

Untangling gender inequalities in economic transition: the social reproduction of work, food and land in Uzbekistan



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The theoretical debate

- **Market transition** entails deeper division of labour through new forms of wage relationships and labour exploitation > *class stratification* (Bernstein, 2010)
- It affects *assets distribution* and *livelihood* diversification (Cousins et al., 2018)
- **Transformation of social reproduction (SR)** requires a broad framework of interpretation which includes: a) **historical roots** b) **transformation of mode of production within a and outside of agriculture**, c) **the formation of classes and their patterns of accumulation** d) **the nature of the state** (LeBaron, 2010; Mezzadri, 2019; Bhattacharya, 2017)

Economic transformation & SR

- Economic transition affects divisions of labour through new dynamics of *exploitation* different for men and women (Elson and Pearson, 1981) and natural resources –i.e. land- (Cousins et al, 2018)
- Despite the important international political economy work on capitalist market transition, its gender dimension remains underexplored
- *SR* - useful analytical lens to comprehensively understand processes and outcomes of market transition (Angeles and Hill, 2009; O’Laughlin, 1996).
- Missed link between *commodification* processes happening in the market and unpaid feminised *productive and reproductive work* (Razavi, 2009) beyond the dichotomy of formal vs. informal (Mezzadri,2019).

- **food** due to its material specificity, is one of the commodities that can better explain gendered inequalities and enable an analysis of social reproduction through:
- **reproductive work** (double burden) – access, preparation and consumption of food in the household
- **productive** (commodification) - its relations of production, access to the physical-natural means of production, wage-labour classification

Social reproduction overcomes the dualism between public and private & commodified versus non-commodified domains (Cousins, 2018)

Soviet Union Administrative Divisions, 1989

The United States Government has not recognized the incorporation of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania into the Soviet Union. Other boundary representation is not necessarily authoritative.



Post –Soviet States

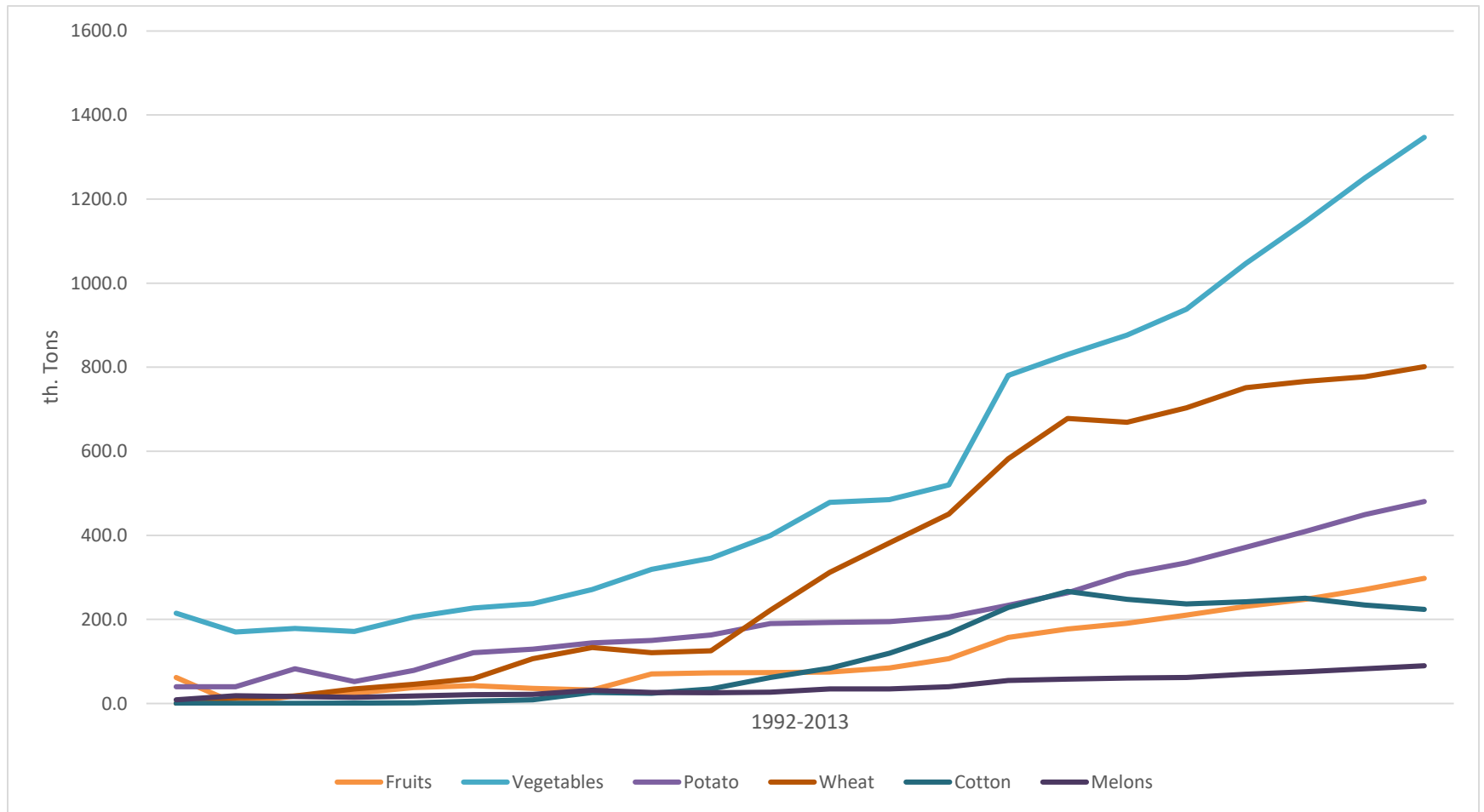
Uzbekistan



the context: Uzbekistan

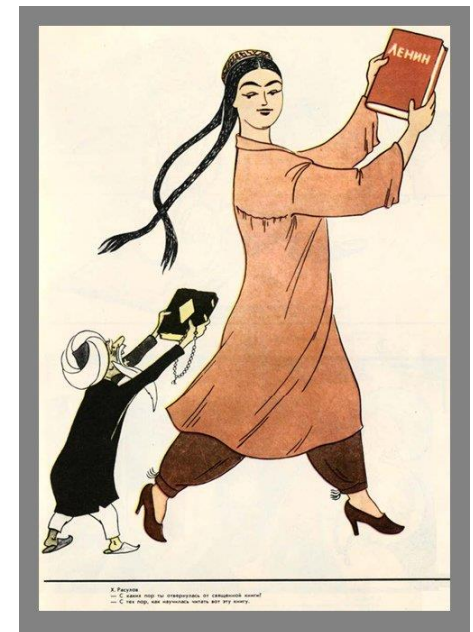
- Independent in 1991, 62% population lives in rural areas, GDP growth rate 7-8% , most populous in CA
- **Strong role of the state** as regulator and market actor in agriculture, visible in land, procurements etc..
- **Cotton** export from 65% to 9% of GDP between 1992 and 2012 (WB, 2013) (the “cotton basket” in Soviet times) - still world's fifth largest exporter and sixth largest producer of cotton
- **High value crops production (F&V)** increased in 2008

Patterns of crop diversification



Gender in Uzbekistan

- High labour-force participation compared to other low-middle income countries (43%-WB)
- Progressive Soviet legacy on education and employment (30% quota system)
- Structural transformation- marketization
- Decline in agricultural employment for both women (26%) and men (18%)
- De-Sovietification of gender norms



Research question

- Rolling back of the Socialist state
- Recent market liberalisation in the HVCs in agriculture
- Slow but new patterns of private **accumulation**
- New proletarianisation-commodification processes

To what extent such agrarian transformation is affecting the reproduction of gendered inequality and *value* generation?

Push factors (market) + *Pull* forces (patriarchal norms)

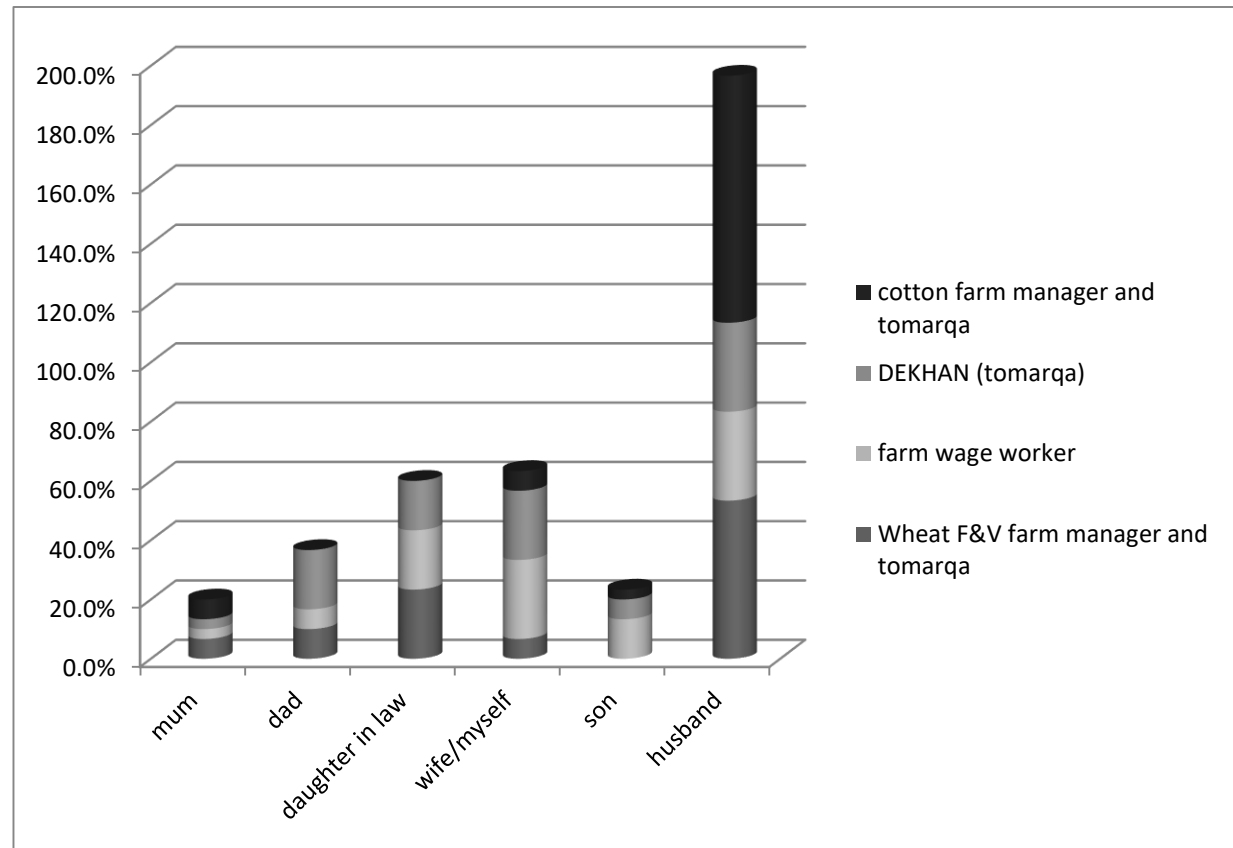
Methods and data

- Mixed- methods: qual>quan+qual>qual
- Participant observations/ Focus groups/ SSIs
- Purposive survey 120 farmers, 16 respondents were female, in Samarkand on :
- Food access
- Land entitlements
- Time- use
- Productive and reproductive activities – classification



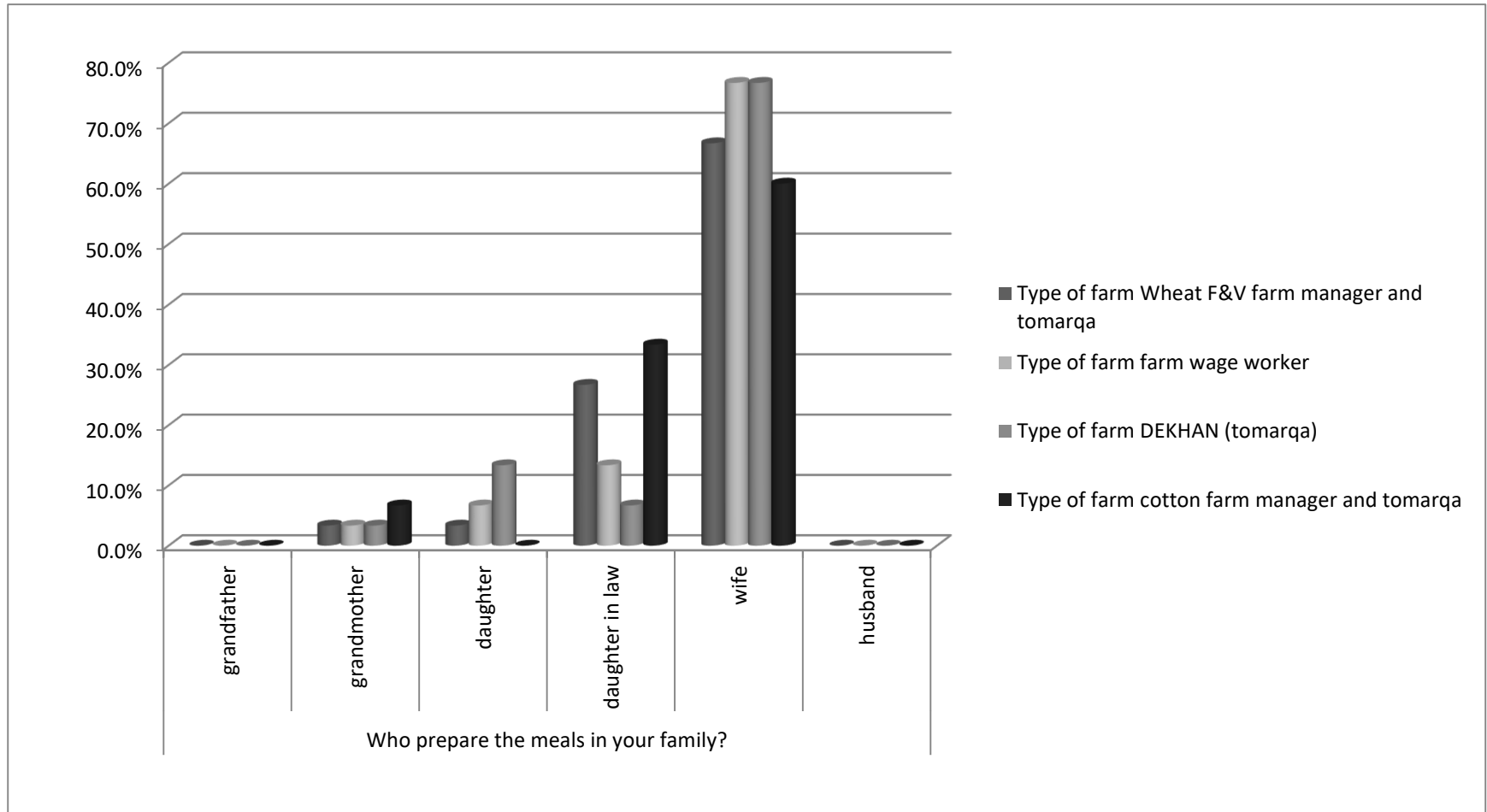
Results: reproductive work

Who goes to buy food in your family?

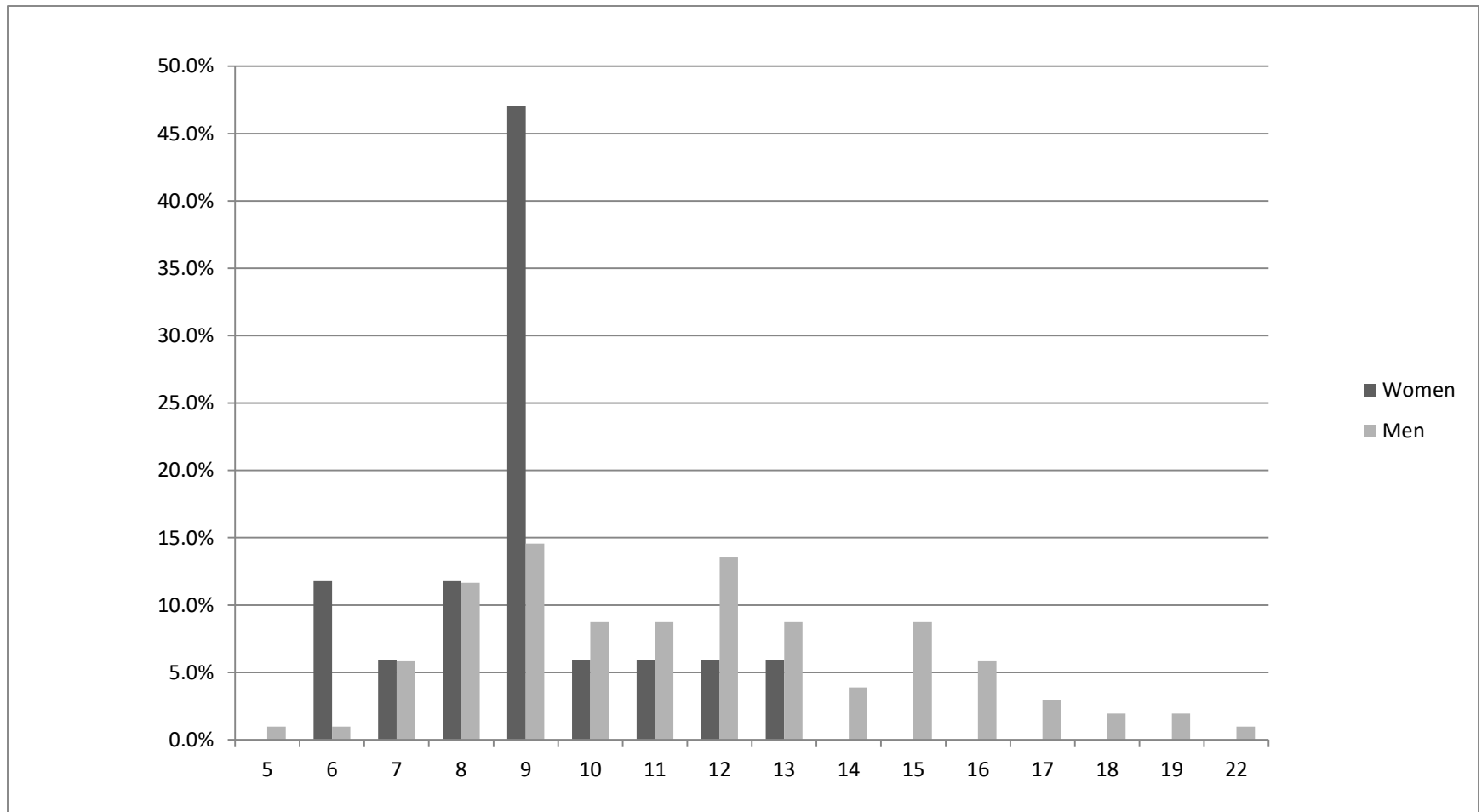


Source: Author's survey data

Who prepare the meals in your family?



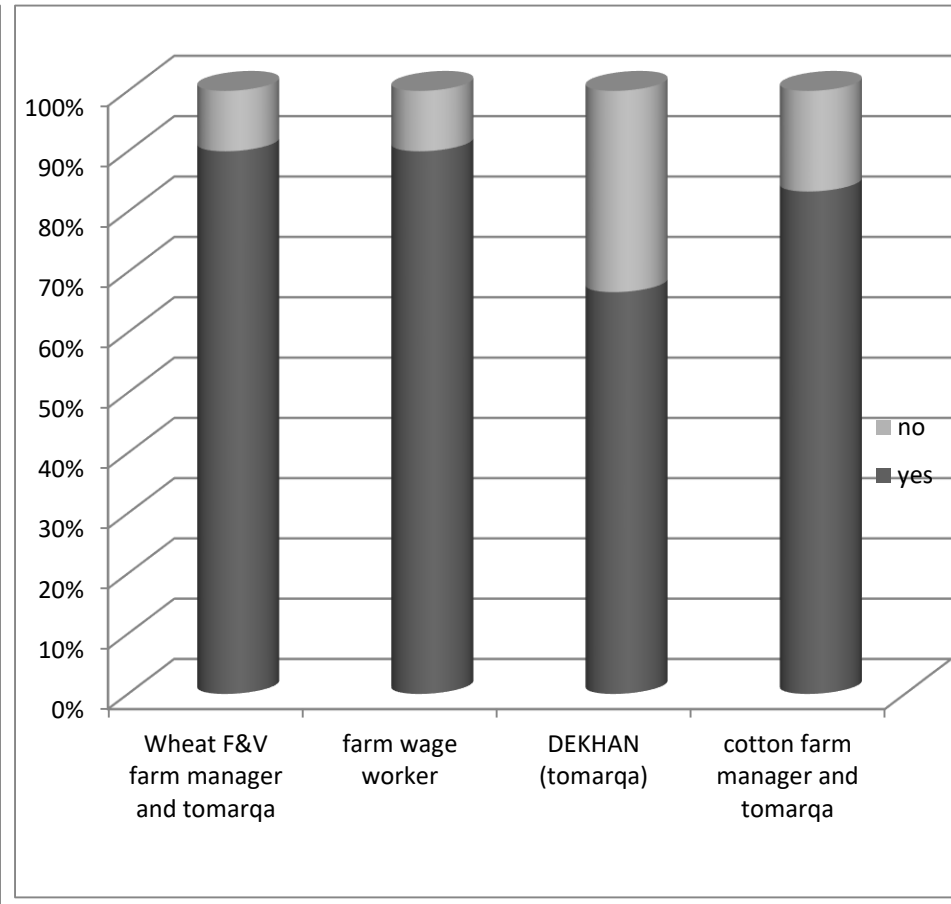
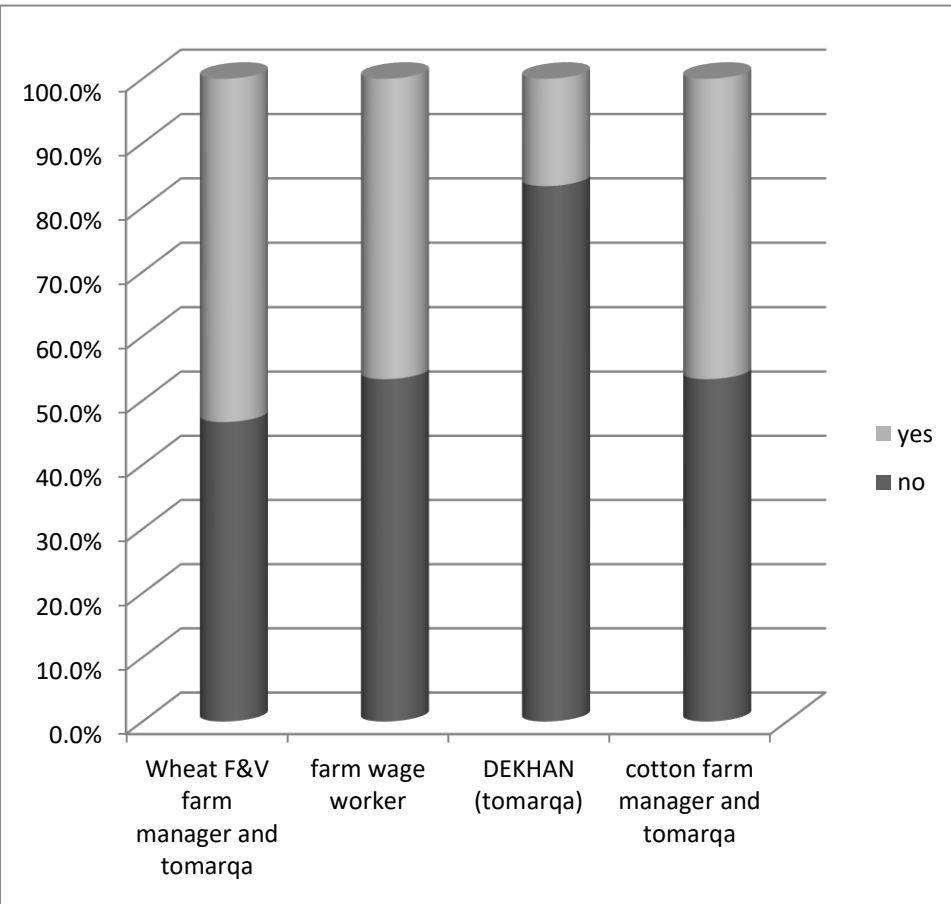
Food inequalities: Dietary diversity by gender



productive work classification:

Does your wife/mother work outside home? (L)

Does your wife/mother work in the farm? (R)



Increased employment opportunity from agribusiness HVCs

- Formal labour as indicator of empowerment?
- Formal wages
- Status of worker
- Possibility of organise as labour

However..

- Gender-specific skills
- Lower wages than men
- Systemic vulnerabilities –double burden
- Just a different kind of dispossession?

Transition but 'static' gender inequalities

- Men have exclusionary access to land titles – key in contexts where social reproduction depends on access to natural resources (Cousins, 2018)
- Dynamics of expropriation (Folbre, 2004)
- Women's work is not recognised AND non monetised > reinforces patriarchy (Razavi, 2009)
- Those elements perpetuates a slow yet dynamic of transition to a deeper and formal division of labour and commodification of food and other commodities that could reduce domestic burden of women (subject to ...)

Conclusions

- Gendered transition of the Uzbek agriculture could be traced, although not exclusively, by patterns of commodification and historically rooted (pre-Soviet) social norms
- Development of job opportunities in the agro-processing industry are shaping new patterns of labour structure which are absorbing women in new patriarchal-dominated regimes outside the household (new venue of tension and negotiation)
- Outcome depends on bottom-up power of organising, challenge social norms but also state policies which regulate K and L (minimum wage, trade union legislation GVC, etc)
- History is not unidirectional but as this case-study demonstrates, it can go backward. The process of transition towards the market economy has deprived many women in post-soviet states of paid jobs (Welter and Smallbone, 2008)
- This case study also disproves the linear thesis of 'smart economics' (WB_WID) which argues in favours a clear overlapping between gender empowerment and economic growth.

Thank you!

Q&A



Limitations

- Shortage of primary data, panel data and literature on post-soviet region to compare and contrast
- ‘Bureaucratic’ constraints during fieldwork
- Female only partially represented in the population sample
- The non-monetary economy & non-traded goods play a big role which is not incorporated in national statistics
- Strong role of the “social economy” around the “flex crops” which give further reasons to investigate further *social reproduction* as a whole