

# Land Reforms and Rural Transformation in Ethiopia: Insights from 30 years of research

By Stein T. Holden

Professor,

School of Economics and Business,

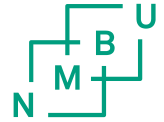
Norwegian University of Life Sciences

Homepage: [www.steinholden.com](http://www.steinholden.com)

# Background



- **The Radical Land Tenure Reform of 1975 and the Derg Period**
  - **All land is state land**
  - All residents in a community have a **constitutional right to access land**
  - **Land was distributed in an egalitarian way** within communities
  - Maximum farm size of 10 ha
  - Land and labor markets were illegal
  - **Land redistributions to maintain the egalitarian land distribution**
- **1991 Change in Government and More Market Friendly Reforms**
  - Land remained state land
  - Land renting and labor markets were allowed
  - Land sales and mortgaging of land remained illegal
  - **Created tenure insecurity due to weak land rights, undermined investment incentives**



# Background, continued

- **First-stage Land Registration and Certification 1998-2010**
  - **Low cost** approach
  - Granted user rights to land into perpetuity
  - Federal and Regional Land Law Reforms
  - Established local Land Administration Committees and Land Courts
  - Land rental restriction adjustments
  - Confiscation of land from households who have been away for more than two years
- **Second-stage land registration and certification**
  - Modern tools, parcel-level certificates with maps

- Studies in different parts of the Ethiopia<sup>N M B U</sup>

Land Redistribution, Tenure Insecurity, and Intensity  
of Production: A Study of Farm Households in  
Southern Ethiopia

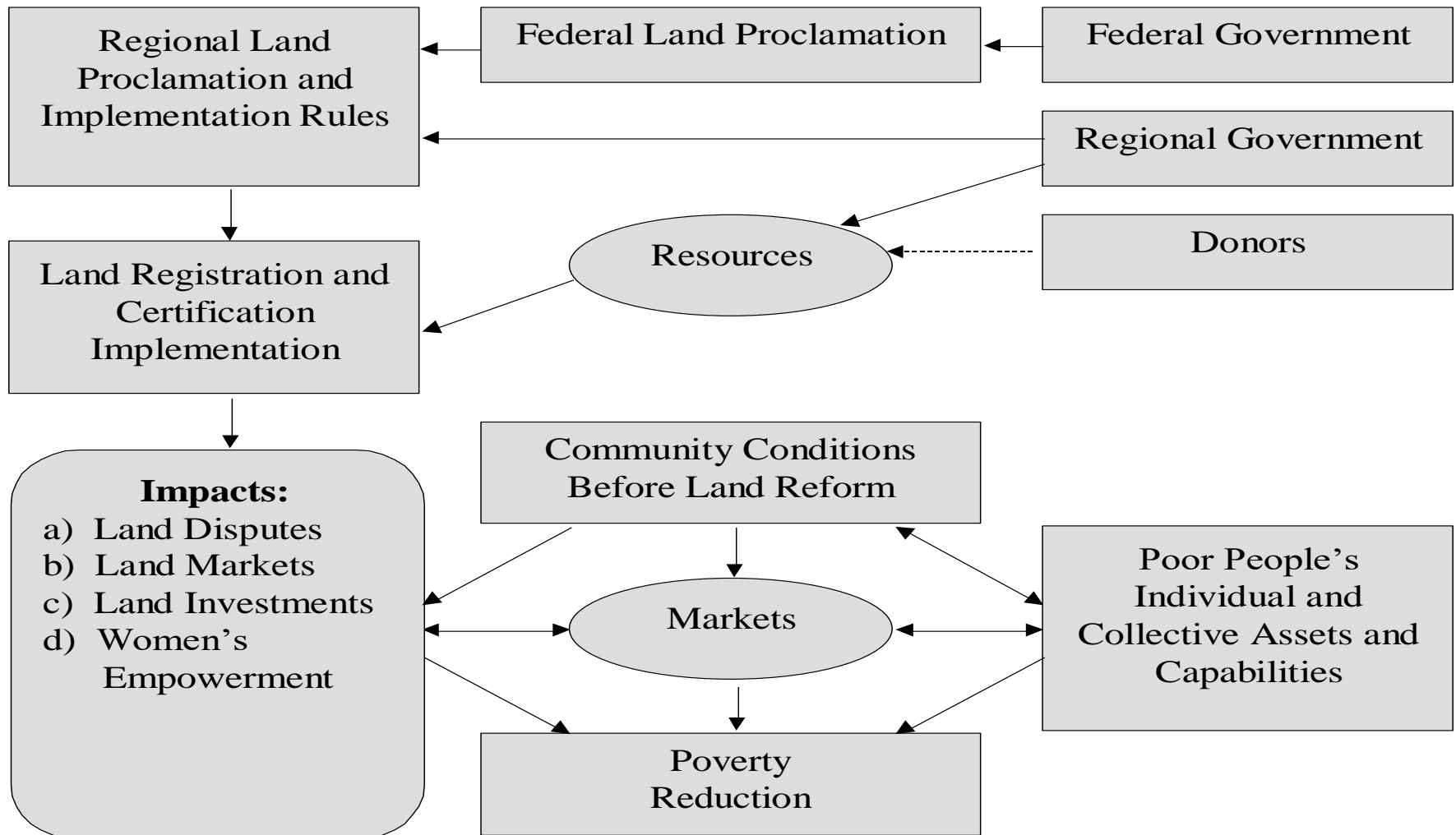
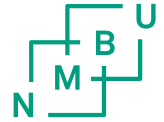
*Stein Holden and Hailu Yohannes*

identified severe tenure insecurity in some locations in  
Southern Ethiopia

Our household survey in Tigray in 1998 found that half of  
the households feared losing land in the next land  
redistribution – while the other half hoped to gain land.

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# Conceptual model for land certification project



# Land certificates in Tigray

- Simple one-page certificates

- Name of head of hh (husband not wife usually)
- Name of location, plotsize, land quality of plots, and names of neighbours



3 9 2005



# Joint land certification of husbands and wives in Southern Ethiopia: **Example certificate:**



**Women – from being the “property” of men to becoming equal co-owner of land?**

**How has this reform influenced women’s position in the household?**



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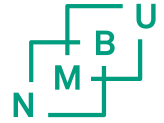
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Rural Land Certification in Ethiopia:  
Process, Initial Impact, and Implications  
for Other African Countries



**Low-cost** land  
certification  
impacts

KLAUS DEININGER, DANIEL AYALEW ALI  
*World Bank, Washington, DC, USA*

STEIN HOLDEN  
*Norwegian University of Life Sciences, Ås, Norway*

and

JAAP ZEVENBERGEN \*  
*Delft University of Technology, Delft, Netherlands*

**IMPACTS OF LOW-COST LAND CERTIFICATION  
ON INVESTMENT AND PRODUCTIVITY**

**STEIN T. HOLDEN, KLAUS DEININGER, AND HOSAENA GHEBRU**

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# Tenure Insecurity, Gender, Low-cost Land Certification and Land Rental Market Participation in Ethiopia

STEIN T. HOLDEN\*, KLAUS DEININGER\*\* & HOSAENA GHEBRU\*

\*Norwegian University of Life Sciences, Norway, \*\*World Bank, Washington DC, USA



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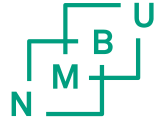
Land Use Policy

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/landusepol](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/landusepol)

Demand for second-stage land certification in Ethiopia: Evidence from household panel data

Sosina Bezu\*, Stein Holden

*School of Economics and Business, Norwegian University of Life Sciences, P.O. Box 5003, 1432 Ås, Norway*



# Can land registration and certification reduce land border conflicts?

By

Stein Holden<sup>1</sup>, Klaus Deininger<sup>2</sup> and Hosaena Ghebru<sup>1</sup>

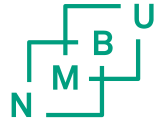
<sup>1</sup>Department of Economics and Resource Management,  
Norwegian University of Life Sciences, Norway

Email: [stein.holden@nmbu.no](mailto:stein.holden@nmbu.no)

<sup>2</sup>The World Bank, Washington, D.C.

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# 12 The Gender Dimensions of Land Tenure Reforms in Ethiopia 1995–2020



**Stein T. Holden\***

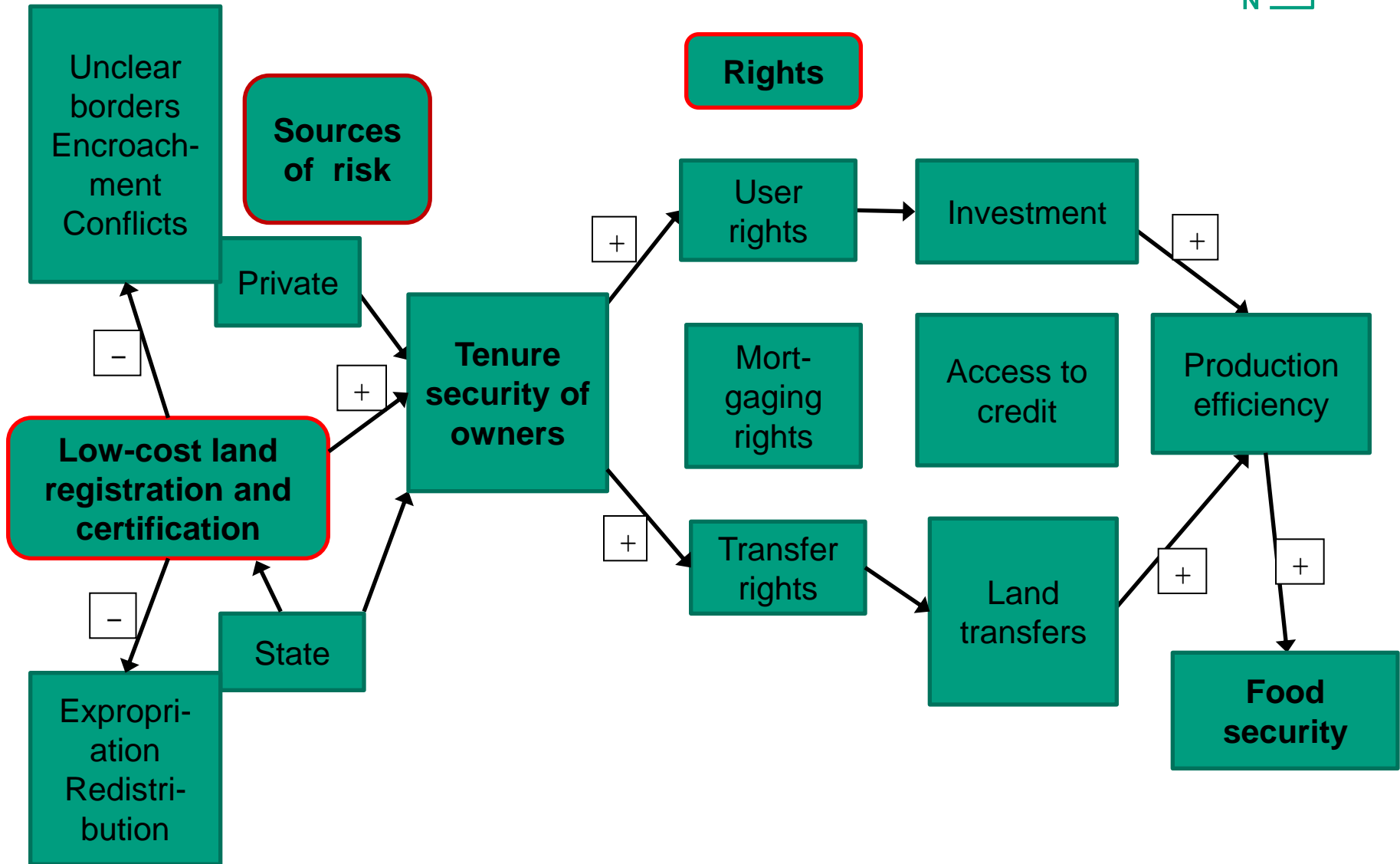
*School of Economics and Business/Centre for Land Tenure Studies,  
Norwegian University of Life Sciences, Ås, Norway*

## The Role of Land Certification in Reducing Gaps in Productivity between Male- and Female-Owned Farms in Rural Ethiopia

Mintewab Bezabih, Stein Holden & Andrea Mannberg

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# Low-cost land registration and certification impacts



the emergence of  
**LAND MARKETS IN AFRICA**

*Impacts on Poverty, Equity, and Efficiency*

edited by *Stein T. Holden,*  
*Keijiro Otsuka & Frank M. Place*

ENVIRONMENT FOR DEVELOPMENT

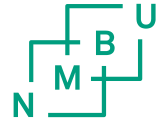
Thomas Sterner, Series Editor

The first systematic attempt to address emerging land markets and their implications for poverty, equity, and efficiency across a number of African countries.

- Revealed that land rental markets
- Are active in many African countries
- Also in customary tenure systems



# The importance of Land Rental Markets for Rural Transformation



Agricultural Economics 37 (2007) 179–188

## Sharecropping efficiency in Ethiopia: threats of eviction and kinship

Menale Kassie<sup>a,b,\*</sup>, Stein Holden<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>*Environmental Economics Policy Forum for Ethiopia, P. O. Box 2479, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*

<sup>b</sup>*Department of Economics and Resource Management P. O. Box 5033, 1432 Ås, Norway*

*Journal of Agricultural Economics*  
doi: 10.1111/1477-9552.12345

July 2007; accepted 26 July 2007

## Variation in Output Shares and Endogenous Matching in Land Rental Contracts: Evidence from Ethiopia

Desta B. Gebrehiwot<sup>1</sup> and Stein T. Holden<sup>1</sup>

## Reverse-Share-Tenancy and Agricultural Efficiency: Farm-Level Evidence from Ethiopia

Hosaena H. Ghebru<sup>a,\*</sup> and Stein T. Holden<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), Washington, DC 20006, USA, and <sup>b</sup>Norwegian University of Life Sciences (UMB), Aas, Norway

**Published by  
Palgrave Macmillan**

**August 2013**

- This book examines the **impact of land tenure reforms on poverty reduction and natural resource management** in countries in Africa and Asia with highly diverse historical contexts
- → **Importance of tenure security**

# Land Tenure Reform in Asia and Africa

*Assessing Impacts on Poverty and  
Natural Resource Management*

Edited by Stein T. Holden,  
Keijiro Otsuka and  
Klaus Deininger



# Tenure security: Essential for food security



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## Global Food Security

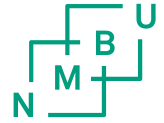
journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/gfs](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/gfs)

Land tenure reforms, tenure security and food security in poor agrarian economies: Causal linkages and research gaps

Stein T. Holden<sup>a,\*</sup>, Hosaena Ghebru<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Centre for Land Tenure Studies/School of Economics and Business, Norwegian University of Life Sciences, P. O. Box 5003, 1432 Ås, Norway

<sup>b</sup> International Food Policy Research Institute, Washington, D. C., USA



# Policy Implications

The roles of land tenure reforms and land markets in the context of population growth and land use intensification in Africa

Stein T. Holden <sup>a,\*</sup>, Keijiro Otsuka <sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> School of Economics and Business/Centre for Land Tenure Studies, Norwegian University of Life Sciences, 1432 Ås, Norway

<sup>b</sup> GRIPS, Tokyo, Japan

## **Policies for Improved Food Security: The Roles of Land Tenure Policies and Land Markets**



**Stein T. Holden**

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# Population growth implications



[r.com/locate/worlddev](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/worlddev)



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*World Development* Vol. 64, pp. 259–272, 2014  
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(<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/>).

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2014.06.013>

## Are Rural Youth in Ethiopia Abandoning Agriculture?

SOSINA BEZU and STEIN HOLDEN\*

*Norwegian University of Life Sciences, Aas, Norway*



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journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/worlddev](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/worlddev)

Farm size and gender distribution of land: Evidence from Ethiopian land registry data

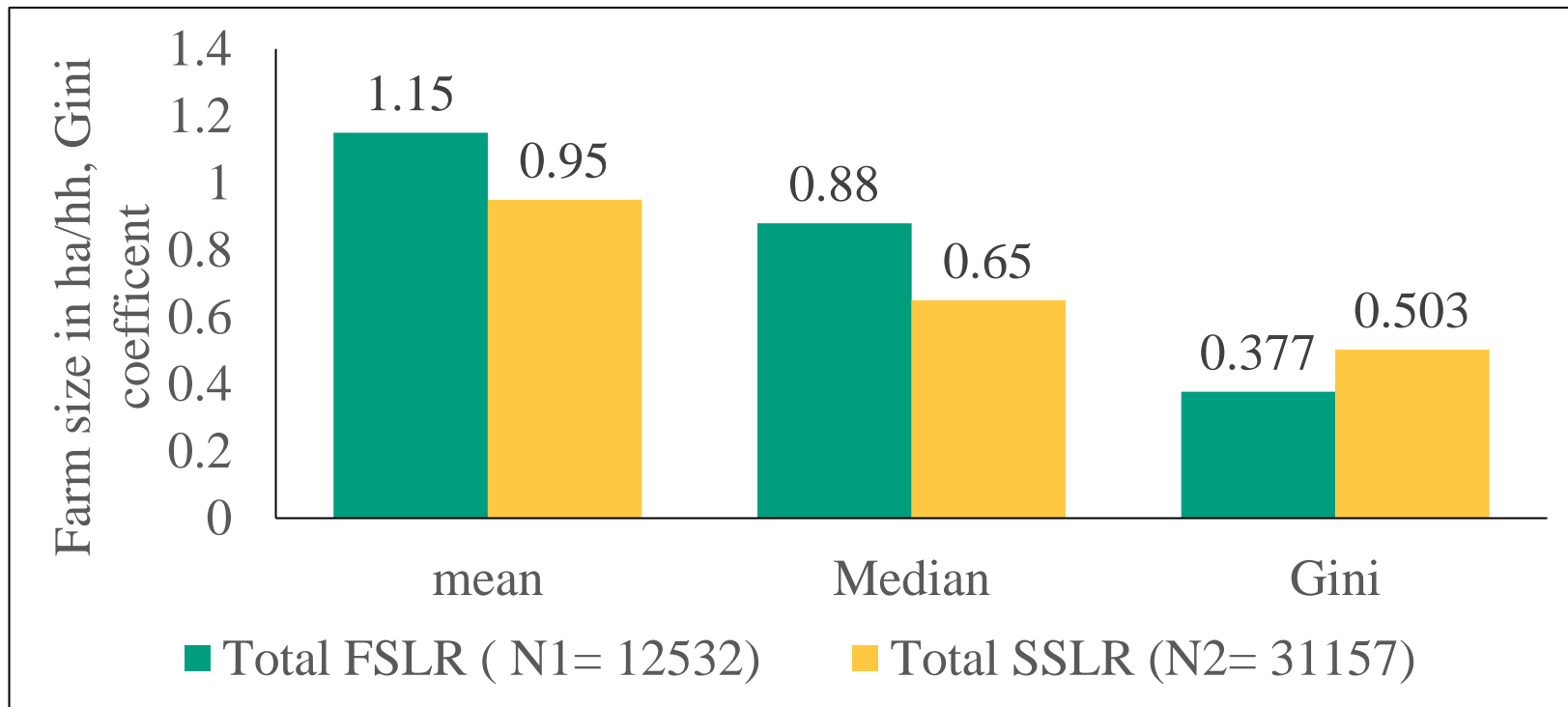
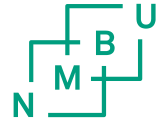
Stein T. Holden<sup>a,\*</sup>, Mesfin Tilahun<sup>a,b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> School of Economics and Business, Norwegian University of Life Sciences, Box 5003, 1432 Ås, Norway

<sup>b</sup> Mekelle University, Department of Economics, P. O. Box 451, Mekelle, Ethiopia



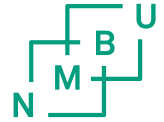
# *Changes from 1998 (First Stage Land Reg.) to 2016 (Second Stage Land Reg.)*



*Farm size distributions in 4 districts in Tigray*

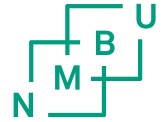
*Source: GoE Land Registry Data with own calculations.*

# Youth migration



- **Rural population growth** has contributed to **shrinking farm sizes and land fragmentation**: The smallest farms being unable to provide a secure and sustainable livelihood for rural households.
- **Household food security is therefore threatened** and chronic poverty a consequence unless the population pressure can be reduced through migration and provision of alternative non-farm sources of income or more productive technologies such as irrigation
- **Accelerated outmigration** from the most densely populated areas as a larger share of the households pass a threshold level of land available per capita (Wollaita: 30% of youth outmigrated in 5 years: 2007-2012)
- **Youth employment and livelihoods a most important priority: Improve youth land access is one option**

# Land-poor youth and land access



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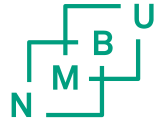
## Are land-poor youth accessing rented land? Evidence from northern Ethiopia

Stein T. Holden<sup>a</sup>, Mesfin Tilahun<sup>a, b, \*</sup>

<sup>a</sup> School of Economics and Business, Norwegian University of Life Sciences, Box 5003, 1432 Ås, Norway

<sup>b</sup> Mekelle University, Department of Economics, P. O. Box 451, Mekelle, Ethiopia

# Land allocation to rural landless youth: The Youth Business Group model



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journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/worlddev](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/worlddev)

## The importance of Ostrom's Design Principles: Youth group performance in northern Ethiopia

Stein T. Holden<sup>a,\*</sup>, Mesfin Tilahun<sup>a,b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> School of Economics and Business/Centre for Land Tenure Studies, Norwegian University of Life Sciences, P.O. Box 5003, 1432 Ås, Norway

<sup>b</sup> Mekelle University, Department of Economics, P.O. Box 451, Mekelle, Ethiopia

The business groups largely organize themselves according to Ostrom's Design Principles

Their performance is positively correlated with the number of her principles they follow: **Ostrom's Invisible Hand** 😊

*Routledge Research Companions in Business and Economics*

# BEHAVIOURAL ECONOMICS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

A RESEARCH COMPANION

Edited by

Alessandro Buccioli, Alessandro Tavoni  
and Marcella Veronesi

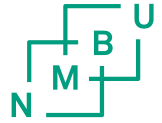
- 4 **How are social preferences of youth related to their motivations to invest in environmental conservation (local public goods)?**

STEIN T. HOLDEN AND MESFIN TILAHUN

55

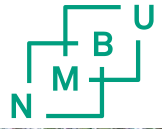


# Youth group with exclosure area: from grazing land to fruit trees (with irrigation)





# Youth group with enclosure with beehives and bee fodder and eucalyptus enrichment

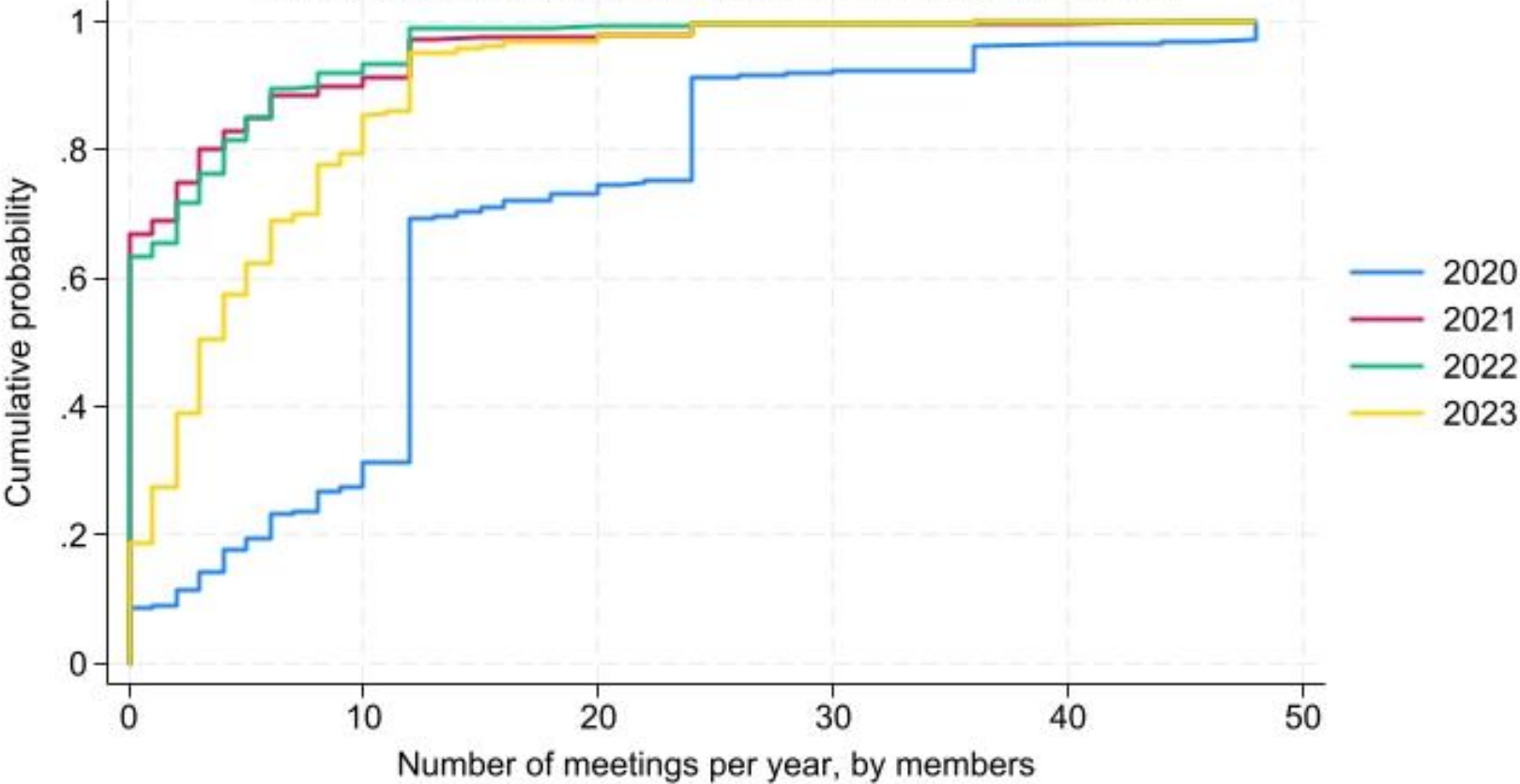




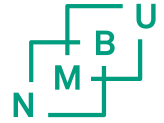
# Group meeting participation before, during, and after the war



Business group meeting participation by members by year  
War started November 2020 and ended December 2022



# Empowering women in business



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## World Development Perspectives

journal homepage: [www.sciencedirect.com/journal/world-development-perspectives](http://www.sciencedirect.com/journal/world-development-perspectives)

### Mobile phones, leadership and gender in rural business groups

Stein T. Holden<sup>a</sup>, Mesfin Tilahun<sup>a,b,\*</sup>



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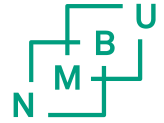
## Journal of Behavioral and Experimental Economics

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/jbee](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/jbee)

### Are risk preferences explaining gender differences in investment behavior? ☆

Stein T. Holden<sup>a,\*</sup>, Mesfin Tilahun<sup>a,b</sup>

# Climate shocks and risk-taking



Environmental and Resource Economics  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10640-024-00850-5>

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## Can Climate Shocks Make Vulnerable Subjects More Willing to Take Risks?

Stein T. Holden<sup>1</sup>  · Mesfin Tilahun<sup>1,2</sup>

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# Fifty Years of Research on Land Tenure Policies and Land Markets: What Are the Major Lessons?

•Chapter by [Stein T. Holden](#)

•Open Access

•First Online: 02 December 2022

•pp 115–126

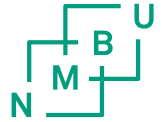
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**[Book: Agricultural Development in Asia and Africa](#)**

# Policy recommendations based on the studies in four regions I



- **Allow land rental markets to work!** This is good for poverty reduction and land use efficiency! Ethiopian laws impose too many restrictions on land rental markets and these restrictions can be counter-productive if enforced
    - Ensure conservation and investment incentives on rented land
  - **Do more to help motivated youth to access land:** The Youth Business Group model implemented in Tigray provides interesting lessons
-