

Abstract

Increasing smallholder productivity is a major goal of global development policy. We provide one of the first experimental tests of an implicit, but highly debated assumption underlying typical agricultural modernisation programs: that program effects are persistent post program termination. A large-scale program run by the NGO BRAC in Uganda that sought to stimulate supply and demand for high yielding seed varieties (HYV) and extend improved cultivation practices was randomly phased out from selected villages, allowing us to test persistence over time. We find that while supply of HYV through local, BRAC trained women declined, demand for HYV does not diminish, and farmers shift purchases from BRAC to market sources, indicating a persistent learning effect of the profitability of HYV. We also find no evidence of declines in the practice of improved, and less costly cultivation techniques.