Adoption and Socioeconomic Impacts of E-Learning Platforms on Agricultural Extension Services Among Smallholder Farmers in Northern Ethiopia,

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Abstract

The adoption of e-learning platforms in agricultural extension services has gained traction globally as a means to enhance knowledge dissemination and farmer education. In particular, the use of such platforms among smallholder farmers in Northern Ethiopia is an area that requires further exploration given its potential to bridge geographical and socioeconomic divides. The study employs a qualitative research approach, utilising semi-structured interviews with 50 smallholder farmers who have access to e-learning platforms, as well as focus group discussions with extension officers. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and analysed using thematic content analysis. A key finding is that the adoption rates of e-learning platforms among smallholder farmers vary significantly based on their socio-economic backgrounds, with a higher proportion (60%) of farmers from lower-income households adopting these platforms compared to those from middle-income groups (45%). The study concludes that while e-learning platforms offer promising avenues for agricultural extension services in northern Ethiopia, there is an urgent need for tailored strategies to address the varying adoption rates and socio-economic impacts. Recommendations include developing culturally relevant content, enhancing digital literacy among farmers, and integrating these platforms into existing farmer education programmes to maximise their effectiveness and reach wider segments of the population.

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