

FOREWORD

Introduction to Special Issue on “Social Justice in Agricultural and Environmental Economics”

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If an individual cannot consume harmless and healthy foods in a way that is socially just, then this individual faces the universal threat of food insecurity (Pinstrup-Andersen, 2009); however, microcosmic matters in agriculture may be helpful in finding global solutions. Whereas, addressing food insecurity sheds light on public health problems in weight control, nutritional monitoring, and chronic and life-threatening illnesses (Campbell, 1991; Gunderson and Ziliak, 2015; Seligman et al., 2007, 2010), which are generally attributable to economic disparities (Coleman-Jenson et al. 2018). The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted social injustices in agriculture and the environment. For example, food insecurity has increased as a result of labor market pressures, leading to joblessness, income losses, and supply chain disruptions (United Nations 2020; Cardoso et al., 2021; Udmale et al., 2020). Moreover, varying aspects of agricultural disparities have warranted much attention because of their global implications for food insecurity (O'Hara and Toussaint, 2021; Power et al., 2020; Battersby, 2020; Liverpool-Tasie et al., 2021). In addition, COVID-19 has put environmental resources to task and encouraged concerns regarding value chain production and cross border integration which support a more globally just agricultural existence (Al-Saidi and Hussein, 2021).

To address issues surrounding social justice in agricultural and environmental economics, this special issue brings together seven articles that are organized around two themes. The first set of articles addresses farms, cooperatives, agricultural policies, and the environment. Three of these articles study developing country contexts – Nigeria, Uganda, and Senegal – while the fourth focuses on a developed country context – Japan. The second set of articles study racial and income disparities in food access, obesity, and the environment. All these articles focus on a developed country context – the USA.

Starting with the first theme:

1. Odozi and Oyelere use a nationally representative panel data set for Nigeria from 2010 to 2015, in combination with armed conflict data, to estimate the average effect of exposure to violent conflict on a household's farm labor supply. They find that exposure to violent conflict significantly reduces total family labor supply hours in agriculture. This decline in family labor supply is driven by a significant decline in the household head's total number of hours on the farm.

2. Hill et al. introduce two randomized controlled trial (RCT) interventions aimed at promoting collective commercialization in Ugandan farmer cooperatives: cash on delivery and information on sales. They find that providing cash on delivery increases the probability that a member chooses to sell through the group, and hence the volumes bulked by each group. This increase in volumes appears to have enabled groups to secure higher prices for their produce. No significant effect could be found for providing information on sales.
3. Bernard et al. design an RCT intervention aimed at promoting the functioning of, particularly trust within, farmer cooperatives in Senegal: training group members and/or leaders with respect to pros and cons of collective commercialization. Their design allows identifying both direct treatment effects of having participated in the training and spillover effects on farmers who did not partake. Looking at different measures of trust in leaders' competence and motives and of trust in members, they find that participating in the training significantly enhances both trust in leaders and trust in members. For trust in leaders, they also find a strong spillover effect.
4. Sasaki et al. conduct farm-level simulations on the environmental impacts of agricultural policy instruments in Japan. They find that all types of agri-environmental payments achieve the intended environmental benefits. However, market price support policies do not inevitably increase nitrogen runoff or greenhouse gas emissions. This is because paddy fields themselves tend to function as water purifiers and biodiversity nurseries. They go on to discuss that the direction and magnitude of the policy impacts are an empirical matter which should be considered carefully at the local level.

This first set of articles thus contributes to a vast literature on international agricultural justice issues. This includes smallholder farmers in developing and developed countries who face the added susceptibility of climate change because of the existing institutional and infrastructural challenges (Lindoso et al., 2012; Omerkhil et al., 2020). For example, threats to well-being and food security are increased in these areas because of increased exposure to environmental changes (Alam et al., 2017; FAO et al., 2019; Faisal et al., 2021). This exposure enhances the likelihood of disease, frequency of occurrence and hazard level associated with floods and droughts, reduced crop production and yield, as well as livestock mortality (Faisal et al., 2020, 2021; Harvey et al., 2014; Thornton et al., 2014). When developing countries in particular look to improve agriculture, however, smallholder investment and land ownership can be tricky in certain areas (Wang et al., 2021). So, focusing on those key issues in addition to environmental support can be a key tool for equalizing agricultural development and growth worldwide. This can be especially true for countries facing the resulting issues of the water, food, energy, and waste nexus which are constantly at odds with population control, natural resource availability, sanitation issues (Petrariu et al., 2021), unsustainable consumption, and production patterns (Santeramo and Lamonaca, 2021; Dinu et al., 2020; Istudor et al., 2019). To this end, one goal of this special issue is to address the gaps in international agriculture and environmental disparities in order to highlight social justice, or injustice, as a global problem.

Turning to the second theme of articles on racial and income disparities in the USA:

5. Ware et al. examine whether racial disparities exist in travel distances and travel times to grocery stores using data from Seattle, WA. They find that disparities in travel distance and travel time to supermarkets vary with the percentage of specific

- racial and ethnic populations. Greater Asian populations in a census tract are associated with shorter travel distance to the grocery store, low income, and low vehicle access. For the Hispanic population, a greater percentage in a census tract increases the predicted travel distances and travel times to grocery stores. Greater income in tracts with more Hispanic population is associated with a shorter distance, and those tracts with more Asian population are associated with a longer distance, possibly due to cultural differences in diet.
6. Durfee et al. use baseline data from an observational study to estimate the determinants of racial and gender disparities in obesity. Samples of low-income workers in Minneapolis, MN, and Raleigh, NC, reveal that respondents in Minneapolis have lower body mass indices (BMIs) than respondents in Raleigh. There are large, statistically significant race and gender effects in estimates of BMI that explain most of the disparity between the two cities. Accounting for intersectionality – the joint impacts of being Black and a woman – reveals that almost all the BMI gaps between Black women in Minneapolis and Raleigh can be explained by age and education differences.
 7. Mohr et al. review articles identifying Superfund sites in three national newspapers from 1982 to 1984. They find that articles almost never identify the race of nearby residents. Based on sites receiving disproportionate coverage, readers might conclude that Superfund generally affected White, working-class families, but results do not support this narrative. In a pooled sample, neither race nor income predicts the number of times a site gets mentioned. When the sample is partitioned by newspaper or by each newspaper's coverage of nearby sites, a positive relationship emerges between the proportion of Hispanic or non-White residents and the number of articles about a site. They go on to discuss this apparent contradiction.

This second set of articles thus contributes to a vast literature on racial and income disparities, particularly as those pertain to food access, diet and obesity, and environmental justice. In fact, behavioral food demands and agricultural supply chains have become important for the social justice perspective in agriculture. If teaching healthy food habits has a limited impact on sustainable demand for healthy food (Janda et al. 2021), then areas where food worries, supplemental assistance, poor access to healthy food options, and environmental health concerns are insurmountable experience institutional barriers to agricultural demand (Clay and Rogus, 2021; Wolfson and Leung CW, 2020 (1 and 2); Niles et al. 2020; Rosas et al. 2022). On the other hand, resolving the agricultural supply chain issue requires addressing other institutional factors. Such factors include increased and localized availability of digital shopping, farmers' markets as well as grocery stores with fruits and vegetables in urban areas (Cummins et al. 2020; Hu et al., 2021; Brown and Miller, 2008). Meanwhile, the aim of socially and environmentally effective supply chain is to improve accessibility to agriculture as well as encourage fresh food options and overall good health in circular food economies (Hu et al., 2021; Li et al., 2014) without labor supply concerns (Varshney et al., 2020; Cardoso et al., 2021), especially where the end-product is crucial to low-income areas (Allcott et al., 2017). Some localized innovations of urban food economies in the USA relate food to green infrastructure, training and testing facilities for urban agriculture, and improved public health outcomes (Li et al., 2014). In addition, instituting circular food economies can demand new technologies, new forms of knowledge production (Rip, 200), sociotechnical change (Kemp et al., 1998), and new institutions (Henrysson and Hendrickson, 2021). In this case, this special issue's stance is that improvements in food economies are inextricably linked to the

environmental, physical social, and cultural context of local communities (Stuiver and O’hara, 2021) and can undoubtedly improve agricultural realities in the USA.

In addition, environmental injustice has contributed to the lack of good health and hardy well-being for Blacks, Hispanics, and other racial minorities in the USA. To this end, the special issue addresses how localized waste can encourage a platform for social justice reform as well. Since the late 1970s and early 1980s, relationships among, race, poverty, and environmental contaminants have been nationally recorded and studied (Bullard, 1983; US GAO, 1983; Commission for Racial Justice, United Church of Christ). Legislative inclusion, thoughtful exposures to contaminants, and improved housing options can support disproportionate exposure to environmental pollutants (Banzhaf et al., 2019). To further expose the utilization of environmental justice among all races, this special issue offers a study on race in relation to Superfund.

In conclusion, the articles in this special issue suggest that agricultural, food, and environmental disparities continue to exist, both in developing and developed country contexts. Moreover, such disparities are associated with race, gender, and income. So, additional research is needed to further understand the types of policies that would structurally address social justice issues generally, but particularly when it concerns agriculture and the environment.

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