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Cooperation in Watershed Management: A Field Experiment on Location, Trust, and Enforcement

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Highlights

- We test the effects of location, trust, and enforcement on cooperation in a watershed
- We apply a standard trust game in the field with three treatments
- We show that observed levels of trust is positively rel to investment
- Trust itself is sensitive to the relative location of trustor and trustee
- Framing the game in the context of soil conservation investments reduces trust

We test the effects of location, trust, and enforcement on cooperation between upstream and downstream farmers in an Ethiopian watershed, where the former cause negative externalities to the latter due to unsustainable farming practices. We apply a standard trust game in the field with three treatments that allow us to relate our experimental results to actual soil conservation investments. We show that observed levels of trust, a measure of the encompassing concept of social capital, are positively related to such investments at the individual level. Trust itself is sensitive to the relative location of trustor and trustee in the

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