SUCCESS STORY

When Farmers Feel Secure—Providing the Evidence to Invest in Climate Smart Agriculture and Agroforestry

Photo Credit: Bob Kombe Ninda

An enumerator conducting the baseline survey to determine if a correlation exists between secure land tenure and higher investments in agroforestry

Telling Our Story

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In Zambia's Galileya village, a Mr. Njovu reported that he planted a large number of musangu trees to improve the fertility of his soil. He learned about agroforestry – the interplanting of native trees and shrubs with crops - from international development organizations, and Mr. Njovu now attributes his successful maize harvest to his to his use of agroforestry. Research shows that farmers who invest in agroforestry see positive benefits such as increased crop productivity and soil fertility, reduced variability in yields, and higher, more reliable farm income. However, agroforestry has not been widely adopted for reasons that may include its upfront financial and labor investments, delayed benefits, or farmers' perception that they may lose their land before realizing the benefits of their investments. Research has not examined these barriers until now. USAID has just launched a pilot project and impact evaluation to test their hypothesis that when farmers feel that their land tenure is secure, they have incentives to invest in agroforestry.

USAID's climate smart agriculture pilot, being launched in Zambia, seeks to demonstrate this linkage. In order to gather evidence to show what role, if any, tenure security plays in the adoption of agroforestry, USAID is implementing a third-party impact evaluation. USAID and its implementing partners have worked together to design an impact evaluation involving a randomized control trial – generally regarded as the most rigorous design for an impact evaluation – to measure the impact of the tenure and agroforestry interventions on rural farmers.

A baseline survey of 4,000 households in 315 villages will be completed prior to the launch of pilot project interventions and again after the completion of the project. To see how strong tenure contributes to agroforestry adoption, villages will randomly be assigned to receive either an agroforestry intervention, land tenure intervention, both agroforestry and land tenure interventions, or neither intervention (the control group). It is anticipated that once a village has been selected for the tenure intervention, most if not all households' land in that village will be certified. With the strong impact evaluation design, USAID expects to see a higher uptake of agroforestry in the group that receives both the agroforestry and tenure interventions.