

# SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF FARMERS LANDLESS HOUSEHOLDS IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF BUKAVU (DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO)

## 1. Introduction

Within the territory of the archdiocese of Bukavu, more than 80% of the population live in rural areas and mainly rely on agriculture to make their livelihood. However, according to several sources, poverty in the Congolese rural areas is due, among others, to the difficulty for the peasants to access to land. Indeed, peasants are obliged to hire land to local elites and large landowners.

The originality of this research is to deal with the socio-economic impacts of the large land areas managed by the archdiocese of Bukavu, partly coming from gifts from the local traditional authorities in order to develop activities in favour of the local population. So, the goal of the study is to examine the land availability and the poverty situation of the rural population in the territories of Idjwi, Kabare, Kahele and Walungu in South-Kivu.



Figure 1. Map of South-Kivu  
Source: De Saint Moulin et al. (2025)

## 2. Materials and Methods

A survey was implemented through a pre-tested questionnaire to a sample of 120 households, randomly selected among farmers who hired land of the archdiocese of Bukavu within the four abovementioned territories. The collected data, among others, concerned the size and origin of the cultivated plots, the household composition, the main income sources and the net agricultural income. The last one was compared to the guaranteed minimum salary and to the poverty threshold in the area.

## 3. Results and discussion

It appears that 71.7 % of the income of rural households come from agriculture, while these households generally manage less than 0.5 ha (Table 1), of which 63% belong to large landowners, including the archdiocese of Bukavu. The latest provides nearly 70% of the land hired by these smallholders (Table 2).

Table 1. Cultivated area per household (ha)

| Territory | n  | Sum   | Mean | Standard deviation | Min  | Max  | VC (%) |
|-----------|----|-------|------|--------------------|------|------|--------|
| Idjwi     | 30 | 9.82  | 0.33 | 0.06               | 0.23 | 0.43 | 18.4   |
| Kabare    | 30 | 13.26 | 0.44 | 0.12               | 0.29 | 0.76 | 26.6   |
| Kahele    | 30 | 7.94  | 0.26 | 0.03               | 0.20 | 0.32 | 13.1   |
| Walungu   | 30 | 10.30 | 0.34 | 0.08               | 0.19 | 0.50 | 23.2   |

Table 2. Land origin

| n   | Arch. Bukavu | Other owner | Own land | Total area (ha) |
|-----|--------------|-------------|----------|-----------------|
| 120 | 18.46        | 7.95        | 15.35    | 41.76           |
|     | 44.20%       | 19.20%      | 36.76%   | 100%            |

Source: Field survey (2024)

The agricultural income varies from 0.90 to 2.82 US\$/household/day (Figure 2 and Table 3). All surveyed households have a very low income, far below the guaranteed minimum salary (4.99 US\$), which is itself too low to satisfy the basic needs of the Congolese population.

Table 3. Daily agricultural income per household per territory (US\$)

| Territory | n  | Sum   | Mean | Standard deviation | Min  | Max  | VC (%) |
|-----------|----|-------|------|--------------------|------|------|--------|
| Idjwi     | 30 | 59.77 | 1.99 | 0.19               | 1.60 | 2.37 | 9.5    |
| Kabare    | 30 | 25.55 | 1.50 | 0.24               | 1.22 | 2.05 | 16.0   |
| Kahele    | 30 | 11.73 | 2.35 | 0.44               | 1.86 | 2.82 | 18.7   |
| Walungu   | 30 | 35.05 | 1.17 | 0.12               | 0.90 | 1.44 | 10.6   |

Source: Field survey (2024)

With 8-9 persons per household on average, the income per capita is even much lower than the poverty threshold of 1.25 US\$/capita/day (Figure 3 and Table 4).

Table 4. Daily agricultural income per capita per territory

| Territory | n  | Sum  | Mean | Standard deviation | Min  | Max  | VC (%) |
|-----------|----|------|------|--------------------|------|------|--------|
| Idjwi     | 30 | 8.05 | 0.27 | 0.07               | 0.17 | 0.42 | 25.4   |
| Kabare    | 30 | 3.16 | 0.19 | 0.04               | 0.13 | 0.26 | 19.3   |
| Kahele    | 30 | 1.36 | 0.27 | 0.05               | 0.21 | 0.35 | 18.5   |
| Walungu   | 30 | 4.51 | 0.15 | 0.02               | 0.11 | 0.20 | 15.9   |

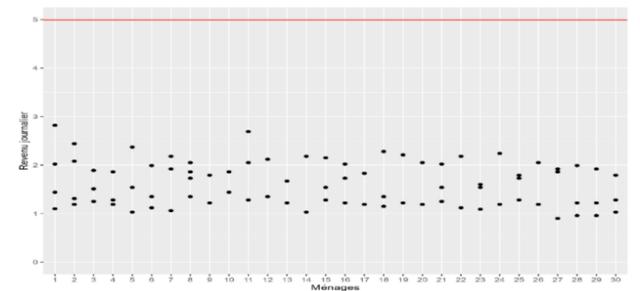


Figure 2. Agricultural income of farm households compared to the guaranteed minimum salary (US\$). Source: Field survey (2024)

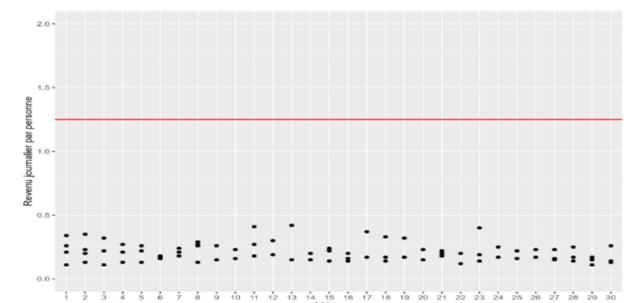


Figure 3. Agricultural income/head for household's members compared to the poverty threshold of 1.25 US\$. Source: Field survey (2024)

## 4. Conclusion

It is clear that the rural population in South-Kivu do not have access to large enough agricultural areas per household and that, as a consequence, they stay in a situation of severe poverty. Rural development has to be supported by active and strong public policies, but landowners like the archdiocese of Bukavu also have a role to play in order to improve the wealth of the rural population.

## 5. REFERENCES

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