

Geographisches Kolloquium



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Reinterpreting how forests and trees support people's dietary quality in Africa

Current agrifood systems are failing to deliver nutritious and affordable food for all as 83% of the population in Sub-Saharan Africa is unable to afford a healthy diet. Inadequate intake of fruits and vegetables is a key component of low-quality diets. Trees present a promising avenue as they can be a source of nutrient-rich fruits and leafy vegetables. In my ERC project FORESTDIIET, we have examined how trees – both in forests and on farms – affect people's dietary quality in multiple African countries. We have done so using a unique approach combining broad-scale data from multiple countries with detailed in-depth work in Malawi and Tanzania. Our in-depth work resulted in a highly interdisciplinary dataset with ~1000 households combining survey data on food consumption from detailed 24-hr dietary recall surveys (conducted twice within one week) in both the dry and wet seasons, socioeconomic dimensions, forest use, and agricultural land use with mapping of tree cover in people's surroundings. In the process, we have found that rural people's diets (e.g., intake of key micronutrients such as zinc, vitamin A, and iron) benefit from having trees in their surroundings, controlling for key biophysical and social factors assumed to influence diets. In this talk, I will present the main findings from FORESTDIIET. I will also discuss how the results showcase a new paradigm of promising avenues to reduce malnutrition in Africa, given that the current narrative on achieving food security is focused on intensifying production of staple crops at the expense of both environmental and human health.

Erwin-Schrödinger Zentrum
Rudower Chaussee 26
Raum: 0'307
15:00 Uhr c.t

