

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Sustainable Development Goals of No Poverty and Zero Hunger, and Sustainable Agricultural Intensification: The Institutional Perspective

by

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Scholars have proposed global governance as a means of addressing the challenges posed by neoliberal globalization. Current global governance approach, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) framework, symbolizes the pinnacle of development's past evolution and future goals. Both scholarly literature and global public opinion have revealed that SDG2 and SDG1 are prominent on the global agenda. The literature has stressed the relationship between agricultural progress and alleviating poverty and hunger for decades. Sustainable agricultural intensification (SAI) is a fundamental school of thought that proposes practical solutions to challenges afflicting global agriculture. However, the free market economy with minimal state intervention has weaknesses and negative externalities that have paved the way for the rise of institutionalism. Meanwhile, SDG16 promotes the development of responsible and efficient institutions at all governmental levels. This study investigates the likely impacts of institutions on achieving the SDGs of no poverty and zero hunger, with a particular focus on SAI as a mediator variable. The study combined panel data, time series data, and cross-sectional data to achieve its objectives, and a range of robust analytical methods was employed to produce reliable estimates. When applicable, the direct, threshold, mediation, and moderating effects of institutions were investigated utilizing worldwide governance indicators and political risk ratings as a measurement of institutions. The results reveal that institutions have a highly significant direct positive relationship with SDG1 performance. Furthermore, institutions affect SDG1 indirectly via mediating factors—state policy, agricultural productivity, economic growth, and SDG2 performance. With reference to the findings on institutions–SDG2 nexus, institutions showed a positive and highly significant association with SDG2 performance. Furthermore, institutions showed a significant mediating impact on SDG2 performance via agricultural productivity, economic growth and SDG1 performance. SAI has no significant influence on SDG1; however it has a significantly positive impact on SDG2

performance. However, a positive effect on SDG1 is likely if institutions intervene to moderate SAI. Furthermore, the results divulge that institutions do not significantly associate with SAI adoption. Results show that while agricultural development reduces poverty in Sri Lanka, the country's institutions are not. Institutional framework hinders agricultural productivity's ability to reduce poverty. In the long run, Sri Lanka's institutional framework is not favorable to food security and has no moderating influence on agricultural development. Thus, this study offers compelling empirical evidence to demonstrate that strengthening existing institutional framework is integral for achieving SDGs of no poverty and zero hunger.

Keywords: ARDL, FMOLS, institutions, negative externalities, sustainable development goals, sustainable agricultural intensification, 2SLS, 3SLS