PhD Project: The effects of an African biomass expansion on labor markets and incomes

Background
The enthusiasm for green-economy and deliberate policy directives have resulted in an increasing demand for biomass\(^1\) base materials. Although this drive could result in crisis such as food insecurity, a balanced and coordinated biomass activity is the key to mitigating the crisis that may result. Consequently, there are successive studies aimed at minimising shocks from the demand side but with little focus on the labour market at the production segment of the biomass web.

We envisage that a positive effect of expanded and efficient biomass production on food security is transmitted to a large extent via labour markets. Even in the eventualities where primary availability of food is decreased, improve incomes and purchasing power of poor households is possible. Part of the increased income will originate from higher farm production. The other part will be generated by direct and indirect employment effects of growth in the non-food biomass sector.

Objectives
Combining both time series and cross-sectional data from Ghana and Nigeria, we analyse the trends in the contribution of the biomass sector to the national economy. Second, we analyse the performance of the biomass sector as compared to other sectors during economic growth and structural change. With a focus on farm household labour, we describe farm household food processing (FHFP) activities as an immediate diversification strategy for agriculture labour. Further, empirical analysis is done to identify the factors that determine the likelihood and intensity of FHFP participation. By this, economic development and household socio-economic factors explaining labour transition to small scale agro-processing are identified.

\(^1\) Biomass is defined as any biological material from living or recently living organisms.