Openings Remarks to STAARS Workshop

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Agriculture-led structural rural transformation

Ag technological advances spark farm output growth
  → input/labor supply boost to post-harvest processing
  → demand boost to rural non-farm economy
  → increased investment in human capital
  → rural-to-urban migration and fertility rate decline

Markets an analog/complement to physical techs
  → enhanced efficiencies in exchange
  → dampens GE price response to tech change

(Some of) Africa in early stages of structural transformation
Innovation needed b/c traditional producers ‘poor but efficient’

TW Schultz was right. Observations of smallholder inefficiency often conflate env’t variation uncontrollable by farmer w/error.

Ex: Ivorien rice farmers – median falls on PPF w/ control for soils, rain, pests, etc. vs. 52% w/o (Sherlund, Barrett & Adesina JDE 2002)

Smallholders appear poor but efficient.

Need markets, policies and technologies that make productivity gains feasible/profitable.
LSMS-ISA data show that uptake of modern ag inputs varies markedly, w/n and among countries. (Sheahan & Barrett, FP 2017)
Enhancing lives and human capital

Innovations lead to investment in rural education, nutrition, health care. Break intergenerational cycles of poverty.

Greater financial liquidity and ability to cope with shocks w/o compromising future. Enhance resilience; reduce poverty traps.

Reduced risk of conflict, the ultimate destroyer of livelihoods and lives.
The STAARS Agenda

Promote rigorous policy-relevant research
- strong microfoundations using best available data
- engage implementers/policymakers to guide and use research

Mentor/connect young African policy researchers
- connectivity makes virtual aggregation possible
- need for attention to local policy/research needs
The STAARS Consortium
Rural Africa is on the move.
Thank you for your engagement with STAARS!