

# Seasonal scarcity and sharing norms

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## Abstract

This paper examines the relationship between a short-term resource scarcity, and preferences for sharing and its enforcement among Afghan subsistence farmers exposed to seasonal food shortages.

I conducted repeated within-subject lab-in-the-field experiments both during a lean season and in the post-harvest season of relative plenty six months later. I administered dictator and third party punishment games to separate the effects of individual sharing preferences from enforcement of sharing norms.

While sharing preferences exhibit a high degree of temporal stability at both the aggregate level and, to a large extent, at the individual level, the enforcement of sharing norms measured by the willingness of monetarily uninterested third parties to punish non-desirable behavior is found to be substantially weaker during the lean season.

The findings suggest that although the farmers are capable of coping with transitory periods of scarcity and sustain mutual sharing, exposure to prolonged periods of scarcity or to unexpected shocks might result in breakdown of mutual cooperation.

JEL Classification: C91, D63, I32, Z13

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