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Export-Oriented Horticulture and Female Labour in Post-Socialist Tanzania: Poverty Reduction or Exploitation?

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Abstract:

This article analyses the rise of export-oriented horticulture in 'post-socialist' Tanzania, framing the phenomenon within the wider processes of socio-economic change. While confirming previous research findings on the accelerated process of social differentiation, the article shows a mixed picture regarding the effects of export-oriented horticulture on female labour and poverty reduction, and questions the 'mainstream' over-optimistic claims. On the one hand, 'contracted' female workers seem to experience an 'upgrade income mobility' and (moderate) empowerment, but with poor working condition at the workplace. On the other hand, the article shows a considerable level of labour informality, casualisation and pauperisation of female wage work. It concludes that the development of export horticulture, while offering income opportunities for a minority of the workers, contributes to a process of exploitation of the poorest and enrichment of the richest – exporters, foreign companies and Tanzanian rural capitalists.

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Keywords: Export-horticulture, Tanzania, wage labour, poverty, inequality

Introduction

Over the last decades, some countries in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) have experienced significant increases in horticultural exports to the European market (Fukase, Martin 2017; Ponte 2019).¹ Following the policies of attracting foreign and private investments, in countries such as Kenya, Senegal, Ethiopia and Tanzania tens of thousands of jobs have been created in farms and packhouses (Maertens *et al.*, 2012; FAO 2012; USAID 2015). A large share of the workers in the export-oriented horticulture are females,

considered more suitable for picking, sorting, packing and handling certain 'delicate' horticultural crops such as flowers, french beans and peas (Maertens, Swinnen 2012). A limited number of empirical studies have tried to assess the impacts on poverty reduction looking at labour. Some claimed that the rise of global horticulture has resulted in 'upward income mobility' and poverty alleviation, particularly among young women through employment creation and labour market effects (Dolan 2004; Mano *et al.* 2011; Van den Broeck *et al.* 2017). Based on his study on Senegalese horticulture, Maertens (2009) noted that the wages earned by the workers employed in foreign farms might add directly to household income and can additionally result in investment spillover effects on household's own farm and non-farm economic activities. The wages earned by women might also increase their decision-making power in the household and result in increased female empowerment (Maertens *et al.* 2012), and eventually in additional non-monetary welfare benefits such as increased child schooling and reduced fertility rates (Maertens, Verhofstadt 2013; Van den Broeck, Maertens 2015). Yet, other scholars question the 'mainstream' optimistic point of view by highlighting low wages paid to workers and poor working conditions in farms (Riisgaard 2009; Baumgartner *et al.* 2015; Ulrich 2014; Staelens *et al.* 2018). Some argued that proliferation of Global Value Chains (GVCs) has been based upon the prior establishment of large, poor and cheap labour forces and that their subsequent incorporation into GVCs generates new forms of workers poverty and 'super-exploitation' (Selwyn 2014, 2019). In this view, poverty is a consequence of employers' ability to pay them low wages and to subject them to harsh working and living conditions as part of their strategies of competitive capital accumulation. In her study on Senegalese horticulture, Baglioni (2018) showed how (female) labourers are exploited and disciplined in several different ways: remunerations below social reproduction costs, gender segmentation and subordination, employment informality. Most of 'mainstream' literature seems to focus exclusively on 'formal' labour in foreign companies, leaving behind the great amount of cheap, informal, seasonal, casual and daily (female) workers employed by both foreign farms and 'African' farmers. Several studies have shown how labour hiring in rural Africa is not limited to foreign/commercial agriculture, but is rather a common phenomenon in smallholder farming; 'informal' wage labour often involves the poorest rural dwellers who cannot make a living out of own farming activities (Ponte 2002; Cramer *et al.* 2008; Oya, Sender 2009; Mueller 2011; Oya 2013; Oya, Pontara 2015; Cramer *et al.* 2017). However, most of the literature on labour in export-oriented horticulture does not take into consideration workers employed by the 'African' rural capitalists and small-holder commercial farmers who are emerging and incorporating into new global value chains (Bernstein 2010; Oya 2010, 2012; Jayne *et al.* 2015). This article frames the development of global horticulture within the wider processes of socio-economic change in 'post-socialist' Tanzania, where relevant studies are lacking. In order to fill the gap in the literature, this contribution includes in the debate both

'formal' and 'informal' workers, as well as foreign companies and African farmers involved in the production of new horticultural crops. In this way, the paper seeks to understand what kind of labour is used, how, and whether global horticulture is generating poverty alleviation, with a particular focus on female workers. The article is based on a 6-months fieldwork in 2016-2017 as part of a wider 3-year PhD project² focused on contract farming and wage labour in the northern districts of Meru, Moshi and Lushoto. In-depth and semi-structured interviews were conducted with contract farmers (61), wage labourers (46), foreign farms (3), exporters (4), NGOs (2) and district authorities (4). An additional seven focus group discussions with contract farmers and five with wage labourers were conducted. A total of 216 household questionnaire (120 contract farmers and 96 wage labourers) were administered. This paper is inspired by the findings regarding labour and labourers.

Agricultural policy in Tanzania: from SAPs to horti-business

Tanzania is one of several African countries where most of the population still lives in rural areas (81%) and it is engaged in agriculture. Despite the rapid economic growth of the last 15 years, levels of poverty and food insecurity, especially in rural areas, remain significantly high (URT 2019).³

After roughly twenty years of policies inspired by African socialism (1967-1986), the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) imposed radical economic reforms, which entailed a drastic reduction of the role of the state in all sectors of the economy (Coulson 2013). Within a few years (1986-1994), the Tanzanian government turned one of the most state-controlled economies in SSA into one of the most liberalised. The agricultural sector, which was subject to marked state control and absorbed a substantial share of public expenditure, was at the core of the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) (Aminzade 2013). In the aim of IFIs, the private sector was to replace the public sector in several functions. The removal of state control and the reduction of taxation on agricultural production was to facilitate the achievement of 'right prices' for small farmers (who accounted for more than 90% of the rural population),⁴ stimulate agricultural export and the development of rural entrepreneurship (hindered by socialist policies). However, the rapid implementation of SAPs led to a worsening of the already precarious conditions of the majority of the rural population due to the negative effect on the agricultural sector and farmers' incomes, the lack of private investments and the sharp rise in the cost of living (WB 1996). The neoliberal reforms also brought about rising inequalities and changes in the strategies for survival and accumulation. According to WB, in the early 1990s, the wealthiest households increased their incomes from agricultural production, while the poorest households saw both agricultural incomes and total incomes fall (WB 1996). On the one hand, wealthy farmers located in the most fertile areas and better linked to urban and regional markets modified and intensified agricultural practices by introducing more profitable

cash crops and increasing the use of hired labour and modern inputs; on the other hand, the majority of rural dwellers faced rising difficulties in accessing markets, inputs and credit to finance production and obtain a decent farm-income (Ponte 2002). The poorest part of the population, while continuing to be involved in subsistence farming, became increasingly engaged in off-farm informal economic activities, particularly in agricultural wage labour, but without being able to derive any significant benefit from it (Ponte 2002; Ellis 2003; WB 1996; Mueller 2011).

From the late 1990s, the negative effects of the reforms prompted donors and the Tanzanian government to re-evaluate the development strategy introduced with SAPs. The IFIs recognised that the neoliberal 'orthodox' economic reforms had not produced the expected results: the free market and macroeconomic rigour had to be accompanied by an 'efficient' state, able to exercise 'good governance', to guarantee an economic climate suitable to entrepreneurship and private investments, to adopt 'inclusive policies' and to provide a 'safety net' for the most vulnerable (WB 1997). In addition, the need for greater state involvement in rural and agricultural development policies through investments in infrastructure was (apparently) recognised. In this context, in the 2000s the modernisation and commercialisation of agriculture became (once again) a top priority for development policies in Tanzania (URT 2006). As also suggested by the 'new development paradigm' proposed by the World Bank in its World Development Report titled *Agriculture for Development* (2007), the Tanzanian government stated that it wanted to pursue (again) the goal of the 'green revolution', through a partnership between the public and private sectors and between large companies and small farmers. The strategy launched with the *Kilimo Kwanza* (KK) program is aimed at achieving greater involvement of the private sector in the production, processing and marketing of agricultural products and the distribution of inputs and services to farmers (URT 2009). Through the leasing of agricultural land, tax incentives, the establishment of special economic zones and 'agricultural corridors', this policy seeks to attract large-scale foreign investments with the aim of 'modernising' the sector and creating jobs in rural areas. The KK strategy also places great emphasis on the need to involve local farmers in modern regional and global supply chains through contract farming (CF) schemes. CF is in fact considered as a form of inclusive business that allows local small farmers to be included in new agro-industrial chains, ensuring them access to modern inputs and technologies, facilitating the adoption of 'good agricultural practices', the development of rural entrepreneurship and the reduction of poverty (URT 2013). The KK programme has resulted in the Horticultural Industry Development Strategy 2012-2022, which has provided for the creation of 'horticultural corridors' and 'horticultural export processing zones' in several highlands of the country, with the aim of "increasing horticultural production and exports by 10 times in 10 years [...] through the promotion of large-scale production as well as the organisation of small-scale producers into blocks of similar crops to effectively utilise economies of scale and competitiveness

in the market" (URT 2010: 1). The strategy is intended to create one million jobs, developing rural entrepreneurship and including thousands of small farmers in the new GVCs (*ibid.*). Among the target areas of the strategy, there are the northern highlands of the regions of Arusha and Kilimanjaro, in which the promotion of horticultural export had already started in the 1990s and a process of agro-industrialisation is now emerging (Mashindano *et al.* 2013; TAHA 2016).

The rise of horticulture and *kibarua* labour in northern highlands

Horticulture is one of the sectors of the economy that has grown most in the last years, at an average of 11%, whilst agriculture grew by 3% and GDP by 6-7% (TAHA 2016). This growth was supported by the increase in the production of fruit and vegetables for sale on local markets by Tanzanian farmers, as well by the growth in the volume and value of horticultural exports,⁵ which exceeded 500 million US dollars for the first time in 2015 (*ibid.*). Horticultural production has been intensified in recent decades especially in the northern highlands, and particularly in Meru, Moshi and Lushoto districts. These areas have been the most integrated into the market economy since colonial times and are now experiencing more accelerated processes of economic transformation and social differentiation than other regions and districts of the country. These districts are not only home to the majority of the country's foreign farms,⁶ but also to the most market-oriented Tanzanian farmers.⁷ One of the farmers' strategies to adapt to the agricultural crisis in the transition from socialism to the free market has been the intensification of the production of short-ripening vegetable crops – tomatoes, cabbage, beans, and so on – for the local market, often to the detriment of 'traditional' long-ripening export crops, in particular coffee.⁸ The intensification of the production of these crops, which ensure faster incomes and require a greater workforce in a much more concentrated time, has prompted farmers to increase the use of hired workers, leading to "the *contractualization* of farm labour recruitment" at the expense of the traditional mechanisms based on social relations and labour exchange (Ponte 2002: 123). In mountain areas (above 1000 meters), these crops are cultivated by small farmers on small plots of land (0.1-0.5 ha). In the flat areas (800-1000 meters) between the cities of Moshi and Arusha, such crops are also produced by some African entrepreneurs on large plots of land with access to mechanised irrigation systems, employing many labourers: in fact, around the production of horticultural crops (particularly tomatoes and onions), African capitalist production has emerged (again) in the last two decades (Mueller 2011, 2015; De Blasis 2020).

The labourers employed by richer small horticulturalists and capitalist farmers mainly consist of poor and often semi-landless rural dwellers in search of sources of income to make a living. What is known as *kibarua*, or casual wage work, is the prevalent form of wage labour in the rural economy (Mueller 2015). The increasing fragmentation of land properties caused by population growth in mountain villages, coupled with the

neoliberal policies of the 1980s and 1990s and the agrarian crisis they generated, have contributed to the widespread availability of labour in these areas. A study conducted in the late 1980s by Sender and Smith (1990) highlighted the pronounced scarcity of rural wage labour during socialist era: because men still retained patriarchal control over land and were able to sustain their families by working on the family farms, they usually prevented household members from engaging in wage work. For these reasons, it was largely single, divorced and widowed women who became rural wage workers, as they were unable to gain access to land through the institution of marriage. By sharp contrast, in the same area and after twenty years of neoliberal policies, Mueller (2011) found a huge oversupply of rural wage labour; many men were no longer owning or controlling enough land and were forced to work for casual wages in order to make a living. Consequently, the majority of *kibarua* wage workers, about 60%, were found to be males and competition for labour access was intensive. *Kibarua* is however extremely insecure and irregular hard manual labour; typical activities include digging/hoeing, harvesting, weeding, irrigating, manuring or caring for livestock; average wages are very low (usually 1–2 US dollars per day) and labour is organised very informally and based entirely on verbal agreements. According to Mueller (2011; 2015), the spread of such conditions is telling evidence of a rise in rural inequality and social differentiation, accelerated over the last decades by the lack of state support to agriculture and the lack of alternatives in the rural economy.

The rise of export-oriented horticulture and re-feminisation of labour

In this context, the export-oriented horticultural industry has developed. In the districts of Meru and Moshi, economic liberalisation, the coffee industry crisis and the policy of attracting foreign investments have stimulated the development of the first foreign productions of flowers for export since the mid-1990s (Cooksey 2011). Over the last fifteen years, new investments have led to a rapid process of diversification of the industry towards crops such as French beans, peas and avocado for export to the European market.⁹ In addition, the investments have also concerned the packaging of products on site: some companies export packaged products using 'pack houses' within the special economic zones and buying from their suppliers through contract farming arrangements, at prices set in advance, taking care of the transport of products and often providing inputs on credit. Overall, in the area between the cities of Moshi and Arusha, there are about 30 horticultural companies between farms and exporters (MMA 2017). Since mid-2000s, some Tanzanian entrepreneurs have also introduced French beans through informal contract farming. More recently, with the support of international donors some smallholder mountain horticulturists – already strongly market-oriented – have also been involved in contract farming; in 2016–2017 there were 2,000–3,000 Tanzanian farmers engaged in the production of French beans, peas and avocado for export.¹⁰

Due to the introduction of labour-intensive, highly perishable products, subject to stringent quality and quantity criteria and tight deadlines and delivery methods to exporters, the demand for labour has increased significantly both in foreign farms and among Tanzanian farmers. Overall, it is estimated that over 10,000 workers are employed in the horticultural industry, mainly in the harvesting and packaging of flowers, French beans and peas (TAHA 2016). As other researches in Tanzania and elsewhere (FAO 2012) have also shown, the development of the horticultural industry has generated the (re)feminisation of agricultural labour: women are preferred by employers over men, especially in the harvesting, sorting and packaging of products, as they are considered "more suitable for handling beans, peas and flowers quickly and gently".¹¹

According to FAO, although the horticultural industry "has been criticised globally for its negative consequences on agricultural workers [...] in Tanzania the sector is at the forefront in terms of adoption of good practices and compliance with labour laws [...] [and] has also benefited from the actions of the Tanzania Plantation and Agricultural Workers' Union (TPAWU)", the largest trade union organisation for agricultural workers. The study also stated that "the majority of the workforce in the fruit and vegetable sector in the Arusha region has been contracted" (80%) and is also part of a trade union association (FAO 2012: 8). However, this article suggests that a large share of the workforce in the global horticulture (60-75% depending on the season)¹² is employed on an informal basis and working conditions, albeit varying, are critical at best.

Foreign farms and Tanzanian entrepreneurs, located at the foot of the Kilimanjaro and Meru Mountains, use their land to ensure a constant supply to exporters: they harvest and deliver beans and peas to their buyers three to five times a week almost continuously throughout the year. According to field data, foreign farms use land ranging from 5 ha (those that only produce flowers in greenhouses) to 50 ha (those that also produce beans and peas in open land) and employ between 150 and 300 contracted workers, of which over 80% are females. These workers are paid a monthly wage and are employed for sowing, soil preparation, fertiliser and insecticide application, harvesting and packaging of flowers, French beans and peas. In addition, for the harvesting of the beans and peas foreign farms employ between 50 and 200 additional informal (female) pickers per day, four to five days a week, with higher intensity during the high season (when productivity increases due to optimal climatic conditions). These workers do not have contracts but usually work continuously in the same company. In case of need, labourers are also recruited by word of mouth; a manager of a Dutch firm says that especially during the high season "our workers spread the word in their villages of residence and the next morning a large number of relatives and friends show up". He also confirms the intense competition for such works, pointing out that the influx of aspiring workers "is so high that every morning dozens of women we cannot employ remain outside the gates [...] since the introduction of French beans in the company, although the demand for workers has increased exponentially, we have had no difficulty in finding workers".¹³

Like foreign farms, Tanzanian entrepreneurs also grow French beans and employ many workers throughout the year, albeit to varying degrees depending on the low or high season. According to data collected from exporters, they contribute to 70-80% of the production purchased outside foreign farms. The entrepreneurs surveyed (8) use an average of 6 ha of (rented) land and employ an average of 4 (male) workers on a 'continuous' basis – paid with a monthly salary of 50,000-80,000 but without a contract – for sowing, soil preparation, application of fertilisers and insecticides, and for the supervision of the labourers hired during the days of harvest. In fact, Tanzanian capitalist farmers employ an average of 47 additional (female) workers per day for 16 days a month. They often recruit such labourers through 'announcements', by which "the word is spread to nearby villages and the next day people in need of money show up en masse at my land". In case of need, another channel of recruitment during high season is that of the road: "every morning hundreds of people coming from neighbouring or mountain villages meet at the focal points along the road that connects the city of Moshi with that of Arusha, waiting for someone to offer them a job".¹⁴

Small farmers located in mountain villages, unlike foreign companies and entrepreneurs, grow peas and French beans only for some months during the year (May-October), using small plots of land (0.1-1 ha) but associating in groups of 20-100 members for each village, so as to ensure a minimum and constant supply to exporters. Therefore, in a village there can be several hectares under production. Small mountain farmers usually employ family labour for soil preparation, sowing and the application of insecticides and fertilisers, and hire labour for the harvesting of products. Even in mountain villages, with the introduction of new export crops the demand for labour has increased considerably, so much so as to push many farmers to employ workers from neighbouring villages, when previously only workers from the same village were employed. On average, the small horticulturalists sampled during the fieldwork (112) hire labour for 11.5 days a month, employing up to 16 workers a day.

Wage labourers in global horticulture

The following part of the article focuses on the conditions of (female) wage labourers employed by foreign companies and Tanzanian contract farmers in Meru and Moshi districts. All the workers interviewed and sampled (96) were employed in French bean, pea or flower value chains and live in mountain villages or in the ones located along the road that links in the cities of Moshi and Arusha. Workers were selected randomly: they were met at their workplace when firms and Tanzanian farmers agreed to cooperate; in the surrounding areas at the end or beginning of the working day; or at the meeting points along the A23 road linking the city of Arusha with that of Moshi, where informal workers meet every morning waiting for any employers to offer them a job.¹⁵ Except for few labourers interviewed at their workplace, workers were given an appointment and interviewed individually or during a focus group at Vredeseilanden/VECO office in

Arusha (a Belgium NGO) or in local bars and restaurants not far from their villages. Interviews and questionnaires were carried out and administered in Swahili with an interpreter, and then translated into English.

As mentioned above, agricultural workers can be divided between those employed with a work contract – henceforth 'formal workers' – and those employed with no contract – henceforth 'informal workers'. The former are the wage labourers contracted by foreign farms, while the latter are the wage labourers employed on an occasional basis, daily or continuously but without a contract, both by foreign farms and by Tanzanian farmers (entrepreneurs and small farmers). Overall, 32% of the workers sampled are employed on a contract basis by the companies Hortanzia, Kili Flair and Dekker Bruins, while 62% are employed without a contract by the same companies or by Tanzanian farmers; 42% of them have worked in the last 12 months with or without a contract in foreign farms, while 58% have worked only for Tanzanian farmers.

The agricultural workers sampled have an average age of 35.2 years (with a minimum of 18 and a maximum of 77), with significant variation between formal (younger) and informal workers (older). The households of these workers are composed on average by 4.4 members; 14% of the workers have no school education, 71% have completed primary school and 14% have completed secondary school. Reflecting the feminisation of labour, 86.3% of workers sampled were women and 13.7% were men; compared to the national figure, a lower percentage of married (56%) and a significantly higher percentage of widows (16%) and separated (16%) were found among agricultural workers. In particular, the presence of widows among informal workers (23%) was almost four times higher than the national average (6% of the female population). A high number of migrants was found among agricultural workers: about 35% came from the poorest regions in the north of the country – Singida, Tabora and Shinyanga.¹⁶ Unlike the colonial period, when the manpower employed in European farms consisted mainly of seasonal/circular labour, these migrants have settled and live in the flat areas along the road that connects the city of Arusha and Moshi.

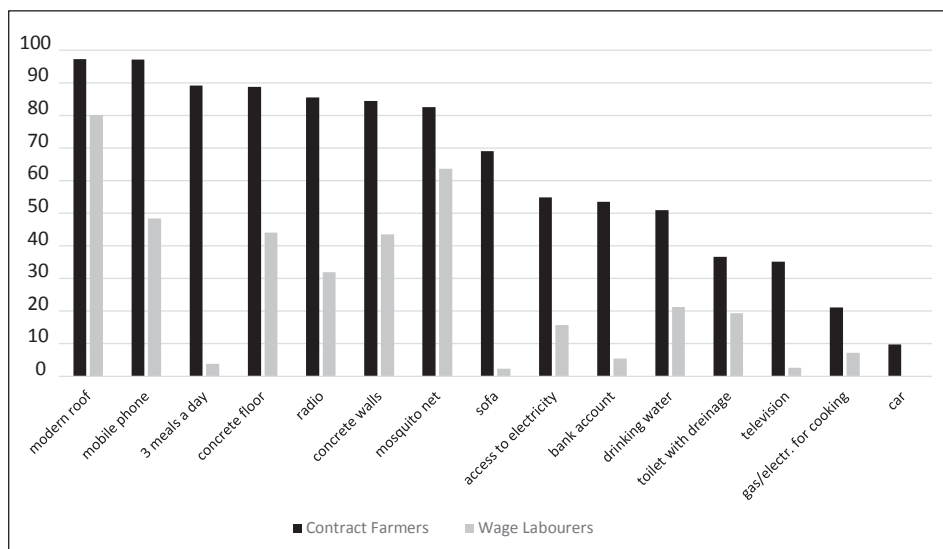
Table 1: Age, household size and family status of agricultural workers sampled

	Age	Household Size	Married (%)	Single (%)	Separated (%)	Widows (%)
Formal Workers	27	3.7	70	17	13	0
Informal Workers	38	4.7	50	8	19	23
Total	35.2	4.4	56	11	16	16

Source: author's elaboration

In general, as found by Mueller (2011, 2015) agricultural workers belong to the poorest part of the population. In order to understand the socio-economic status of the interviewees, the housing conditions and the access to some consumer goods were verified.¹⁷ In total, 15 indicators were taken into account: a mobile phone; a modern roof (metal or better); a radio; a mosquito net; a concrete floor; concrete walls; a sofa; access to electricity;¹⁸ access to drinking water;¹⁹ a bank account; a bathroom with drainage;²⁰ a TV; the use of gas or electricity for cooking; the consumption of three meals a day; a car. Such indicators were chosen because they are used in national censuses (Household Budget Surveys) to measure socio-economic status, and some allow a comparison on a district, regional and national basis. On average, labourers show lower access to consumer goods and worse housing conditions than not only contract farmers (employers), who can be regarded as a rural elite, but also the district, regional and national population. Tanzanian contract farmers – particularly entrepreneurs – have access to consumer goods that are scarcely available to the population as a whole (such as a car), earn incomes that are up to 30 times higher than the poverty line and nearly 10 times higher than the per-capita GDP, and utilise plots of land up to 40 times bigger than the average in the district.²¹ Comparing the prevalence of consumer goods and housing conditions between farmers and workers, a high level of inequality and social differentiation emerges.

Figure 1: Access to consumer goods and housing conditions; a comparison between contract farmers and wage labourers



Source: author's elaboration

Even compared to the regional and district population, labourers show lower access to consumer goods and worse housing conditions. For example, a radio, a mobile phone and a television are owned by 31.9%, 48.4% and 2.6% of the wage labourers sampled, while in the district of Meru they are owned by 76%, 79% and 11% of the district population and in the district of Moshi by 79%, 80% and 19% (URT 2016c, 2016d). Furthermore, only 40.6% shows access to land, compared to a district average of 81% (Moshi) and 76% (Meru), with no significant difference between formal and informal workers.

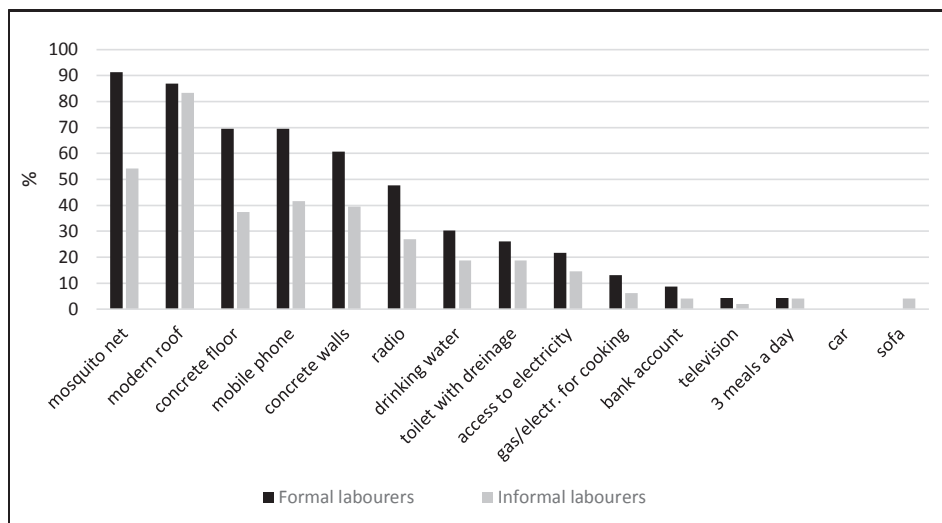
Table 2: Access to consumer goods and housing conditions; a comparison between regions, districts and labourers interviewed

Goods/housing condition	Arusha region (%)	Kilimanjaro region (%)	Meru District (%)	Moshi District (%)	LABOURERS (%)
Modern roof	80.5	98.6	95.4	95.4	80.1
Mobile phone	75.2	79.6	78.6	79.6	48.4
Concrete walls	54.7	64.2	55.3	45.6	43.6
Concrete floor	51.1	64.2	55.2	62.3	44.1
Access to electricity	32.9	44.9	17.1	27.1	15.7
Television	22.9	21.2	11.3	19.2	2.6
Radio	64.1	76.1	76.7	79.7	31.9
Access to land	60.3	75.4	76.5	81.3	40.6

Source: author's elaboration for wage labourers; URT (2019) for 'modern roof, walls and floor' at the regional level. Other data refers to URT (2016c, 2016d).

Almost all labourers (96%) belong to households that earn their income solely from agricultural labour and other informal non-agricultural activities: even when they own land, the size is significantly smaller than the average in respective districts (0.75 acres compared to about 2 acres in Meru and Moshi districts) and they produce food crops exclusively for domestic consumption. This reflects an ongoing process of *deagrarianisation* and income diversification (Bryceson 2018) and confirms that in northern highlands there is a widespread and increasing availability of very poor and semi-landless rural dwellers in desperate need of a source of income. However, a significant difference in socio-economic status can also be found between formal and informal workers; as shown in the table below comparing asset ownership and housing conditions, the latter can be considered as the poorest among the poor. In part, this inequality is the result of different working conditions for the two types of workers.

Figure 2: Access to consumer goods and housing conditions; a comparison between formal and informal labourers



Source: author's elaboration.

The contracted workers in foreign farms: between upward income mobility, disciplining and control

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Among all the workers sampled, the young women employed with a contract in foreign farms are those who seem to experience (modest) 'upward income mobility' and empowerment (Maertens *et al.* 2012). The contract specifies the duration of the employment (all of them are employed on a temporary basis), the number of working days per week, the working hours and the monthly pay. Working conditions are regulated by the Labour Institution Act of 2004, as amended in 2007, 2010 and 2013. The 2004 Act set a maximum limit of 12 hours of work per day and a minimum of 24 hours of weekly rest; it also established an obligation for the employer to pay an increased hourly wage after the 45 hours of work per week. Employees are entitled to paid sickness, pension contributions, holidays and severance pay at the end of the contract. Women are also entitled to 84 days of paid maternity leave covered 100% by the National Social Security Fund. The last amendment of 2013 - in force at the time of the research - raised the minimum wage in various sectors of the economy; the minimum wage in agriculture was set at 100,000 Tanzanian shillings per month.

Labour recruitment in foreign farms pass through a strict selection based on age and gender; employers make a careful selection of the youngest and healthiest females to work in greenhouses and packhouses. Such criteria generate a great segmentation of labour within the horticultural labour market, which reserves formal employment in foreign companies only to a selected category of women. As reported by a manager of a

Dutch firm, foreign farms prefer to hire "healthy young women who are able to harvest and pack beans and flowers quickly and gently".²² It is not surprising that contracted female workers are much younger than informal workers (27 years vs 38 years); about 70% is married; 30% has no male partner and 20% no children; among all the workers sampled their households are smaller (3.7 members) and contain less children (1.7).

Contracted workers sampled have been working in foreign companies for 4.5 years; they work six days a week for eight hours a day and get a monthly salary of 100,000–120,000 Tanzanian shillings (about US dollars 45–55). On average, they earn 1,340,347 Tanzanian shillings per year, with a minimum of 1,200,000 and a maximum of 1,440,000 Tanzanian shillings. Most of the formal workers interviewed argue that their income has increased since they got the job in foreign companies, as they were previously unemployed or employed in informal *kibarua* work. Before the development of global horticulture, some of these women were employed by Tanzanian farmers in the seasonal production of horticultural crops for sale in local markets (tomato, onion, cabbage). Those casual and seasonal labourers who managed to get a job at foreign companies have therefore upgraded their position: a woman pointed out how "until few years ago I used to work fewer days in a year and mostly during the high season [...]. Nowadays I work all-year round and earn more money".²³

The individual income of formal workers is indeed way higher than the individual poverty line indicated by the Tanzanian government (591,840 Tanzanian shillings). The feminisation of labour in the industry, combined with the lack of alternative employment opportunity in the rural economy, has also led many families to have women's paid work as their sole or main source of income. For these women, there seems to be a (modest) process of empowerment: as argued during a focus group, this job provides the opportunity "to have our own wages for the first time and to feel independent from the family, to buy goods that we could not afford before, to send our children to a decent school and to be proud of what we do".²⁴ As shown in the table below, this is reflected in the level of asset ownership and housing conditions, which are not far from the average in the district (with the exception of the levels of access to land, radio and television which are much lower).

Table 3: Asset ownership and housing condition; a comparison between contracted labourers and Meru district

Goods/housing condition	Meru District (%)	Contracted Labourers (%)
Modern roof	95.4	86.9
Mobile phone	78.6	69.5
Concrete walls	55.3	60.8
Concrete floor	55.2	69.5

Access to electricity	17.1	21.7
Television	11.3	4.3
Radio	76.7	47.8
Access to land	76.5	36.8

Source: author's elaboration; URT (2016c).

However, many of their households might still struggle around the poverty line because such job is the main source income, and alone it is unable to sustain an average of 3.7 members with often no land. Unsurprisingly, their income is rarely used to make economic investments. Unlike what was shown in Senegal (Maertens 2009), there seems to be no significant 'investments spillover effect' as the salary is just enough to meet urgent needs (such as to buy a mobile phone or moderately improve housing conditions) and does not seem to allow accumulation of money. For example, no woman reported to have started an off-farm business over the last 10 years; only 20% of the workers reported to rent a plot of land, and overall only 36% reported access to plots of land of about 0.7 acres on average.

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The moderate upward income mobility seems to come together with poor working condition at the workplace and mechanism of labour disciplining and control (Baglioni 2018). The majority of workers (71.5%) reported to have experienced some sort of problem with their work.²⁵ They were asked to indicate, in order of priority, up to 3 problems encountered in working at farms. The most frequently reported problem (80%) is late payment of wages; contracts stipulate that wages should be paid on the first day of the month following the month of work, but companies often delay payments up to two weeks. Other problems are related to the conditions in the workplace; about 57% indicated excessive workload as one of their main problems, and 31% said they suffered the lack of easy access to drinking water. During a group discussion a female working in a packhouse pointed out that "packing the beans is a machine-like job [...] we have to pack the beans very carefully but very fast, and the boss controls us", while another female working in French bean fields said that "the water taps are located near the offices of the company, but it happens to collect beans in plot of land distant several minutes of walk, so I stay many hours without drinking [...] when it's very hot I have dizziness, but I must continue to work, I cannot take too many breaks if I want my contract to be renewed".²⁶ The extreme facility by which employers might replace their temporary-contracted female workers is also utilised to discourage trade union membership. None of the workers sampled is indeed a member of a trade union association, despite the existence of the TPAWU. One female worker pointed out that the "membership of trade unions has been advised against by the company and we have followed the advice, because there are many job seekers [...] competition

is extremely high, and it is not difficult to replace us". The same worker also argued that employers seem to encourage them "not have children if we want to have new contracts".²⁷ However, despite such working conditions many young women are ready and willing to engage in foreign farms in order to get a highly aspired and stable salary. The alternatives are indeed much worse: it would mean piece-work and greater exploitation in the informal horticultural labour market.

The informal labourers: exploited pieceworkers in global horticulture

Informal workers, as noted above, are those employed on a daily, weekly, seasonal or even continuous basis but without a contract. Unlike contracted workers, they have no insurance cover in the event of an accident, no leave, no sickness and no severance pay. Regarding daily work, the latest amendment (2013) to the Labour Institution Act of 2004 established a minimum wage of 5,000 Tanzanian shillings per day for 8 hours of work: however, this is just on paper.

The harvesting of French beans and peas employs the great majority of informal labourers in the global horticulture. The development of the horticultural industry has led not only to an increase in the demand for labour but also to changes in the mechanisms of access to labour and in the way informal workers are paid. While during the 1990s the intensification of vegetables production led to an increase in the use of hired labour and the *contractualisation* of farm labour recruitment (Ponte 2002), in recent years the spread of new export crops through contract farming has led to a *pieceworkisation* of the informal labour market. Knowing the selling prices in advance (which are established by oral agreements or written contracts with exporters) and having to deliver the products in accordance with the quality standards and tight deadlines dictated by the buyers, foreign companies and Tanzanian farmers (which used to pay by task or day) began to pay their workers on the basis of the kilos of beans or peas harvested.

Foreign companies and Tanzanian entrepreneurs, who sell French beans to exporters at a price of 1,600–2,000 Tanzanian shillings, pay their workers about 100–150 Tanzanian shillings (0.4–0.6 US dollars) for every kilo harvested. In the flat areas between 800 and 1,000 meters – where foreign farms and Tanzanian entrepreneurs are located – the cost of labour is lower due to the wide availability of agricultural workers: in fact, many migrants from neighbouring regions have settled there in search of work. Labour cost is higher in mountain villages, although farmers have no difficulty in finding people willing to work for a wage: they pay their workers between 150 and 200 Tanzanian shillings for every kilo harvested, even if the selling price to exporters (750–1,200 Tanzanian shillings) is lower than that of foreign companies and Tanzanian entrepreneurs.

While contracted workers reported wage increases since they got the job, most of the informal labourers (87%) stated that incomes have decreased or remained the same over the last 10 years. On average, informal workers earn about half of the income

of contracted labourers (655,021 Tanzanian shillings/year), with significant variations according to the frequency of employment and the level of per-day remuneration in the piecework system. Even for pieceworkers, labour recruitment passes through a selection based on age and gender, generating labour segmentation. This activity is in fact also undertaken by female labourers. A worker explained that "my husband and I are without land [...] we have our arms to work the land of others [...] I work the most, because they only hire my husband to sow and apply fertilisers and insecticides, but they are infrequent activities [...] [employers] do not want men to pick up the beans [...] the harvesting of beans is a thing of woman!".²⁸ Moreover, employers prefer young females pickers: if we look at age, those who participate more frequently and intensively in horticultural labour market are young women between 18 and 30 years; even if they do not have a contract, their total income mainly comes from such horticultural labour and they spend most of the working days at French beans and peas farms. Among all informal workers, young females get a job more frequently and earn more for each day of labour because they can collect the highest quantity of beans and peas. On average, females aged 18-30 find a job for 192 days/year and earn 4,181 Tanzanian shillings per day, which is the highest daily remuneration among all informal workers, but still below the minimum required by the last amendment to the Labour Act (5,000 Tanzanian shillings). They usually work on a continuous basis for the same foreign company or large Tanzanian farmer, though they might shift from one to another in the same year, month or week. However, despite working intensively almost all year-round in the global horticulture, even these 'highly incorporated' females do not seem to experience 'upward income mobility' nor social empowerment. As a young woman pointed out during a focus group, their income "is barely enough to feed our children as we are usually the only workers in the family, my husband works as *kibarua* but there are very few jobs for him".²⁹

Table 4: Female informal workers: age cluster, income, working days, daily income and % of landless

Age cluster	% of the sample	Annual Income	Working Days/Year	Daily income in Global Horticulture	Household size	Landless (%)
18-30	30	874,909	217	4,181	3.5	58
31-45	42.5	550,235	144	3,779	5.1	73
45+	27.5	578,181	155	3,772	5.5	41

Source: author's elaboration

The individual annual income they get (874,909 Tanzanian shillings per year) is above the individual poverty line (591,840 Tanzanian shillings), but clearly unable to sustain a household of 3.5 members on average, often landless (58%) or with minuscules plot of land (0.25 acres), and with any other stable source of income. As shown in the table below comparing housing conditions and asset ownership, they are poorer than contracted workers; they are also poorer than the average in the same district, suggesting that the deep engagement in global horticulture is not able to let them come out of poverty.

Table 5: Asset ownership and housing condition. Meru district, contracted workers and informal females 18–30

Assets/housing conditions	Meru District (%)	Contracted Labourers (%)	Informal Females 18–30 (%)
Modern roof	95.4	86.9	84.6
Mobile phone	78.6	69.5	54.5
Concrete walls	55.3	60.8	18.2
Concrete floor	55.2	69.5	27.3
Access to electricity	17.1	21.7	27.3
Television	11.3	4.3	9.1
Radio	76.7	47.8	27.3
Access to land	76.5	36.8	41.6

Source: author's elaboration

The picture gets even worse when looking at other labourers. About 50% of the informal labourers sampled earn incomes below the individual poverty line; compared to young females and to all those above the poverty line, such labourers find a job less frequently, earn less for each day of labour, belong to larger and more-often landless household, and many have no male partner. Divorced, widows and separated account together for over 40% of the informal labourers sampled, confirming that they are still deeply participating in (and looking for) rural wage labour (Sender, Smith 1990); however, they are not benefiting much from export-oriented agriculture since they earn incomes below the poverty line.

Table 6: Informal labourers above and below the individual poverty line, working days, household size, % of landless

Category	% of the sample	Working Days/ Year	Household size	Landless (%)
Above individual poverty line	49.8	201	4.5	57
Below individual poverty line	50.2	130	5.2	66

Source: author's elaboration

Labour selection based on young age and the piecework-pay system have been particularly penalising for older and less healthy women. For many women in search of *kibarua* work, and especially those aged 45+ and widows, both the annual income and the total number of working days seem to have decreased with the expansion of horticultural export. They are the poorest among all labourers considering housing conditions and asset ownership, and those most in need of money. They would need to work more, but since large and small farmers shifted to global horticultural crops, labour market has become much more selective. They are largely excluded from piecework in foreign companies because they are too weak to pick up the beans and peas 'rapidly and gently', and thus they get a job solely from Tanzania farmers and mainly during the high season; when they get a job, they earn much less because they manage to collect less kg of beans or peas. For example, a widow explained how "foreign farms don't want elderly people [...] the only ones who make me work are the Tanzanian farmers, but I manage to collect few kilos a day and there is strong competition for access to work [...] farmers prefer younger women, so I find work few days a week and stay without working for several weeks, especially during the low season".³⁰ Indeed, if we look at family status, the widows are those who get a job less frequently (121 days/year) and earn less (469,454 Tanzanian shillings/year).

While the income levels and frequency of employment differ, all informal workers face very poor working conditions and intensive exploitation. Besides the common problems shared by all *vibarua* in Tanzania (lack of bathing and drinking water in the workplace, poor wages, long working hours, excessive workload, lack of protection when applying fertilisers and insecticides), there are also some dynamics specifically related to power relations within the 'buyer-driven' (Ponte 2019) global horticultural value chains. The poor conditions of *kibarua* labour were surely already there well before the rise of global horticulture, but they seem to be further worsened by the expansion of global horticultural crops through labour intensification and *pieceworkisation*. As argued by an exporter purchasing beans and peas from foreign farms and Tanzanian farmers, "within 24 hours our buyers [European supermarkets and retailers] require super-

fresh, on time and very good-looking products at prices they impose... That's what we also ask to farmers [...] If we don't follow the rule we are out of the global market"³¹ Women are thus strictly supervised and pushed to collect peas and beans 'rapidly and gently' by their employers in order to meet the quality and quantity standards of exporting companies; since in extreme need of money, informal labourers are ready to further exploit themselves by collecting as many kilos as possible each day of labour. A young worker said "I manage to earn up to 5,000 Tanzanian shillings at day" but then highlighted the frenetic pace of work by describing how she "fainted in the field of a farm after so many hours in a row spent picking beans [...] employers want us to be fast [...] then I needed the money and I had to collect as many kilos as possible".³²

Another problem which is at least partially related to the development of horticultural export is that of delayed payments. Most of the informal workers reported late payments (84%) as one of the main problems of their work, with delays that can last up to several weeks or months, particularly when the employers are Tanzanian farmers. The reason seems to be in turn the late payment by exporting companies to producers; a female worker even attempted to go to the office of an exporting company herself to solicit payment to the farmer, who "continued not to pay me for the work done by telling me that he was waiting the payment for the beans delivered a month ago [...] I had to wait more than a month before receiving 15,000 Tanzanian shillings".³³ Furthermore, nearly half of the labourers (48%) have reported missing payments for the work performed at least once in the last 12 months. The non-payment of the work is mainly due to the high rate of rejection of products delivered by Tanzanian producers to exporting companies. During a group discussion, a worker stated that "the employer did not pay me by claiming that the exporter had deceived him [...] [The exporter] paid only a small part of the kilos delivered, so Jonathan [the farmer] did not have the money to pay us in full".³⁴ Another worker said she spent "three months asking for the money I deserved" and was later compensated with corn. In other words, some farmers - particularly 'small horticulturists' - cannot pay their workers because they might get a minimum or no income from selling beans or peas, especially during the high season, when production in Tanzania reaches its peak due to the good weather conditions but, at the same time, European demand is at its lowest. European supermarkets and large retailers *de facto* impose their conditions throughout the supply chain, and the risks of production are passed on by exporters to (Tanzanian) producers, by specifying the timing and methods of farming and, above all, selecting only a portion of the produce delivered (the best-looking beans and peas) without paying the scrap to farmers, even when it would be in compliance with Global Gap export standards.³⁵ In turn, farmers - forced or not - can pass on losses to the last, weakest and least visible link in the supply chain, delaying or even defaulting on payments to their *pieceworkers*. Informal agricultural workers thus take over the unbalanced power relations within the new global horticultural value chains.

Conclusion

In recent years the rise of export-oriented horticulture has generated a significant amount of jobs in some sub-Saharan African countries; mainstream literature highlights the positive effects on poverty alleviation and female empowerment through employment generation in foreign farms; other scholars highlight poor working conditions and low wages paid to workers; most critics argue that global horticulture heavily relies on cheap and poor labourers and generates new forms of workers poverty and exploitation. This article focused on the development of the export-oriented horticulture in 'post-socialist' Tanzania, where relevant studies on labour and poverty are lacking. While confirming previous research findings on the accelerated process of social differentiation, the paper showed a mixed picture regarding the effects of export-oriented horticulture on labour and poverty alleviation. Jobs created are largely reserved to 'delicate' and 'fast' young females who can keep the pace with the requirements of powerful buyers – European supermarkets and retailers – in the horticultural value chains. Among these 'selected' females, some get a job with a contract in foreign companies and seem to experience an 'upgrade income mobility' and (moderate) empowerment, but with poor working condition at the workplace; if the latter improved, the creation of such jobs would still be a good driver for poverty reduction. However, this article also showed a significant level of labour informality, casualisation and extreme pauperisation of wage work in global horticulture. Indeed, foreign companies and Tanzanian farmers heavily rely on poorly remunerated and highly exploited informal female labour: even for the most integrated informal labourers, working nearly full time and all-year round in the global horticulture, the income they earn is not enough to get out of poverty. In turn, the development of the export horticultural industry, while offering income opportunities for a minority of the workers, contributes to a process of exploitation of the poorest and enrichment of the richest – exporters, foreign companies and Tanzanian rural capitalists. In conclusion, this article suggests that in order to analyse the impacts of emerging value chains on rural poverty in Tanzania and elsewhere in SSA, it is crucial to look at the informal labour market and the wider (ongoing) processes of socioeconomic change.

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NOTES:

1 - Among these, Senegal, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda recorded the highest growth rates. For export data see the *International Trade Statistics 2001-2020*, "International Trade Centre", n.d.: <http://www.intracen.org/itc/market-info-tools/trade-statistics/>.

2 - PhD in Global Studies at the Department of Political and Social Sciences of the University of Bologna.

3 - According to the World Bank (WB), 49.1% of the population lives on less than 1.90 US dollars a day (2011 PPP; % of population), see *Poverty Headcount Ratio at \$1.90 a Day - Tanzania*, "The World Bank", n.d.: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.DDAY?locations=TZ>. Latest government data (URT 2019) shows that 26.4% of the population lives below the national 'basic need' poverty line. The incidence of poverty is higher in rural areas (31.3%) than in urban areas (15.8%).

4 - The WB (1996) estimated that at the end of the 1980s about 93% of households owned land below 2 hectares.

5 - Between 2004 and 2015 horticultural export increased from US dollars 46 to about US dollars 500 (URT 2010: 2; TAHA 2016).

6 - In 2013, the region of Arusha was home to 94 agricultural enterprises and the region of Kilimanjaro to 65 enterprises (URT 2016a). According to the latest available census (URT 2016a: 56), about half of the country's paid agricultural workers are in the regions of Arusha and Kilimanjaro (24,519 out of a total of 56,810).

7 - For example, in Meru district 70% of farmers sell their products on the market, about 40% use fertilizers and 35% use insecticides (URT 2016c). At national level, only 15% of farmers uses fertilizers (URT 2016b).

8 - In the 'Northern coffee belt', coffee production declined from 28,000 tons in 1980 to 10,000 tons in 2009 (URT 2012: 9). In the Kilimanjaro region, fruit and vegetable production increased from 19,550 tons in 2000 to almost 35,000 tons in 2014/2015 (URT 2007b; 2012; 2016d). In the Arusha region, the production of tomatoes increased from 7,000 tons in 2002 to 18,000 in 2008 (URT 2007a; 2016c).

9 - Between 2007 and 2015, according to data provided by the Tanzania Investment Center (TIC), the regions of Arusha and Kilimanjaro received the majority of foreign or domestic investment in agriculture exceeding US dollars 150,000. In the Arusha region, 49 agricultural investments worth US dollars 16,500,000 were recorded, generating 8,671 new jobs. In the Kilimanjaro region, 14 agricultural investments worth US dollars 67,000,000 were recorded, generating 3,850 jobs.

10 - Estimate based on data provided by exporters.

11 - Manager of a foreign company, interview, 13 February 2016, Meru District.

12 - Foreign farms employ about 60% of the workforce on a contract basis, while Tanzanian farmers employ only informal workers. Estimation based on data collected from foreign farms, Tanzanian farmers and exporters.

13 - Manager of a Dutch firm, interview, 22 March 2016, Moshi District.

14 - Tanzanian entrepreneur, interview, 5 March 2016, Usa River.

15 - These labourers were included in the sample if they had worked at least once in the global horticulture over the previous 12 months.

16 - In these regions the incidence of poverty calculated on basic needs is significantly higher (between 31.1% and 35.5%) than in the regions of Arusha (24.7%) and Kilimanjaro (10.5%) (URT 2019).

17 - Consumer goods and housing conditions are believed to be more reliable than incomes in verifying socio-economic status, poverty levels and inequalities (Sender, Smith 1990; Cramer *et al.* 2017).

18 - Grid connection or solar panels.

19 - Running water or 'tanks' on the roof or in the grounds surrounding the house.

20 - Bathroom with automatic or 'handmade' drainage.

21 - Tanzanian entrepreneurs earn about 20 million shillings per year (80% of which comes from the sale of French beans), while small farmers earn about 3.5 million. The basic need poverty line has been calculated by the Tanzanian government at 591,840 shillings (URT 2019). Per-capita GDP is estimated to be about 2,400,000 shilling or US dollars 1.050: *GDP per capita (current US\$) - Tanzania*, "The World Bank", n.d.: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?locations=TZ>. Out of a total of 120 farmers interviewed, 8 can be considered as rural entrepreneurs or capitalists. According to data provided by exports, their number in the Meru and Moshi districts can be estimated at 15-20.

22 - Interview, 22 February 2016, Moshi District.

23 - Interview, 13 April 2016, Usa River.

- 24 - Female wage worker during a Focus Group Discussion, 2 April 2016, Usa River.
- 25 - Agricultural workers were asked if they had faced any problems with their employers. Overall, 72% of the workers surveyed said they had faced problems over the last 12 months, with no substantial differences between formal and informal workers.
- 26 - Focus group, 2 April 2016, Usa River.
- 27 - Interview, 11 March 2016, Milala.
- 28 - Interview, 24 March 2016, Arusha.
- 29 - Focus group, 21 April 2016, VECO office, Arusha
- 30 - Interview, 12 April 2016, Kibosho Village. Widows are only employed by Tanzanian farmers. This also reflects the paternalistic relationship between Tanzanian employers and agricultural workers. The same woman pointed out that "Kennedy [an entrepreneur] is a respected person, he takes care of the poor by making us work and we can buy food".
- 31 - Manager of Serengeti Fresh, Interview, 15 April 2016, Arusha.
- 32 - Focus group, 4 April 2016, Arusha.
- 33 - Interview, 17 April 2016, Usa River.
- 34 - Focus group, 26 April 2016, Usa River.
- 35 - This practice is much more relevant among (small-holder) Tanzanian farmers than among foreign farms, which have greater bargaining power vis-à-vis exporters and get less rejects.

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