

Abstract of Working Papers

My research focuses on how natural resources scarcity and environmental problems impact human welfare. I also evaluate how economic policies impact poverty and gender disparity in developing countries.

In my job market paper, “The Effects of Water Markets: Evidence from the Rio Grande” (with Peter Debaere), we present the first difference-in-difference analysis of the impact of water markets on the value of production. A fundamental theoretical prediction of tradable allowance markets is that these markets shift production to higher value uses. This paper directly tests this conjecture by comparing crop composition in counties in the Rio Grande water market with neighboring control counties before and after the water market established in 1971. We show that water markets facilitate a shift from less productive crops that generate on average fewer dollars per unit of water to more productive crops. The reallocations are economically significant and especially prevalent in times of drought, demonstrating large potential efficiency gains from tradable permits programs.

“Protecting the Breadbasket with Trees? The Effect of the Great Plains Shelterbelt Project on Agricultural Production” (revise & resubmit at *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*) studies the historic Great Plains Shelterbelt Project - a massive tree-planting operation implemented in 1935-42 in the wake of the American Dust Bowl. Large-scale forestation programs are increasingly common around the world, but whether they work and whether they are worth the investment remains largely unstudied. I estimate the short- and long-term effects of this program on agriculture while instrumenting for the endogeneity of tree-planting location. My paper shows a shift in production towards livestock and an overall increase in agricultural revenue in later decades where there is higher shelterbelt coverage.

“The Spillovers of Employment-based Safety Net Program on Child Labor and Education” (with Sheetal Sekhri, revise & resubmit at *The World Bank Economic Review*) examines the consequences of employment based safety net policies for the human capital accumulation of children in rural India and find that such policies increase child labor and reduce school enrollment.

“Regional Poverty Targeting and Income Distribution: Evidence from China’s National Designated Poor Counties” (with Sangui Wang) uses restricted micro-data from China to investigate the impact of poverty alleviation programs targeted at regional level on the distribution of household income. We consistently find that government investment favoring agriculture has a redistributive effect that does not benefit the poorest households.

“Foreign Direct Investment and Agency of Women” (with Sonal Pandya and Sheetal Sekhri) exploits India’s 2005 large scale FDI liberalization. We show that FDI reduces reported rapes, which is supported by greater empowerment due to a rise in women's relative income.

JEL classification: Q15, Q56, O12, O15, O22, I38, J21, F16.

Keywords: Sustainability, Agriculture Productivity, Poverty Alleviation, Employment, Gender, Economic Integration.