

# COLLOQUIUM BY RYAN BARCLAY EDWARDS

## TROPICAL OIL CROPS AND RURAL POVERTY

TIME: 5:00-6:00 PM, MONDAY, 06 MARCH 2017

VENUE: ACADEMIC BUILDING 1079

### *Tropical Oil Crops and Rural Poverty*

**Speaker:** Ryan Barclay Edwards, Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Department of Earth System Science & Center on Food Security and the Environment, Stanford University.



\* The event is also a faculty recruitment seminar for Environmental program.

#### **ABSTRACT:**

The tripling of area planted with tropical oil crops since the 1990s represents the most significant global agricultural transformation since the green revolution. Tropical oil crops feature in a wide variety of agricultural, food, and environmental policy debates, including those related to tropical deforestation and the haze that regularly blankets Southeast Asia. The most important questions surrounding the tropical oil crops boom involve managing complex economic—environmental trade-offs, yet there is surprisingly little systematic evidence on how the global oil palm boom has affected welfare in rural communities across the developing world where it is grown. This article asks whether the world’s largest modern plantation-based agricultural expansion—that of palm oil in Indonesia—has been pro-poor. Causal effects are identified by instrumenting the decadal expansion in the area planted with oil palm in each district with its agro-climatically attainable yield. Of the more

than 10 million Indonesians lifted from poverty over the 2000s, my most conservative estimate suggests at least 1.3 million rural people have escaped poverty due to growth in the palm oil sector. The areal expansion increased expenditure for low income households and expanded rural public services related to agricultural manufacturing, specifically road networks and households' access to electricity. Indonesia's recent smallholder-led palm oil expansion thus provides an important case study of how geographically dispersed pro-poor growth can reach remote rural regions. While environmental concerns are likely to remain a key issue in global policy debates about the future of palm oil, income effects may be the first-order issue communities where it comes from, and a critical consideration in addressing the sector's persistent environmental challenges.

**BIO:**

Ryan is Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Department of Earth System Science and the Center on Food Security and the Environment at Stanford University. His primary fields are development economics and econometrics, with a focus on natural resources and the environment. Prior to his current appointment he completed his PhD in Economics at the Australian National University and worked in the Australian Government on education funding reforms, social policy evaluation, and fiscal policy.

This event is open to all and entry is on a first come, first served basis. For any queries email [yg73@duke.edu](mailto:yg73@duke.edu) or call 3665 7149.

Hope to see you all~

Best Regards,  
Zhengrong Gu