

Agricultural Economics Society Annual Conference, 29th & 30th March 2021, online

Symposium

Version 2-1, 22 March 2021

Time of Symposium

Tuesday 30 March, 14:00 to 15:15 GMT

[75 mins]

Location

Online

Is Africa rising? Smallholder commercialisation in sub-Saharan Africa

Much is changing in rural Africa, but is Africa rising?

Motivation and objectives

Rural Africa is changing, largely for the better. More so than some might imagine.

Improved health, more education, better roads and physical infrastructure, and increased agricultural output — with rising productivity — the changes are often striking.

A sea change in thinking about rural Africa is underway. During the 2010s, leading institutions in the continent, such as the African Union, African Development Bank, and the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Agriculture (AGRA) have increasingly highlighted dynamic change in rural

areas — rather than replaying narratives about stagnation crisis that dominated thinking in previous decades.

Is this too optimistic a take? While evidence of progress exists, it's neither complete enough nor comprehensive enough to confirm the insights seen. For want of better national statistics, insights depend largely on research at village and district level carried out in the 2010s.

This symposium will present some of the recent evidence about change in rural Africa, showcasing some recent research. This will include the insights emerging from the Africa Policy Research in Africa (APRA) research consortium, that brings together researchers from eight countries in Africa with UK colleagues.

It will address the following questions:

- **What's happening in the field?** What can be seen from recent field studies of change in rural Africa as village and District level? In what ways does the most recent evidence differ from that seen at the turn of the new century?
- **What is driving change?** What forces and factors explain what is being seen? What's different today compared to, say, 10 or 20 years ago?
- **What does this imply for policy?** What problems and challenges remain for those governments, donors, NGOs and private firms working with and for African smallholders?

Contributors

- Chair: Steve Wiggins, Overseas Development Institute

Panel:

- Prof. Dan Brockington, Sheffield — on changes in rural Tanzania since the 1980s and 1990s
- Dr Milu Muyanga, Michigan State University and APRA — on small and medium farmers in Nigeria
- Dr Saweda Liverpool-Tassie, Michigan State University, on the evolving supply chains of rural Africa. **TBC**

Format

The symposium will run for 75 minutes.

Following a 5 minute introduction from Chair,

Each presenter will have 15 minutes to make their points; after which the Chair will facilitate audience contributions and panel responses.

Steve Wiggins

Pen portraits of contributors

Steve Wiggins is an agricultural economist, researcher at the Overseas Development Institute.

Dan Brockington is an anthropologist by training and co-directs the Sheffield Institute for International Development.

Milu Muyanga

Saweda Liverpool-Tassie