

Climate change exacerbates problems of subsistence farmers, but is not the main cause thereof

- A case study from Northern Vanuatu

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PhD Student: Danny Nef (danny.nef@usys.ethz.ch)
Supervisors: Michael Stauffacher, Pius Krütli (TdLab),
Johan Six (Institute of Agricultural Sciences)

Rational of the Study: **Subsistence-based livelihoods in the Pacific are particularly vulnerable to climate change.** While this has rightly attracted much attention within academia and beyond, **other drivers of change receive far less attention.** This is particularly notable as there is a variety of shocks and trends that are not necessarily triggered by or related to climate change but contribute significantly to the increase in vulnerability of local livelihoods. Neglecting these drivers entails the **risk of a premature and possibly false attribution of problems and challenges to climate change.** Consequently, interventions might be inefficient or even misdirected and potentially have a tendentious influence on local discourse and perception.



First insights: During initial interviews with local farmers, it was widely argued that many of the problems encountered are a direct result of climate change. However, the subsequent participatory analysis of these findings has shown that **only for very few of these problems climate change is actually likely to be a direct cause** thereof. Instead, problems in pursuing livelihood strategies were increasingly attributed by participants to own actions rather than external factors. In particular, **unsustainable and improper management practices** were identified as being responsible in many cases for compromising the effectiveness of local gardens and with that the stability of livelihood strategies. Current local initiatives, however, neglect these reasons and their causes and continue focusing on climate change.

