

OSTROM WORKSHOP COLLOQUIUM SERIES

Tom Evans

Department of Geography, IU Bloomington

“Seed Choice and Misinformation among Smallholder Farmers in Africa”



Monday, November 28, 2016

12:00 – 1:00 p.m. • Ostrom Workshop, 513 N. Park

Despite decades of research and interventions, crop yields for smallholder farmers in sub-Saharan Africa are dramatically lower than yields in more developed countries. Attempts to address variable yields of staple crops in Africa since the Green Revolution through policies and investments in advanced seed cultivars have had mixed results. Numerous African countries have doubled down on hybrid varieties of cultivars through government subsidy programs and investments in research and seed multiplication. One possible explanation for why these programs have not resulted in more significant yield improvements is the challenge faced by farmers to select cultivars that are suited to their local agro-ecological conditions. The question of what seeds farmers choose to plant is a deceptively complex topic as it is often affected by social norms, local availability, and the availability of information on seed performance and agricultural extension to support farmers. At the foundation of this decision is how farmers perceive attributes of different seed varieties and how that is impacted by their perceptions of drought and rainfall variability and management decisions such as when to plant. We demonstrate how paternalistic policies, an overabundance of seed choice coupled with a dearth of information, have resulted in a complex decision matrix for farmers and in many cases unfavorable crop production outcomes.



Tom Evans is a professor in the Department of Geography at Indiana University. His work has focused on analysis of coupled natural-human systems with past work investigating dynamics of deforestation/ reforestation and more recent work investigating water and food security in Sub-Saharan Africa. Additional information on current research can be found at: <http://tomgeog.org>.

Presentations are open to the public and are live streamed (see our website for URL and papers). You are welcome to bring your lunch. For questions, contact Allison Sturgeon (sturgeon@iu.edu; 812/855-3151).