

Laura A. Paul

University of California, Davis
Agricultural and Resource Economics
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Education

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- 2019 **Ph.D.** (expected), Agricultural and Resource Economics, University of California, Davis
Research Fields: development economics, econometrics
Dissertation committee: Michael Carter and Travis Lybbert, co-chairs, Aaron Smith
- 2013 **M.A.**, Economics, Duke University Graduate School, Durham, North Carolina
Thesis committee: Marc Bellemare and Charles Becker
- 2011 **A.B.**, Economics, Kenyon College, Gambier, Ohio

Research

Job Market Paper: “Hurdles to Adoption of Drought-Tolerant Maize”

Abstract: Traditional varieties of maize frequently fail due to drought pressure in East Africa, yet farmers are slow to adopt new drought-tolerant varieties. One reason is that both the risk and returns from adopting drought-tolerant maize depend on irregular exogenous weather outcomes. A farmer’s adoption decision is based on his subjective beliefs about the likelihood of drought and the crop response to drought stress. Updating such beliefs is a slow process because severe drought can mask the trait advantage, and droughts that showcase this advantage are less frequent than drought in general. Drought-tolerant maize can improve household welfare through increased yield stability and income security, yet there is not widespread adoption. I develop a learning model to show the role of expectations in the adoption decision explaining the limited uptake under normal learning conditions. Then, combining rich household survey data with high-resolution climate and yield data, I give empirical evidence on adoption behavior, suggesting that if improved varieties are a useful intervention, uptake must be supported by promotion activities and risk mitigating tools such as crop insurance.

Working Papers:

“Is Drought-Tolerant Maize Actually Drought-Tolerant? Evaluating On-Farm Yield Trials with High Resolution Climate Data”

“Health Savings Behavior in Burkina Faso: Results from a Framed Field Experiment”

“Achieving Development Impact with Complementary Stress-resistant Seed and Financial Technologies: Evidence from Randomized Control Trials in Mozambique and Tanzania” with colleagues from University of California, Davis and the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT).

“The Role of Subjective Rice Price Expectations in Labor Input Decisions: Evidence from Madagascar.”

Research Experience

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- 2015- 2018 **Project Coordinator**, University of California, Davis
Bundling Index Insurance and Drought-Tolerant Maize in Tanzania
Designed and implemented field surveys, trained enumerators, conducted stakeholder meetings.
- 2014 **Project Coordinator:** University of California, Davis
Health Savings Behavior in Burkina Faso: A Framed Field Experiment
- 2013 **Field Assistant**, Nicholas School of the Environment Duke University
Water, Health and Climate Change in the Ethiopian Rift Valley
- 2012 **Research Assistant** to Marc Bellemare, Duke University Sanford School of Public Policy
- 2012 **Research Assistant** to Charles Becker, Duke University Economics

Outreach and Media

- 2018 **Conference Coordinator**, “Partnerships to Scale Insured Drought-Tolerant Maize Seeds in Tanzania” Stakeholder Meeting, Arusha, Tanzania
- 2018 **Basis Innovation Lab for Assets and Market Access Spotlight**, “Partnerships to Scale Insured Drought-Tolerant Maize Seeds in Tanzania.” <https://basis.ucdavis.edu/people/laura-paul>.
- 2017 **Workshop Coordinator**, “Protecting Farmers Against Weather Risk: Satellite Based Index Insurance with Drought-Tolerant Maize” Stakeholder Meeting, Arusha, Tanzania
- 2016 **CGAP Working Paper**, “Resilience and Health Shocks: The potential of health savings accounts and health loans.” <http://www.cgap.org/publications/resilience-and-health-shocks>

Teaching and Mentoring

- 2017 **Instructor of Record**, Intermediate Microeconomics, Students: 62
Agricultural and Resource Economics, University of California, Davis
- 2017 **Teaching Assistant**, Intermediate Microeconomics, Students: 57
Agricultural and Resource Economics, University of California, Davis
- 2017 **UndocuAally Certificate**, AB-540 and Undocumented Center, University of California, Davis
- 2017 **Teaching Certificate**, Scholarly Teaching Strategies to Maximize Student Learning,
Center for Educational Effectiveness, University of California, Davis
- 2012- 2013 **Undergraduate Advisor**, Benjamin N. Duke Merit Scholars, Duke University
- 2011- 2013 **Undergraduate Advisor**, Angier B. Duke Merit Scholars, Duke University
- 2009- 2011 **Assistant Teacher**, French Department, Kenyon College

Conferences and Presentations

- 2018 **Selected Presentation**: “Rain on the Parade: Hurdles to Adoption of Maize with Weather-Contingent Advantages.” AAEA, Washington, D.C.
- 2018 **Discussant**: Impacts of Shocks on Behavior & Personality,
Pacific Conference in Development Economics, Davis, CA.
- 2017 **Poster**: “Drought-Tolerant Maize Response to Precipitation.” AAEA, Chicago, IL.
- 2017 **Presentation**: “Drought-Tolerant Maize Response to Precipitation.” UC Davis Gifford Seminar
- 2013 **Selected Presentation**: “Subjective Price Expectations and Production Decisions: Rice Price Volatility in Madagascar.” AAEA, Washington, D.C.

Grants and Awards

- 2018 Gifford Foundation Research Award, University of California, Davis
- 2017 Henry A. Jastro Research Award, University of California Davis
- 2017 Gifford Foundation Research Award, University of California, Davis
- 2013 Provost’s First Year Fellowship, University of California, Davis

Languages and Skills

French (fluent), Swahili (intermediate), Stata, R, Matlab, L^AT_EX

Academic Service

- 2017- 2018 Graduate Student Associate Instructor Mentor
- 2017 Referee, 2018 Pacific Conference in Development Economics
- 2015- present Referee, American Journal of Agricultural Economics
- 2013- 2017 Coordinator, ARE Graduate Professional Development, University of California, Davis
- 2013- 2014 Representative, Graduate Student Council, University of California, Davis
- 2011- 2012 Representative, Duke University Graduate Student Council
- 2012- 2013 Representative, Duke University Annual Fund Executive Committee
- 2011- 2012 Representative, Kenyon College Alumni Council