

Terms of Reference

‘Do higher quality standards hinder inclusive growth / favour exclusive growth?’

*Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Dhaka
March 25, 2015*

1 Introduction

Food security and inclusiveness are closely related. An inclusive development path is assumed to have immediate and long-term positive effects on food security of the most vulnerable sections of society. But how inclusive are food security interventions, e.g. the setting of food safety standards? Do these (policy) measures or do the market forces hinder smallholders or women in their developmental aspirations (crowding-out)? Once we look at the complex relation between inclusiveness and food security, how best can we conceptualize and operationalize this relation? Is it about pro-poor, about gender transformation, about rights, about vulnerability and resilience or about something else?

We want to explore these questions in the setting of Bangladesh and the Dutch development cooperation program. Bangladesh is a fast developing country. During recent years, the GDP is growing steadily at a rate of 6% and the country is aiming to achieve Middle Income Status by 2021. The country is moving from being a major food importing country to becoming a major food exporter. Still, many challenges are facing the country – like high pressure on the use of land and other natural resources, vulnerability to flooding, drought, cyclones and other natural calamities aggravated by climate change, high population pressure, food insecurity and food safety challenges.

2 Background

With a population of 160 million people, growing at the rate of 2 million people per year, achieving and maintaining food security in Bangladesh is an enormous challenge, and so is food safety. A large array of insecticides, pesticides, and chemicals to enhance production, for preservation and ripening are used. In a number of times, quality of the product is not ensured, which enhances overuse, or use of inappropriate doses. This entails all possible health risks for producers and consumers.

The Netherlands Embassy in Dhaka helps improve living conditions for the poor, focusing on improving water management, food security and sexual reproductive rights. Special attention is given to addressing accountability and transparency (Multi Annual Strategic Plan 2014-2017).

The food security and food safety theme was developed from 2012 onwards and is addressed with the objective to improve access to healthy food and foster sustainable production. A portfolio of projects has been developed, addressing various aspects of food production, food safety, nutrition and sustainable value chain development, including projects like Safal, Proofs, the Food Safety Project, Blue Gold, Char Development and Settlement Project and others (see: <http://bangladesh.nlembassy.org/development-cooperation/food-security>).

Outside the embassy, also various policy makers and researchers have been working on the topic of food security and inclusive growth. At the Ministry of Foreign Affairs there was a task force. Currently, the CGIAR is engaged in a programme Agriculture for Health and Nutrition (A4HN, <http://www.a4nh.cgiar.org/>), which is co-funded by the Netherlands government. At Wageningen UR, researchers from various backgrounds work on the research theme food and nutrition security. Already in a literature study of 2002, Achterbosch and van Tongeren assessed the impact of food safety measures in trade on developing countries. They conclude that developing countries are prone to being excluded from the optimization process regarding food safety measures, and that there are many repercussions to producers markets in developing countries that are not incorporated in the trade-off between health risks and the costs of maintaining a low level of risk. However, food safety issues a priori need not worsen agricultural export potential in developing countries, though related reorganisations of the export supply chain, mostly induced by retailer consortia in developed economy markets, are likely to have a significant impact on rural labour and produce markets (Achterbosch and van Tongeren, 2002). More recently, Wageningen University and Research Centre published a book on the complexity of food security, called The Food Puzzle (Achterbosch et al, 2014).

Among others, the World Bank prepared a framework for inclusive growth (Ianchovichina and Lundstrom, 2009). Prof Max Spoor from the International Institute for Social Studies has been involved in a book on agriculture, food security and inclusive growth (2012). The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs is in the process of writing a letter to Parliament on inclusiveness. For that purpose a consultation process by The Broker has started (<http://www.thebrokeronline.eu>).

In several EKN funded projects on food security in Bangladesh (Safal, Proofs, among others), the intention of the projects is to increase food productivity. This is often done by shifting from low external input agriculture to high external input agriculture that is closely connected to marketing within value chains. Both the quality of inputs and of outputs is to be raised. This market-based high-quality approach requires specific knowledge on the side of the producers, for instance on the use of pesticides and other agriculture chemicals. Or it brings extra costs, for instance to expand the 'shelf-life' of the produce. While on the other hand, there may be specific niche markets with higher prices once a high quality standard is achieved. The question at hand is whether the inclusive growth is hindered or, in other words, exclusive growth is favoured, when trying to achieve higher quality standards. Special attention is warranted for gendered inclusiveness / exclusiveness.

There are examples from practice, showing that different value chains 'react' in a different manner. Some commodities are more likely to generate inclusive outcomes than others. Additional research is needed to place such anecdotal examples in a wider framework and inform the projects. At the same time there is a need to address a more generic policy question related to inclusiveness and the trade and investment agenda of Dutch policy. Policy direction is needed in light of the 'from aid to trade' discussion, whether implementing a policy with more emphasis on trade still serves inclusive growth objectives, or whether there are gaps or missing elements.

3 Question

Do higher quality standards hinder inclusive growth / favour exclusive growth?

4 Approach

The question above is a policy question. A sound research proposal is required, translating the question into a research proposal, using current academic conceptualization. The question is not to be addressed as a purely academic question. The output of the research, as a presentation and a report, should provide answer of the question which is of direct relevance for practitioners, and in particular NGOs working together with farmers to enhance food security in the EKN supported projects, as well as to policy makers in the field of food security.

To achieve this, the researcher(s) will produce a synthesis document of their desk study in relation to the central policy question. Furthermore, in their initial theoretical conceptualizing on the subject they will take into account the practical situation in Bangladesh (references available, see list below), and will formulate their operationalized research proposal in such a manner. It is expected that desk study will be combined with field level investigation.

This should then lead to a draft for discussion, which can be shared with a group of policy makers and practitioners, and sharing it with Bangladesh based scientists on the matter (BARC, BARI, BAU and in particular the newly started Integrated Centre on Food Security).

5 Objectives

The assignment aims to provide Food Security professionals insight into the complex relations between inclusive growth and the achievement of higher quality standards (HQSs), particularly in Bangladesh. In which circumstances are HQSs an incentive for inclusive growth and when do they hinder it or favour exclusive growth? Does inclusiveness have a positive direct or indirect effect on HQSs? Which contextual factor or characteristics play a role in the relation between HQSs and inclusiveness? Which additional policy measures or approaches are required to ensure inclusive development?

The outputs of the assignment are a document (reflecting the findings of the desk study, the theoretical conceptualizations and field level investigations) and a mini-seminar in Bangladesh with policy makers, practitioners and Bangladesh-based scientists on the matter. The results/outputs must be useful for programming the future interventions of development partner organizations.

6 Time line (tentatively)

Week 1	Operationalized research proposal
Week 2	Desk study as well as visit to or briefing by the Food Safety Project and to the SaFal project.
Week 3+4	Field study and analysis, followed by presentation/discussion session
Week 5	Report writing and conducting a mini-seminar in Bangladesh

The budget proposed by candidates can be based on this tentative timeline, which implies a presence of the consultants in Bangladesh of at least three weeks. Proposing an alternative timeline is possible, in combination with a clear rationale. Some working days may be added to the timeline for report finalisation.

The assignment is to be completed by May 31, 2015.

7 Competencies

A team of 2 consultants will combine the following competencies:

- Basic knowledge on agricultural economics.
- Basic knowledge on food production and safety quality standards.
- Knowledge of different methodologies to analyse value chains and gender inequalities.
- Knowledge of the Bangladesh context is an advantage.

8 References

- Multi Annual Strategy Plan 2014-2017, Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Dhaka
<http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/bestanden/documenten-en-publicaties/rapporten/2014/02/05/meerjarige-strategische-plannen-mj-sp-2014-2017/bangladesh-multi-annual-strategic-plan-2014-2017.pdf>
(last accessed 18 November 2014)
- Achterbosch, Thom and Frank van Tongeren, 2002
Food safety measures and developing countries: Literature overview, LEI
- Achterbosch, T.J.; Dorp, M. van; Driel, W.F. van; Groot, J.J.; Lee, J. van der; Verhagen, A.; Bezlepkina, I., 2014
The Food Puzzle : pathways to securing food for all, Wageningen University and Research Centre, ISBN 9789462571921 - 72 p <https://www.wageningenur.nl/en/Publication-details.htm?publicationId=publication-way-343534323430> (last accessed 18 November 2014)
- Ianchovichina, Elena, and Susanna Lundstrom, 2009
Inclusive Growth Framework (policy research working paper 4851), World Bank
- Spoor, Max and M.J. Robbins (editors)
Agriculture, Food Security and Inclusive Growth. The Hague: Society for International Development (SID), ISS and NCDO.

9 Contact at F&BKP

Please submit your proposal to Klaas de Vries (Klaas.devries@knowledge4food.net) no later than Friday, April 3, 2015, 23:59 CET. For questions, please also contact Klaas de Vries.

The Food and Business Knowledge Platform

The F&BKP is one of the five Knowledge Platforms initiated by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It is an open and independent initiative where representatives from international networks and organizations of business, science, civil society and policy come together. We share, critically reflect on, generate, deepen and improve (interdisciplinary) knowledge and feed practices and policies on food and nutrition security. We do so by identifying knowledge issues that are relevant now and in the future, we initiate action, learning and research, we disseminate lessons learned and we highlight promising innovations that will contribute to local and global food and nutrition security. To start, the Platform will create a research agenda and prioritize knowledge themes, such as Food Wastage, Nutrition Security and Partnerships.

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