

Livelihoods

Different surveys treat income sources in various ways. While the commonest method is to record the main source of income of the head of the household, it is clear that households obtain incomes from a variety of sources. Some are “in-kind” or material incomes, such as mahangu harvests or milk from cattle kept at home, while others are cash incomes, for example from wages, trading activities, pensions or remittances. Many households thus have several different incomes, and individual people often have different incomes as well. All this makes it difficult to assess the value of different activities to household economies, and these issues should be borne in mind when considering the information provided below.

Table 12: Percentages of heads of households reported as having different main sources of income¹⁹.

Income source	Rundu	Rural
Subsistence farming	54	71
Wages and salaries	31	19
Business activities	13	0
Pensions	3	7
Cash remittances	0	2

About three quarters of household heads in rural areas report subsistence farming as their main sources of income. Surprisingly, over half of heads of households in Rundu also have farming as their main incomes. This may be due to these urban dwellers having farms just outside the town or perhaps elsewhere. In addition, farming may be reported as the main source of income because many household

heads are older men that have not managed to find jobs in the town. Other important sources of income are cash wages (31% in Rundu and 19% in rural households), business activities (13% in Rundu) and pensions (6% of heads of households in the region as a whole).

As might be expected, most households do not have any wage earners (Figure 43). About 25% of rural homes have a single wage earner, and another 15% have two or three family members earning salaries. In Rundu, over 40% of homes have one wage earner and about 20% have two or more people with salaries.

The great majority of households (87%) do not have any member of the family having a business activity. But among the remaining homes that do have someone in business, by far the commonest kind of business activity is informal retail trade, as reported by 88% of such households.

Most of the harvest of mahangu, maize and other crops is used for domestic consumption, as are milk and meat from cattle and goats. But some households sell the remainder of harvests and livestock to add to their sources of income. These sales probably contribute little to most households, since 62% of all homes do not sell any farm products. Cattle sales are perhaps a more important source of income than crops, since 32% of households trade cattle compared with only 11% that sell mahangu. This would at least be true of those households that have both cattle and mahangu, but cash incomes from crops sales could be significant for those that do not own cattle.

The most obvious reason for these low percentages is that most households have little or no surplus produce to sell. But access to customers is probably also an important factor, since more households along the river and the main Mururani-Rundu road sell produce than elsewhere (Figures 44 and 45).

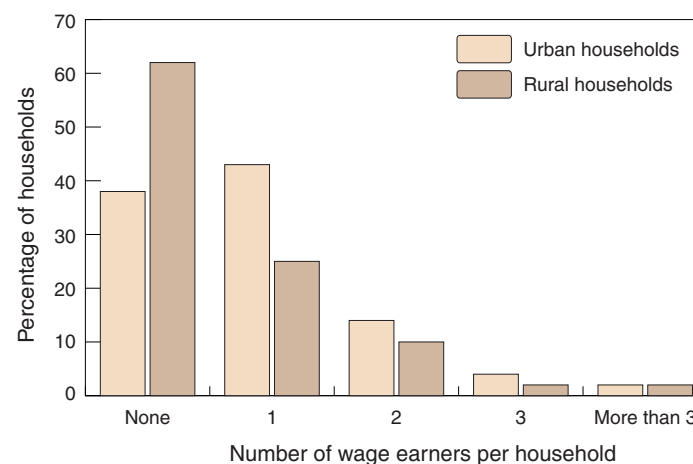


Figure 43

Numbers of wage earners in rural and Rundu households⁷.

Figure 44

Percentages of households in four zones that report selling various amounts of cattle⁷. Areas in green are those in which there are few or no cattle.

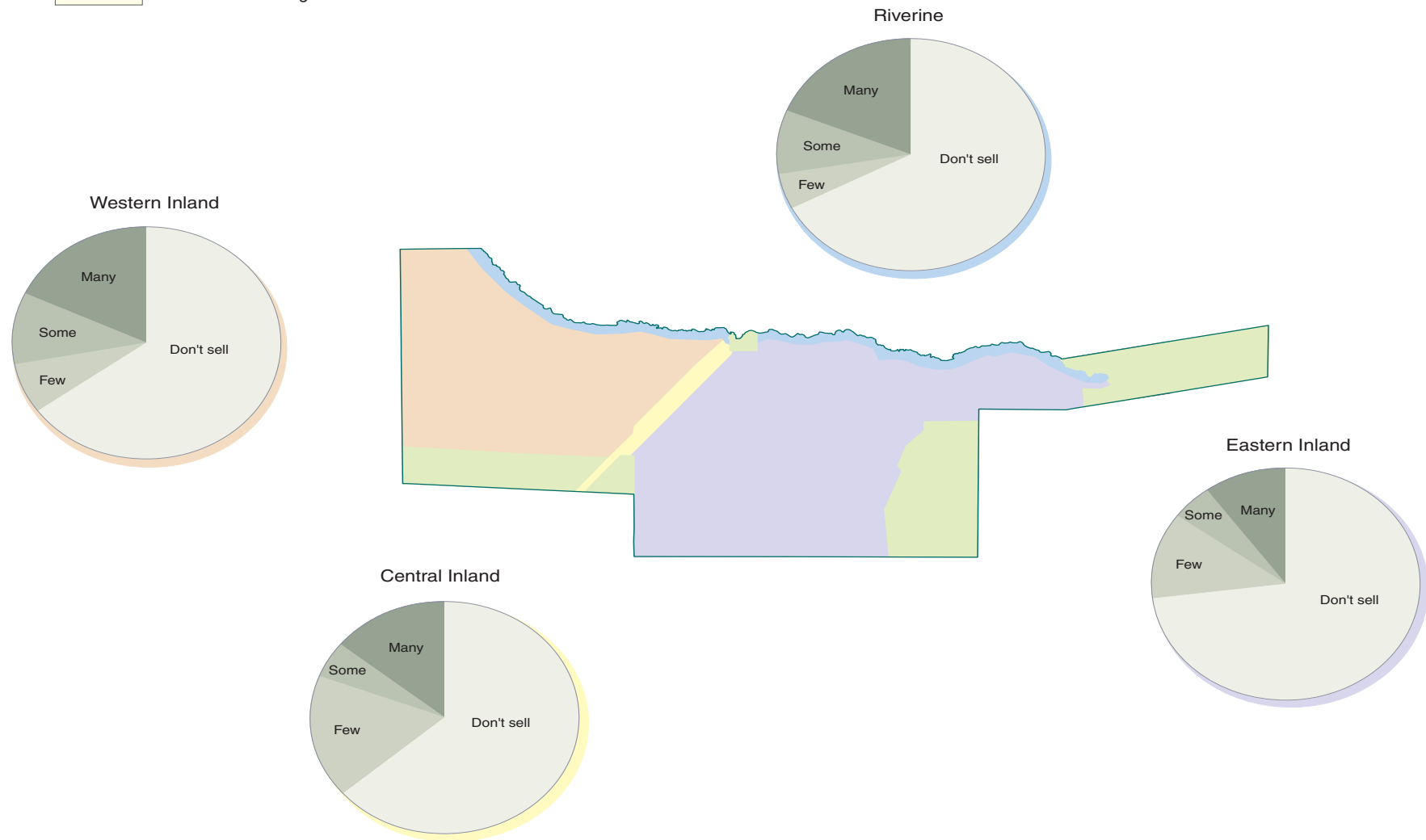
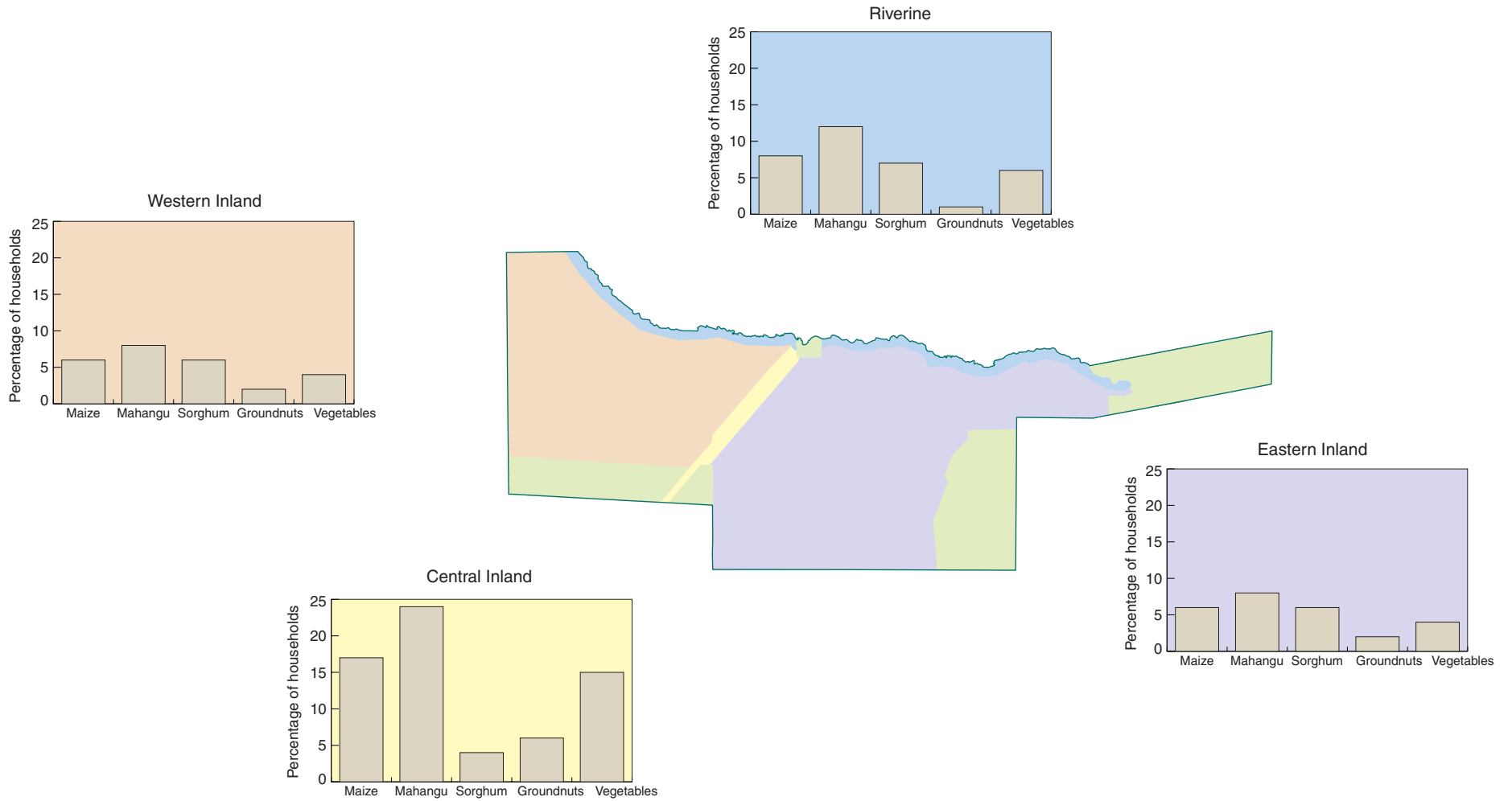


Figure 45

Percentages of households in four zones that report selling different crops⁷. Areas in green are those in which there are few or no cattle.



Food produced at home or fish caught in the river contribute significantly to the food needs of a household. However, this is not true for all homes because a good proportion of homes also rely entirely on cereals, meat and fish that they have been bought or perhaps bartered. Thus, about 28% of households do not produce their cereal needs, 50% do not produce the meat they eat, and 59% do not catch the fish they consume (Figure 46). By contrast, about 13% of households produce all the cereals they eat, while 7 and 10%, respectively, produce all their meat and fish requirements. In between these extremes are those families that both produce and purchase some of the cereals, meat and fish that they eat.

The welfare of a household depends both on income and its access to resources: capital resources (such as oxen, ploughs, livestock) and natural resources (grazing, fields and fish, for example). Patterns of ownership and access to some of these assets are presented elsewhere. But it is useful to summarize some key aspects which, as is true for incomes, show that there is a high degree of variation between households. About 60% of households have cattle and some 48% have goats, leaving 40% and 52% without these livestock. Poultry is owned by 71% of households. Some 79% of households have fields, while 12% use fields belonging to other people. Only half of all households have their own ploughs, and about 32% of people living near the river catch fish.

In rural areas, 48% of households use unsafe sources (such as the river) to obtain water for drinking and other domestic purposes. By contrast, almost all residents in Rundu have access to safe water provided through pipes and taps. Ten percent of households in rural areas have to walk for more than one hour to the nearest source of water¹⁹.

Figure 46 Sources of food, showing percentages of households that largely eat food that they did not produce at home, those that consume a mix of home produce and food obtained elsewhere, and those that rely entirely on food that they produce themselves¹⁹.

