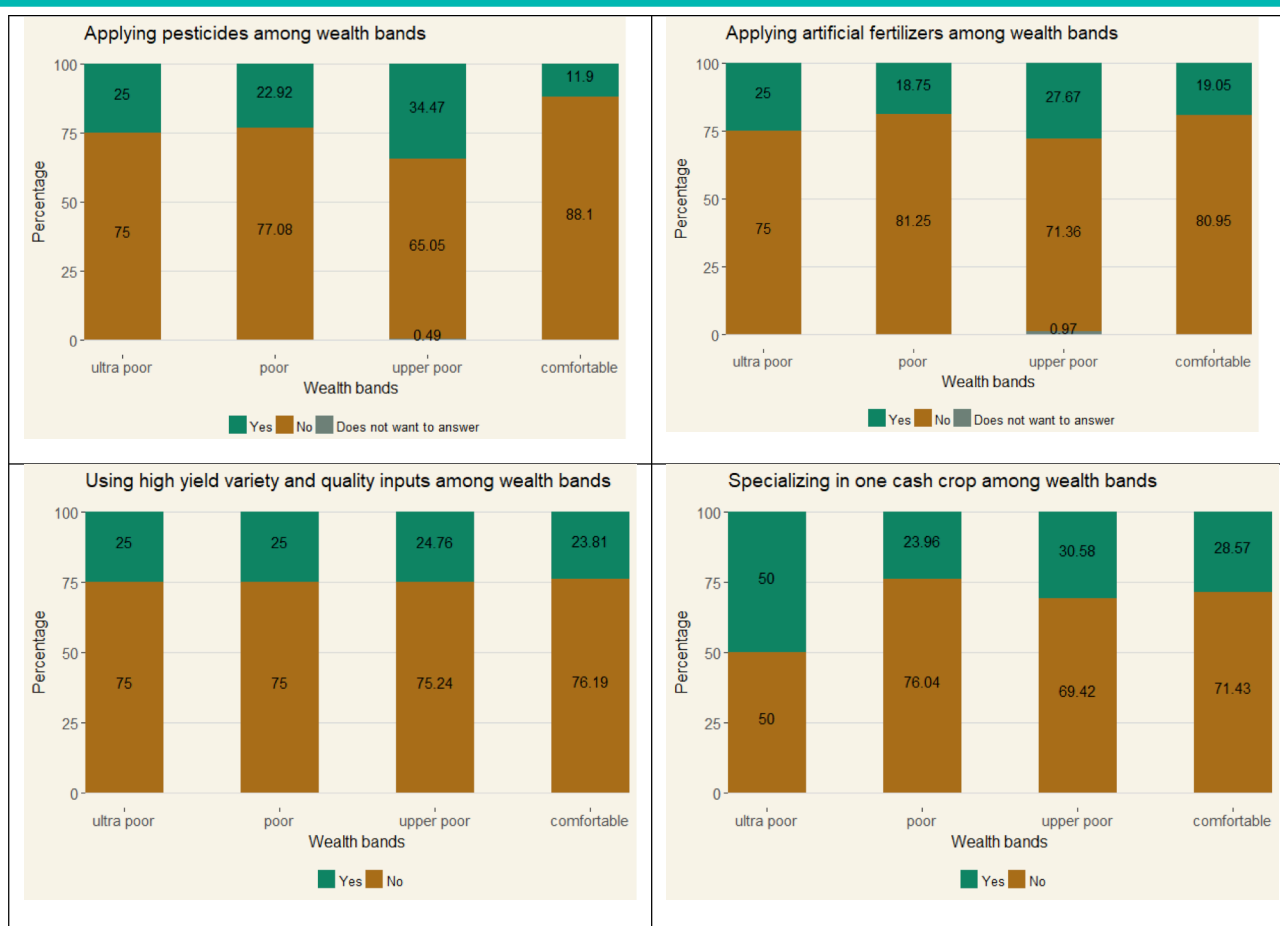


Figure 5: Current agricultural production strategies

Surprisingly enough the adoption of agricultural strategies differs only slightly across age, wealth band, gender and urban/rural. Particularly surprising was the fact that there are even virtually no differences among the more advanced agricultural strategies (such as applying pesticides, fertilizers, using HYV seeds) according to wealth-band.



The small differences that were found in the more commercial agricultural practices, also provided some unexpected outcomes:

- Intensifying land use (in the sense of increasing number of crop cycles per year for the same plot) was mentioned more by rural respondents (17%) than urban (10%), while we would have expected urban respondents, presumably with access to less land, to practice this intensification more.
- Specializing in one cash crop is more common amongst rural (33%) than urban respondents (10%), while we had expected the reverse pattern for this agricultural practice, which is more advanced and risky, but on average more profitable (we expected that the more educated urban respondents might be able to take more risks as presumable having additional income besides agriculture). Involvement in one cash crop is also more common amongst the oldest age group “45 years and older” (40%) against 27%, 20% and 23% for the younger cohorts.

Conclusions and Further Questions

This Research Pearl sheds some light on the type of agricultural practices that people currently follow. Altogether, only a minority is involved in more advanced practices and only some typical subsistence farmer strategies are commonly used, such as “producing for own consumption” and “growing a range of crops”. However, wealth, location or access to information does not seem to be the driving force for the adoption of more advanced agricultural practices. One might expect that people in urban areas have more access to information and to points of sale and therefore urban respondents’ chances of adopting pesticides, artificial fertilizers and high yield varieties would be higher. However, this is not the case, instead, for all three strategies, urban and rural respondents show the same uptake. Likewise, wealth-

level is not a factor in level of uptake, as the four graphs above demonstrate. Uptake percentages were practically the same across all wealth bands, with “applying pesticides” to be more common amongst the ultra poor than the other wealth bands.

Why is uptake of these more advanced agricultural practices at such a low level? The FEDU research so far only discovered the factors, which can be excluded: lack of access to information or to sale points and low wealth levels do not influence the level of uptake. Further research is needed before we can properly explain the prevalent driving forces behind the lack of uptake. A possible explanation may be the following: In Uganda the quality of pesticides, fertilizers and high yield variety is often unpredictable. As a consequence people avoid taking the gamble of spending good money on something that may leave them empty-handed.

What are your hypotheses or experiences for the low uptake of these advanced agricultural practices? Let us know your opinion, then we can explore these in future research.



Get into contact with us:
aswinderen@l-ift.com

Check our website:
<http://www.l-ift.com>



Follow us

Follow us