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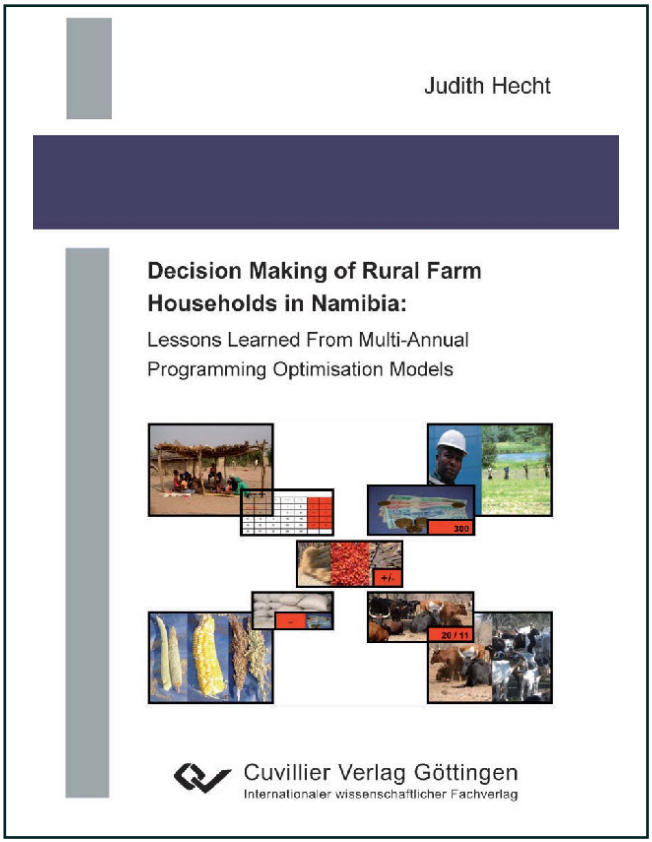
Decision Making of Rural Farm Households in Namibia: Lessons Learned From Multi-Annual Programming Optimisation Models



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2 Namibia and Its Kavango Region

As an overall goal, this study aims to construct a bio-economic model of northeastern Namibia to analyse optimal land use strategies. Hence, this chapter commences with a rough description of geographic and socioeconomic aspects in Namibia. Subsequently, a lucid picture is drawn of the Kavango Region. Its livelihood and farming system is addressed in a third part. Within the Kavango Region, peasant farmers' rather risk-averse behaviour leads to a high differentiation in farming activities. These activities are one building block of optimal land use strategies. Hence, a first sketch of the farming system helps to understand a) the applied theoretical modelling approach (Chapter 3) and b) the scaling of parameter levels used in the model (Chapter 4). Finally, this chapter closes with an outline of major environmental and socioeconomic threats.

2.1 Namibia

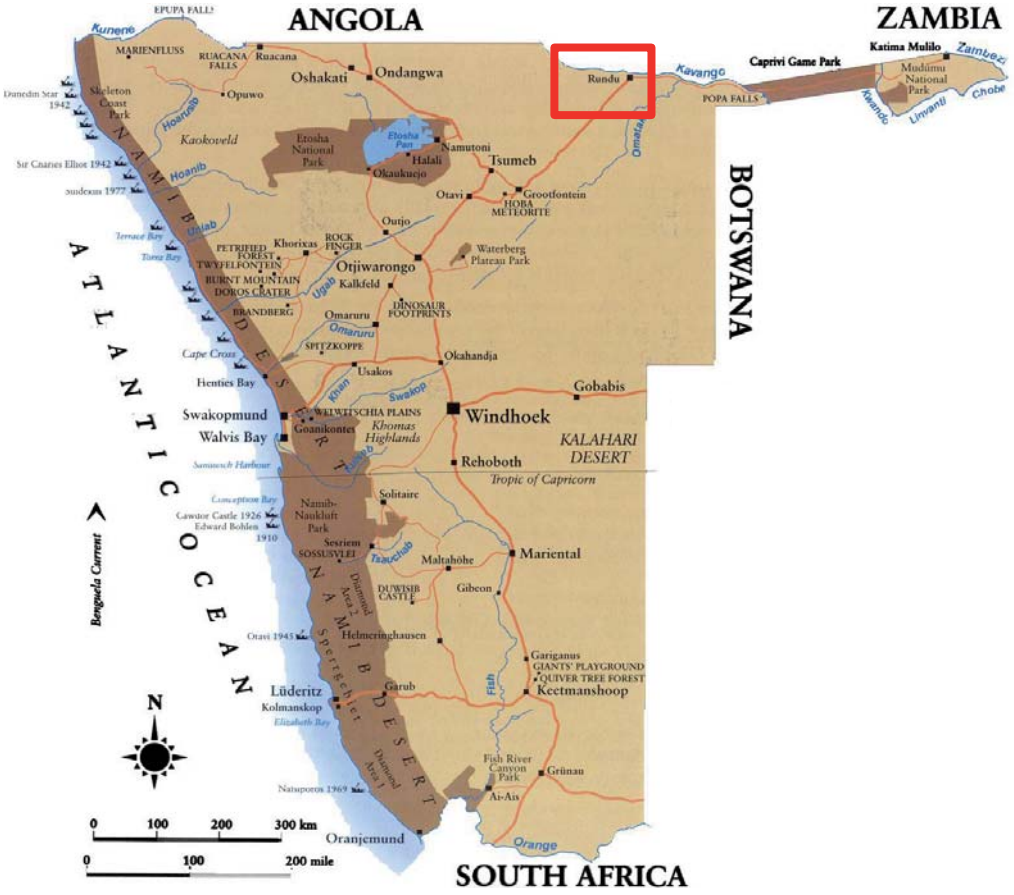
At the end of the 19th century, Namibia was colonised by German settlers. In 1915, colonial power was transferred from Germany to South Africa (Matsaert, 1996: 3), and in 1990, Namibia became independent (Matsaert, 1996: 5). Generally, Namibia is known as one of the driest countries in southern Africa. Rains show regional variation (Schneiderat, 2008: 1) with a mean annual rainfall of 270 mm (Kojwang, 2000: 5). Nonetheless, Namibia produces considerable amounts of woody biomass (FAO, 2000: 1).

2.1.1 Location, land cover and land distribution

Namibia is located in the southern section of the African continent, on the Atlantic coast. It is bordered by Angola to the north, South Africa to the south, Botswana to the east and the South Atlantic Ocean to the west (Figure 2.1). Namibia has five important geographical areas: the Central Plateau, the Namib Desert, the Kalahari Desert, the Caprivi Strip and the Kaokoveld. With the Caprivi Strip, it also borders Zambia and is in touch with Zimbabwe.

Principal vegetation types of Namibia can be divided into savannahs, desert vegetation and dry woodlands (Sweet and Bruke, 2001: 4.1). This indicates that most of Namibia's land resources are suitable for only extensive use (Ashley, 1996: 2). As can be seen in Figure 2.2, cultivation of land is limited to about 6.4 % of the total area. Savannahs and forests are dominant land cover types. Forest resources, which cover more than 20 % of Namibia's area, support the majority of Namibians by supplying energy and building ma-

terials. Further, wooded environments provide browsing and grazing, which underpin livestock farming (Kojwang, 2000: 3).



Source: Modified from FAO (2009).

Figure 2.1: Map of Namibia

Namibia is in general one of the most sparsely populated countries on the African continent. Its population of about 1.7 million people lives on an area of 830,000 km². However, land allocation is unevenly distributed within the country. The majority of Namibians are confined to the North on communally owned land that has to be shared by 60 – 70 % of the entire population (Kojwang, 2000: 14).

Figure 2.3 shows land cover shares under different property rights regimes in Namibia. Approximately 36.5 million hectares, representing 44 % of the total land, continues to be held under freehold title by approximately 6,500 farmers (Kojwang, 2000: 10). Together they shape the commercial farming sector (Ashley, 1996: 2). Non-freehold areas and communal land areas cover slightly less land – 33.4 million hectares, or 41 % of the total land area (Sweet and Burke, 2002). Though owned by the state, communal communities allow for user rights (Ashley, 1996: 2). The remaining 15 % is state-owned land, including conservation areas (Sweet and Burke: 2002). The latter represent about 8 % of the