

Factsheet midterm findings Global Challenges Programme Call 1



Inclusive value chain collaboration in Ghana and South Africa

Summary

There is a persistent mismatch between services offered through value chain collaborations (VCC) and agricultural support systems and the needs of smallholder farmers. At a time when inclusive business models are gaining ground, there is a role for science in providing strategic insights into how agricultural innovation can be made more adaptive and sustainable. This project innovatively combines value chains and livelihood trajectory analysis, action research, and a landscape approach to find out how VCCs or public-private-producer partnerships can be made more inclusive and enhance food sovereignty and landscape sustainability. Research questions addressed are:

1. Do these partnerships align with the livelihood trajectories and innovation capacity of male and female smallholders involved?
2. Do they contribute to their food sovereignty (access to food, having a say over the way in which it is produced and marketed, and the sustainability of production)?
3. Can “learning platforms” make the collaboration more effective, inclusive and innovative?
4. How can tree crops contribute to sustainable landscapes?

Interim Research Findings

1. Tree crop farmers are food secure, but seasonal food insecurity may exist in Ghana and gender differences need to be further explored in South Africa.
2. Small-scale farmers are not all the same. Contrary to popular belief, smallholders work on less than 2 ha of land, they have different profiles according to gender and their degree of market orientation, as well as being engaged full or part-time, and their access to land. This creates different conditions for engagement in value chains, and receptiveness and capacity for innovation.
3. Farmers exert agency and they combine commodity and subsistence production and/or engage in multiple value chains as a deliberate strategy to reduce risk and dependency and retain autonomy. They use VCC to negotiate access to markets, credit, resources, knowledge and innovations.
4. Change makers can be entry points for transformative change. They broker access to markets, resources, knowledge and innovations. These are the people that are “movers and shakers” and have a vision, a network and drive to improve farmers’ lives for the better. This implies that support services and knowledge exchanges are to be analyzed “from below” and start from the farmers and their networks.
5. Innovations come as much “from below” as they come “from above”. “Endogenous” innovations may be small and concern technologies used in the production process or forms of collective action in farmer associations or savings and credit groups. They form the starting point for peer-to-peer learning.
6. Learning platforms offer a space for joint learning and knowledge sharing if organized close to the farmers.

Messages to

A) Actors from private sector:

- Go beyond the “low-hanging fruit”. There may be potential amongst those excluded from the value chain collaboration, although not all are excluded.
- Recognize diversity amongst farmers.

B) Civil society and practitioners organizations:

- Play a role to bridge organizations that bring together actors from different sectors and operational levels, and act as knowledge brokers and facilitators of learning platforms.
- Perform a “watchdog” function in partnerships between actors of differential power.

C) Policy makers:

- Recognize different ways of knowledge exchange and the importance of combining cross-level with peer-to-peer learning to enhance innovation.

Knowledge products

There are various products available at the [Wordpress project page](#), including:

1. For general public and professional use, there are info sheets and newsletters available. Here is the latest [newsletter](#) from November 2016, and the most recent [info sheet](#) from September 2016. And here a project [news item](#) on Small meets big in the value chain from July 2016.
2. For the academic community, there are available MSc theses and peer-reviewed articles. As an example thesis from July 2016, please see [Collective-action-and-inclusive-value-chain-collaboration-in-Ghanas-oil-palm-sector](#). For a peer reviewed article example, see [Landscapes of Social Inclusion from June 2015](#).
3. For consortium and associated partners and donors, there are also internal reports. As an example, see the [consortium meeting and learning platform report from August 2015 from Ghana](#).

Knowledge networks

Learning platforms that bring farmers together with practitioners, private sector actors, researchers and practitioners, play a key role in this project. They are arenas of knowledge exchange, validation of research findings, sharing experiences, concerns, solutions and innovation, and peer-to-peer education.

Co-creation

Knowledge co-creation occurs mainly in the learning platforms, but also through joint fieldwork by the consortium partners. The complementary skills and different perspectives of practitioners and academics in the consortium allows for the “translation” of practitioners and Southern perspectives in academic products, and of academic knowledge in the practice of value chain collaboration. In both countries, there is a strong interaction with the private sector through collaboration with Armajaro Ghana Limited in Ghana (thanks to a subsidy of the Lindt Cocoa Foundation) and the South African Subtropical Growers' Association (Subtrop), an association of associations of avocado, litchi, macadamia and mango growers. Lessons about innovations “from below” and transformational change are learned from interacting with “change makers” in the public and private sector, and people on the ground. Last but not least, there is a strong mutual learning between researchers and farmers in Ghana, who prefer partners in research rather than informants or respondents.

Future research and activities

Remaining questions include how different types of agricultural support differ in empowerment outcomes, and what role does peer-to-peer learning and local innovation networks play in the co-creation of knowledge.

Consortium Partners

- [University of Amsterdam \(UvA\) \(NL\)](#)
- [University of Energy and Natural Resources \(UENR\) \(Ghana\)](#)
- [University of Limpopo \(UoL\) \(South Africa\)](#)
- [Royal Tropical Institute, KIT \(NL\)](#)
- [Ghana Agricultural Associations Business & Information Centre \(GAABIC\) \(Ghana\)](#)
- [Agricultural Research Council, ARC \(SA\)](#)

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Project websites

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