

# PhD seminar

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Nouréini Sayouti

## Pastoralists? Evidence from Niger

with Christophe Muller

Discussants: [Francesca Marchetta](#) and [Pauline Castaing](#)

### ABSTRACT

Agricultural policies in poor rural developing countries typically aim at improving household nutrition by raising households' agricultural profit and presumably their dietary intake as a consequence. However, it is not clear how much of the impact of these policies goes through profit in practice. If the proportion is large, this would confirm the policy orientation and direct the attention of policy makers toward the different financial incentives. Even full activity substitution may occur, which may transform households' lifestyles and access to nutrient sources and thereby affect their nutrition. If, in contrast, the policy impact does not go through profit, then the policy perspective should be adjusted, and a thorough examination and monitoring of its other channels of influence should be undertaken.

Using statistical mediation analysis, we investigate the mechanisms underlying the effect of agricultural policies directed toward pastoralist households on their dietary intake in terms of these direct and indirect (through profit) effects. Based on an agro-pastoral survey conducted in Niger in 2016, the effects of extension services associated with better access to markets are found to be channeled mostly through pastoral profits, while this is not the case for private veterinary services and low-cost livestock feed programs. Extension services may foster specialization in cattle and sheep raising, which incentivizes households to switch toward a nomadic lifestyle and limits their access to cereals, a valuable source of calories. As a result, extension services are found to damage their calorie intake.

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Noureini Sayouti