

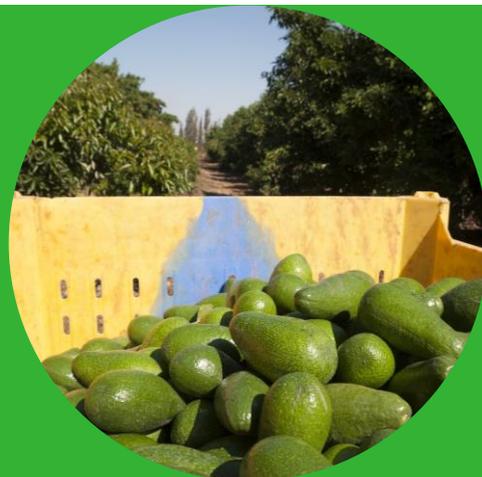
# ITC's contribution to export competitiveness and farmer livelihoods

Verification of ITC's intervention logic in the avocado sector in Kenya

Fedes van Rijn



**WAGENINGEN**  
UNIVERSITY & RESEARCH



Avocado is an important sector for Kenyan smallholder farmers. However, despite increasing production and land cultivated by avocado, in 2013 only 14% of Kenya's total production was exported. This leaves a lot of room for improvement for all parties involved in the avocado sector. The main challenges to expanding this export share are poor quality and regulatory standards, weak institutional capacity of small-scale producers, and inadequate capacity and coordination of fruit export. Private sector development support is one way to address these challenges, but establishing the impact of their efforts remains difficult due to a lack of data and insight in the effects.

One such programme is the Netherlands Trust Fund Export Sector Competitiveness Programme (NTFIII – ESCP), which aims at stimulating avocado export from Kenya. It is a collaboration between the International Trade Centre (ITC) and the Dutch Centre for Promotion of Exports from Developing Countries (CBI). The project aimed at contributing to tackling the problems faced by the avocado sector with activities at the level of Technical Service Providers (TSIs), avocado firms (SMEs) and Farmer Organisations (FOs).

The PRIME (Pioneering Real-time Impact Monitoring and Evaluation) research programme developed and implemented an approach to monitor and evaluate the impact of such private sector development programmes. In order to maximize the potential use of findings for steering ITC-support in other contexts, the focus of the research is on parts of the intervention that have potential to be replicated or scaled out. These include service delivery, networks and sales of firms, food safety, traceability and product quality in the chain, contractual agreements and farmer livelihoods. To assess ITC's contribution on these topics, data was gathered from 3 sources; SMEs, FOs and farm households. A difference-in-difference design was then used to compare supported and non-supported actors.

The PRIME project resulted in new insights in the effects of private sector development support programmes. The results show that ITC has contributed to export competitiveness and farmer livelihoods in three ways. First, capacity building of TSIs contributed to improved service delivery to the sector, but more can be done to address the needs of SMEs. Second, the programme contributed to improved knowledge, practices, network and export performance of SMEs. Third, the programme helped to develop and strengthen the capacity of farmer groups to improve accountability and quality. At the same time many other farming groups also remain effective, showing that the additionality of NTF-III is perhaps limited. Finally, we see that livelihoods of both supported and non-supported avocado farmers have improved in terms of income, working conditions and food security.

In order to maximize future benefits from this study, ITC should use the multi-level approach of the NTF-III project in the implementation of future projects. Also, there should be more focus on the barriers that prevent export companies from expanding their business. Still, the results from this study indicate high potential for the current approach that improved knowledge and practices, which translated into better networks and increased sales. While ITC now supported the capacity of FOs most in the areas where they

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already performed well, future programmes could focus more specifically on weaker spots in their capacity performance. Lastly, adjustments to ITC's monitoring system could improve the organisation's capability to measure impact and use monitoring for strategic decisions. The current results are mainly derived from data gathered by WUR, while there is great potential to make better use of monitoring data.

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#### Contact

Wageningen Economic Research    dr. FC (Fedes) van Rijn  
Postbus 29703    Senior Scientist Impact Evaluation, Value  
2502 LS Den Haag    Chains and Food Systems  
[www.wur.nl/economic-research](http://www.wur.nl/economic-research)    T +31 (0) 70 335 83 68  
E [fedes.vanrijn@wur.nl](mailto:fedes.vanrijn@wur.nl)

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