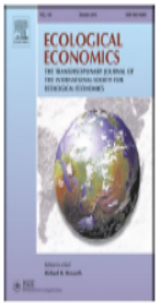
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Analysis

A curse or a blessing? Population pressure and soil quality in Sub-Saharan Africa: Evidence from rural Uganda



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ABSTRACT

Population pressure on farmlands can have two opposing effects on soil quality. It can negatively affect soil quality due to more frequent and intensive use of farmlands; it can induce transition of farming methods towards more intensive farming in which more fertilisers are used in order to increase productivity of the available small farmlands. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the net effect on soil quality is likely to be negative given the region's low fertiliser use. However, recent studies show evidence of agricultural intensification in regions with high population pressure. It is important to analyse the extent of soil degradation and its relationship with population pressure. We use unique decade-long panel data containing lab-tested soil measures from Uganda to examine the effect of population pressure on soil quality. We find that population pressure and soil quality are strongly negatively correlated. We, however, find no strong evidence with regard to the positive correlation between population pressure and agricultural intensification. The findings indicate that farmers in Uganda have yet to change their farming practices to respond to increasing land scarcity resulting from population growth.