Globalization and Sustainable Rural Development


This report is the fifth in a series published by Wageningen International. Earlier publications are:
- The Role of Agriculture in Achieving MDGs: A review of the leading reports
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- Capacity Development in Higher Education: Five years involvement of Wageningen UR with NPT and NFP
Globalization and Sustainable Development

Sustainable Agro-supply Chains

DGIS-Wageningen UR Partnership Programme 2006-2010
2.1 Rationale

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Food security and the provision of food have become important issues on the international development agenda and, accordingly, agri-food chains are a concept central to development policy, practice and research. Theme 1 ‘Sustainable Agro-supply Chains’ of the DGIS-Wageningen UR Partnership Programme focused on ongoing and experimental processes that aim to make inclusion in agri-food chains, mainly serving domestic markets in the South, instrumental for pro-poor development. It complements endeavours in the context of international trade, which is increasingly subject to public legislation and private-sector grades and standards. A common feature of both, international trade and domestic markets is the growing concentration in agro-food systems, and the transition from supply-driven to demand-driven supply chains. This development has caused significant institutional and organizational challenges that affect the economic position and bargaining power of smallholder producers, particularly in developing countries.

In the perspective of the developments, needs and challenges sketched above, the sub-programme ‘Sustainable Agro-supply Chains’ aimed to:

- Strengthen supply chain capacity and entrepreneurial skills among smallholder producers in developing countries;
- Analyse pilot supply chains and formulate recommendations on how integrated supply chains can facilitate market access and sustained economic growth in developing countries, and
- Evaluate the appropriateness of market-driven economic development and their mechanisms in contributing to income generation and to improvement of rural livelihoods.

Output of the programme targeted actual implementation at the level of smallholder farmers and their organizations, as well as local, national and international policy levels. More specifically, the projects under this theme included two sets of coherent sub-activities, namely:

1. Value Chains for Pro-Poor Development (VC4PD), and
2. Facilitating Rural Entrepreneurship.

In a series of multi-stakeholder meetings, six cases of value chain based change processes were selected in which the bulking of agricultural commodities was linked to the organization of farmers and institutional interventions in order to understand the mechanisms that are favourable to development in existing agri-food chains. The process of pilot implementation was organized in an action research-cum-development mode in which the projects addressed specific issues in chain development as perceived by the partners and stakeholders. The selection and implementation took place in close collaboration with Agri-ProFocus and AgriPterra of the Netherlands, and with many partners (knowledge institutes, producer organizations, NGOs and private-sector organizations and enterprises: Traders, processors, retailers, etc.) in the countries concerned: Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Niger, Rwanda, Uganda and Zambia. Their transparent cooperation formed a delicate process of research-agenda setting, problem analysis, co-innovation, policy development and implementation while ensuring sustainable institutional arrangements between the parties. The pilots were also used to build capacities and expertise at all levels of the supply chain, with particular emphasis on farmer organizations. Summary reports of these activities are provided in the sections below.

Research teams from the Netherlands and partner countries collaborated closely with farmers’ organizations, companies and development organizations in the framing and testing of the selected intervention strategies. This collaborative research resulted in a more specific view on the change processes induced, it helped to identify the theory of change, and it capacitated the partners in enhancing their skills and knowledge for managing the change processes. The partners involved did not take for granted that inclusion of smallholder farmers into value chains would automatically lead to desired development outcomes. This depended on institutional arrangements at different levels in the chain, on the dynamics of partnerships surrounding the operational processes functional to trading and marketing and on the organizational capacities and strategic choices of farmers’ organizations. The VC4PD research confirmed the importance of organizing agricultural producers, smallholders in particular, in order to steer agri-food chains in a pro-poor development direction.

At farmers’ level, the Sustainable Agro-supply Chains sub-programme aligned with the AgriProFocus initiative ‘Facilitating Rural Entrepreneurship’ and addressed management capacities and entrepreneurial skills of associated farmers engaged in bulking and trading. At the meso-level the tandem of research and process facilitation shifted attention to the conditions for active involvement of farmers’ organizations in decision-making processes leading to investments in technology and equipment and to the added value of farmers’ organizations teaming up with companies and public agencies in setting a commodity-specific policy agenda. These conditions make it more plausible that participation of smallholder farmers in value chains and market-oriented development interventions results in strengthened rural livelihoods and reduced vulnerability.
2.2 Value Chains for Pro-Poor Development (VC4PD)

Sette Vellema, with contributions by Gerdien Meijerink, Jennie van der Meeren-Sluiter, Marieke de Ruijter de Wildt and Giel Ton, LEI, part of Wageningen UR and Ted Schrader and Simone van Vugt, Wageningen UR Centre for Development Innovation

Programmatic orientation
Enhancing domestic, regional and international value chains is widely recognized as a valuable development trajectory, in particular where value chains link and integrate smallholder agricultural producers to markets. Currently, many donors and development organizations, national governments, NGOs, private enterprises and knowledge institutes are engaged in such initiatives. In the framework of the DGIS-Wageningen UR Partnership Programme, the objective of the subprogramme Value Chains for Pro-Poor Development (VC4PD) was to work with practitioners and policy makers in order to validate intervention strategies and support practices in agro-based value chains.

The actions of the VC4PD programme were grounded in selected ongoing change processes initiated by partners in the network of AgriProFocus, AGRINTRA, SNV and the Netherlands’ Embassies in the African countries in which we worked. This chapter reports on the processes involved in embedding our action research, that was tasked to collect information, to open terrain for discussion and to organize strategic dialogue and priority setting, in such change processes.

In development policy and practice, a variety of approaches are labelled as ‘pro-poor’ market development, or ‘pro-poor’ value chain development. The VC4PD programme started in 2007 with a desk-based survey of donor-driven value chain projects that had such a pro-poor perspective. The survey showed that the vast majority of these projects (i.e. 99 out of 107) worked mainly on basic economic performance issues that related to anticipated market demands, compliance with quality standards, clustering of activities for enhanced competitiveness, or value adding. This outcome confirmed that development interventions that have “pro-poor” development as a label, largely build on the assumed principle that economic growth, diligence and development of entrepreneurship have trickle-down effects that benefit the poor. That assumption, however, foregoes thorough strategizing and theorizing about the precise processes that bring about the changes that are anticipated. In turn, this makes it difficult to identify what may be replicated in other situations, or what the target of ups-scaling and out-scaling efforts should be.

An important and contrasting principle adopted by the VC4PD programme was that pro-poor development is not an automatic outcome, neither of integration into value chains, nor of providing access to markets. Our idea was that, in order to create the right conditions for pro-poor development, deliberate and more-targeted institutional interventions are needed that address both the governance and the institutional arrangements in value chains, as well as the livelihood strategies prevailing in rural areas (Barnett, 2004).

A second principle of the VC4PD programme was that it was not the task of research to initiate and control the interventions or change processes. As a consequence, the programme searched for interesting change processes within existing agro-food chains. The subsequent implementation thereof in pilot studies involved fine-tuning with southern partners that were central in the respective change processes. This collaboration formed a delicate process of co-innovation, problem analysis, policy development and implementation.

The VC4PD programme worked in 6 pilot studies:
- Oilseeds (sunflower) in Uganda;
- Sesame in Ethiopia;
- Cassava and other staples in Rwanda;
- Rice in Mozambique;
- Karité (or shea nut) in Burkina Faso, and
- Onions in Niger.

In the selection and implementation of these pilots, we aligned closely with the AgriProFocus country focus initiative ‘Facilitating Rural Entrepreneurship’. All pilot studies, except for the karité pilot in Burkina Faso, took place in the framework of the so-called ‘Agrihubs’ of AgriProFocus. In the countries concerned, this collaboration with SNV, AGRINTRA and other AgriProFocus partners, all working in the same field, was crucial for allowing knowledge to flow. By 2009, upon approval of the pilots in Niger and Burkina Faso, a total of six pilot studies were up and running.

In selecting our pilots, we looked particularly for interventions in value chains where producer organizations played active roles. This was motivated by our interest in the interface between horizontal social organization and vertical chain coordination. Here, the underlying assumption was that important leverage points for development were to be found in that horizontal-vertical interface. More specifically, we studied options for producer organizations to:
- Cope with market risks;
- Reduce the vulnerability of agricultural producers to exogenous shocks, and
- Enhance their capacity to coordinate with other elements in the chain (Ton et al., 2007).

The orientation of the programme embedded this horizontal-vertical interface in an institutional environment that included aspects such as legislation, leveling the playing field, specific policy measures for sector competitiveness, and institutional arrangements that link value chains to wider innovation networks (Bijman et al., 2007).
The approach we took moved beyond interventions and strategies that primarily aim to link smallholders to markets, or to integrate them into value chain configurations. In fact, the VC4PD programme posed the question: “How do existing producer-market linkages impact on poverty alleviation?” In particular, this question related to the possible integration of smallholder producers in value chains. Also, we searched for intervention strategies that would effectively support the realization of ambitious pro-poor development goals under privatized, deregulated and globalized market conditions. The pilot studies which we implemented were all guided by the desire to address complex problems such as variability of income or employment, instability and vulnerability of value chains and markets, bottom-up influences over chain strategy and economic policy, geographic isolation and social exclusion.

The focus: Value chains of non-perishables for domestic markets

In the beginning, the empirical grounding of the VC4PD approach was undefined and, also, it was open whether the pilot studies would focus on export-oriented value chains or on value chains for domestic markets. To make a start anyway, a pragmatic selection was made of one pilot each, in Uganda and Ethiopia. This was based on the strong momentum prevailing in the respective partner networks. Next, a Strategic Conference was organized in the Netherlands in 2008, with development practitioners, policy makers and researchers to discuss and advise on seven options for new pilot studies. A set of concept notes presented insightful versions of the respective impact logics of the proposed pilots, being the programmatic translations of dialogues held by the VC4PD programme managers with African and Dutch partners (Vellama and de Jager, 2008). The Strategic Conference resulted in a further focus on agrofood chains of non-perishable products that were sold largely in domestic markets. Consequently, the programme adopted a strong interest in value chains related to local food provision and, therefore, food security.

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The engagement of the VC4PD action research in open-ended change processes necessitated us to work on a new approach to explicate and validate the intervention theories (i.e. our ‘treatments’ central to the pilot studies). Action research engages in a change process wherein an innovative intervention strategy is being tested, and it is grounded in experiential learning (Lundy et al., 2009). In doing so, and in order to make them ‘researchable’, the selected change processes were labelled as natural experiments (Diamond, 1989). We considered our action research as a way to find out whether the partners involved were turning the right buttons, and to investigate what the causal properties of these buttons were. We approached our pilot studies as experimental versions of an operation, or an institutional practice. This provided a model for future development.

In the pilot studies we tried to create workable tandems between, on the one hand, addressing localized problems and, on the other hand, answering ‘high-level questions of strategic importance beyond the specific case of the pilot concerned. By explicating theories of change in each individual pilot, we tried to connect comparative learning with a focus on context-specific leverage points for propoor development in agrofood chains. Opening the black box of propoor interventions within a creative process of identifying workable mechanisms was further informed by the use of the five interactive co-dimensions of poverty as identified by the OECD: economic, protective, political, sociocultural and human capabilities, respectively.

The use of ‘exploding logic models’ in the pilot studies helped us to detect underlying processes and to inform local understanding of ‘the buttons to be pressed’ or ‘the keys to be turned’. What proved to be more difficult was to arrive at generalizations from our empirical investigations and from the strong engagement with dynamic and open-ended change processes in which our partners were involved. By focusing on comparable cross-cutting issues,
the programme wanted to use the different pilots for cross-site learning as a kind of sample in which similar ... not only for research but also for policy and practice. At a practical level, this translated into continuous discussions 

with the key players in our stakeholder platforms about what 

the actual function of the platform was and how this function 

connected to the functions of other platforms. By taking the 

position of critical but impartial outsiders, the research teams 

contributed to more-precise formulations of the intervention 

strategies, and they alerted the partners for being responsible 

for outcomes that were not clearly related to the actual action, or 

that were contingent on dynamics in the wider context. Examples 

of the latter include governmental interventions or scarcities in 

commodity markets.

The sections below report on the outcomes of the open-ended change processes in the respective pilot studies. Also, they identify the roles that action research played in these change 

processes. In addition, the VC4PD research team produced a 

series of research papers and briefs. These documents are 

available in the public domain at our website: 

www.dgis.wur.nl/UK/VC4PD/Publications.

In the assessment of the roles of research it is important to realize that many of the effects are not directly attributable to reports and 

to data collection per se. Such written outputs merely fill the pool of 

knowledge and information. Rather, the anchoring of research in 
groups of local actors that make the actual change, appears to have been an important ingredient of the programme. This 

was achieved, for example, through the action research process itself, through agenda-setting activities and through a series of 
presentations, dialogues and work sessions that were held with the 
task forces.

Karité (shea nut) in Burkina Faso: Representing women and building strategic networks

In 2009, the recently-established women’s network REKAF (Réseau Karité des Femmes) and its 40 member organizations started a 

strategizing process in the shea nut sector in Burkina Faso. Karité 

or shea trees (Vitellaria paradoxa) are indigenous to Africa and 

grow wild throughout the West African savannah zone. Karité 
nuts are processed into a vegetable oil for human consumption. 

For most rural women in West Africa it is an important source 

of income. In monetary value karite (or: shea) is the third export 

product of Burkina Faso. Currently, about half of the nuts are 

exported to just a handful of multi-national companies that use shea 
as a vegetable oil. The other half is crushed by rural women into 
a thick yellow cream called ‘shea butter’. A tiny part of this butter 

(less than 5 %) is exported to cosmetic industries in Europe and the 

USA. This niche market is receiving lots of attention in development 

interventions. The bulk of the shea butter, however, is used for 

home consumption, mainly as cooking oil and cream, and to make 

soap and cosmetic products for domestic and regional markets.

The VC4PD programme aligned with REKAF whose women- 

leaders observed that men were increasingly occupying political 

positions in national conventions and making strategic decisions 
in the shea sector. Also, the men were encroaching on the more 

remunerative positions in the shea value chain, where the picking 

of the nuts, their processing into butter, soaps and creams and 

the sales of these products were always a typical female activity. 

In order to increase its presence and effectiveness in 
national and international shea networks and institutions, REKAF 

decided to set up a ‘women-only’ platform to speak with one strong 

voice in shea panels across the country. REKAF is convinced that 

internal consultation and alignment are strong instruments to solve 

common problems, to achieve the members’ aspirations and to 

develop their own businesses in the shea sector of Burkina Faso.

For REKAF to look for ways to represent its members’ interests 
appeared to be far from easy, in particular as women have 
different tasks and positions in the shea sector. Moreover, it 

implied navigating in the paillet of development projects and trying 
to define a strategy for themselves. Together withщин Burkina 

Faso, the Université de Ouagadougou and the France-based 

NGO Interréseaux, the VC4PD programme assisted REKAF in 

systematically exploring the roles that shea producer organizations 
can perform. These roles may range from the training of women 
in up-to-standard, high-quality production techniques to marketing, 

and from the provision of price information to lobbying. The 

programme facilitated visits of the REKAF women to various 
organizations that perform such roles, where the women asked 

questions about the pre-conditions for success, the capacities 

needed, the potential risks, and so on.

One of the options explored was an offer made by a large 
development project to invest in, and manage, a shea butter 

processing factory. The programme facilitated discussions with 

important buyers of shea who explained the type and quality of 

products they were after, and for what prices. The buyers shared 
theirs concerns about working with women groups like REKAF that 

were primarily socially motivated, if not politically. For reasons of 

food safety and efficiency, these companies preferred to process 

the nuts themselves. This position contrasts clearly with prevailing 
development trajectories which promote women to sell butter 
rather than nuts, as the former adds value to the product.

In our research, we supported the REKAF women in the 

identification of their own strategic approach, particularly by 

making comparisons between groups of women selling shea
nuts or shea butter on the local market, and groups selling certified butter to the export market and with women that sell soap and cosmetic products. Some of the latter women had already noticed that cosmetic export markets did not absorb all the butter produced and that some groups were left with high quality, certified organic or fair trade butter in stock. In the end, the REKAF women summarized that, although it had been a difficult learning journey, the action research programme taught them a lot: “Before, we didn’t know what was best for us, we were just doing what they told us to do and we were given money for it.” By analyzing their own situation and by weighing alternatives, the ambitions of the REKAF members are now closer to the ground and this has strengthened their positions in partnerships and in policy debates. VCPD’s empowerment and capacity strengthening efforts formed only a start of a longer process of institutional change that will enable REKAF to take part effectively in decision making on development interventions and strategies.

Sesame in Ethiopia: Making transaction risks manageable

Oilseeds are the second Ethiopian export product with sesame taking the largest share. Where the potential of the Ethiopian sesame sector is huge, it faces several problems including inefficient marketing, improper clearing and poor contract discipline. In addition to low productivity levels of sesame, high transaction costs throughout the chain keep farm incomes low and curtail competitiveness of the sector. Over the past five years, the sesame sector has undergone a transformation that was spurred by several initiatives: The Ethiopian Commodity Exchange (ECX) was established in 2006 and opened up for sesame in 2009 while, at the same time, a Public Private Partnership on Oilseeds (PPPO) was established between parties in Ethiopia and the Netherlands. Partners include the Ethiopian Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, the ECX, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Netherlands Embassy who were all playing major roles in transforming the sector. SNV organized linkages with the associated farmers to assess their information needs. Next, the team conducted research to get a better understanding of transaction risks in the sesame chain, the role of the ECX and the functionality of contract farming in addressing these risks. The results of this research were shared, not only with the direct stakeholders but also with a wider group of researchers, development practitioners and policy makers. SNV, long after the project closed (by the end of 2010), the wider impact of the action research on the sesame chains being felt: Research results have been taken up, discussed and disseminated by various parties. In addition, the research also led to the establishment of new networks, links and relationships that, to date, continue effectively.

Rice in Mozambique: Grounding cooperative models in unpredictable local realities

In 2009, the buying of rice from resource-poor and vulnerable farmers in Zambézia Province of Mozambique was given a new incentive by the introduction of a model based on first- and second-tier cooperatives. In Zambézia, four first-tier cooperatives, two of them with a relatively long history, were responsible for the buying of rice from smallholder producers. A second-tier cooperative “Empresa Ortózola de Zambézia” (EOZ) was tasked to buy paddy, sometimes also directly from farmers, to process the rice in its factory and to find national market outlets for the processed rice. In doing so, EOZ was competing with rice imported from a number of Asian countries. EOZ was also instrumental in accessing credit from commercial banks, which was essential for arranging the work capital required to purchase the rice. The implementation of this cooperative model was facilitated by an NGO, “Associação de Promoção de Agricultura Comercial” (APAC). The process received financial support from the Netherlands’ Embassy in Maputo, Oxfam Novib and the European Union.

The VCPD research team investigated the implementation process of this twofold cooperative model in the context of a local history of violent conflicts, struggles over land, unpredictable markets, neglected irrigation schemes and large numbers of farmers producing under rain-fed conditions. Our research focused on information flows related to the practice of rice buying, the sourcing strategies of local traders, farmers’ perceptions of the buying modalities and the farmers’ use of tractors. Our team experimented with a model designed to make the costs of different activities across the rice chain transparent. Jointly with the management of the second-tier cooperative, the team explored how the provision of information would encourage farmers and members at the first-tier cooperative level to trust the buying procedures and marketing strategies at the second-tier. The ensuing discussions revealed that the buying of rice could be arranged differently, with a positive effect on longer-term commitment. In interviews, the farmers expressed that a reliable and trusting buyer that returns annually, was perhaps more important than the higher prices offered by others that come for a one-time transaction. Hence, buying practices affect the capacities of first-tier cooperatives to purchase rice from farmers. This is fundamental to the success of an intervention strategy.
Our research showed that the viability of the two-tier model depends not only on the internal setup of buying, but also on its articulation with organizational and managerial capabilities at the level of the farmer groups and communities involved. The research team was also tasked to dissociate how the local farmers’ organizations built on the organizational and managerial skills generated during their struggles with respect to land tenure, as well as on their skills in the collective management of an (expanding) irrigation scheme. Moreover, we investigated how first-tier cooperatives, that source directly from the farmers, relate to these capabilities. Our research described how, over a period of almost 10 years, groups of farmers that were cultivating plots occurring over a wide area, managed the use of tractors for ploughing. Here too, it became apparent that linkages to smaller groups of farmers was a vital element in the cooperative model. However, finding ways to functionally link the cooperative structure for trading and marketing to the plethora of organizational forms and practices prevailing in the rural areas of Mozambique remains a challenge.

The insights gained in our action research, and in the many discussions we had with the management and supporters of the two-tier cooperative model, formed the input for a ‘Strategic Stakeholder Dialogue’ that was held in the beginning of 2011. In Zambezia, the design and implementation of the two-tier model closely followed the ‘RhineLand model’ which emphasizes on building a member-based organization and on the introduction of an internal accountability mechanism. With APAC we discussed how such a generic model lands in the specific situation of Mozambique, and in Zambezia in particular. The strategic dialogue elaborated on the (assumed) mechanisms in this intervention model. This opened possibilities to discover new combinations of development pathways, or to tailor the generic model to the particular context of Zambezia. The dialogue and its potential follow-ups have benefited greatly from the commitment of Rabobank, Rabo International Advisory Services, and Rabobank’s local branch Banco Terra, Oxfam Novib, AUSTRALCOWI and the Netherlands’ Embassy.

In Niger, the VC4PD programme worked with three farmer-based organizations specialized in onions: ANFO, the Association National des Professionnels de la Filière Oignons, FOMIN, the Fédération des Cooperatives des Producteurs Mâchefers du Niger and the Galmi Onion Producers Union, UDPG, and with SNWاجر. Both, ANFO and FOMIN are members of the national farmers’ organization of Niger PIPIN. In our research we aimed to depict the onion and to identify levers for the development of more competitive, more inclusive and more sustainable onion value chains. The integration of ongoing initiatives of the farmers’ organizations, as well our participatory approach enabled us to jointly analyze the onion value chain. In this analysis we unraveled the most pressing challenges and opportunities for smallholders as well as for the other chain actors. Our focus was on collective actions to improve financial transparency, farmers’ empowerment, and stakeholder collaboration and coordination.

In a stakeholder dialogue that was organized jointly by AgriFocus, SNWاجر and Wageningen UR Centre for Development Innovation, in November 2010 in Birni N’Konni (Niger), our collaborative work resulted in the formulation of a set of resolutions for joint action. Some hundred stakeholders participated in this interactive workshop: farmers, traders, transporters, representatives of women groups, local government officials, business men, credit unions, research organizations, local and national authorities and supporting NGO’s. In a series of discussion rounds and feedback sessions twenty-five resolutions were formulated that proposed actions relating to seeds, onion bags, differentiated sales, the level of organization of farmers and traders, trade systems and improved negotiation between traders and farmers: ‘Les vingt-cinq résolutions de Konni’.

Among the action domains that emerged was the method of packaging the onions, for which a number of specific actions was prioritized. These included a ban, through the Ministry of Commerce, on the use of onion bags of more than one hundred kg (the so-called ‘Boliguis’), and instead, at least for the time being, only use smaller bags that are locally produced by women. Next, a start was to be made with the production of new and uniform onion bags of twentyfive and fifty kg each. The use of such bags is expected to ensure the safety of carriers and transporters, decrease the intransparency of onion bargaining and increase the competitiveness of the Nigerien onion. A last priority identified was to improve information provision and to raise awareness on the need to modernize the packaging of onions and to use standard weighing balances.

However simple they may look, such agreed joint actions form the outcome of a process of institutional change that did not happen overnight. The stakeholder dialogue and the agreed actions connect to the establishment of trade hubs that bring suppliers, traders and supporters closer together and that, possibly, alter the terms of trade to the benefit of smallholder onion producers. These trade hubs were initiated by associated onion producers and traders in collaboration with local governments. Farmer organizations seek to increase the incomes of their members by selling bulk-purchased inputs (e.g. seeds and fertilizers) at lower prices to their members, by providing storage space and trading places, and by increasing farmers’ negotiation power in the regional market. Resolving a seemingly trivial but highly practical issue such as onion bags is part and parcel of a delicate process of institutional change.

The VC4PD action research programme formed only a small element of a much larger puzzle. A process to ‘really peel the onion’ and improve all institutional arrangements will take much longer than the one year we actually worked on it. It is encouraging, however, to observe how local stakeholders got to discuss and disseminate the results of our research and how they continue their efforts to improve the livelihoods of the hundred...
Research supports Farmers Trade Union

Selected research results and the data sets collected by the VC4PD project informed ongoing discussions and strategizing of the organizations involved in the cassava sector in Rwanda:

“For us as a farmers’ union, it is essential to have the capacity to collect and analyse empirical data in order to underpin our proposals to the government and to other stakeholders”, says François-Xavier Mbabazi, coordinator of the INGABO Farmers Trade Union in Rwanda. “Working with research institutes like ISAE and Wageningen UR increases the credibility of our proposals”, he adds. 

The collaboration with Wageningen UR also introduced ISAE staff and students to the combination of research and practical work as it was implemented in the Cassava pilot action research in Rwanda: Jean-Claude Izamuhaye, who supervised the 19 young ISAE students that worked on the pilot, observes: “The debriefing of our research results to 44 cooperatives was the first of its kind, for both ISAE staff and students and for the cooperatives. And we now think it is an obligation of researchers to give research outcomes back to the actors in the field”.

Oilseeds in Uganda: Defining priorities and building collective capacity in a sub-sector platform

The Uganda Oilseed Sub-sector Platform (OSSUP) is in the process of inventing a novel form of collective action in the changeful reality of the Ugandan sub-sector of oilseeds and edible oils. The sub-sector involves hundreds of thousands of smallholder farmers that operate in risky agricultural systems and face instability in the market place: In a competitive setting, partly invoked by increasing imports of palm oil, and a market that faces unstable prices and fluctuations in supply, oilseed producers in Uganda find it difficult to survive by merely selling what they produce. Therefore, they need to engage with intermediaries and food industries in the

Cassava in Rwanda: Connecting capacities in farmer-led agribusiness clusters

In Rwanda, in 2009, a whole new dynamic developed when value-chain partners involved in various commodities and living in different parts of the country came together to explore and shape the idea of farmer-led agribusiness clusters. A critical element of this cluster concept is that farmer organizations play an important role in shaping the right conditions for a process of specialization of farmers that are balancing between production of food for self-sufficiency or for commerce. In territory-based clusters, farmers and their organizations, small and medium private enterprises, and local governments work closely together to capture the advantages of commercial specialisations. These may be based on, for example, the agro-ecological conditions and the organizational capacities prevailing in a certain area.

The cassava pilot study in which the VC4PD programme engaged, was embedded in the work of the INGABO Farmers Trade Union, one of the leading organizations in this field, in Muhanga District of Rwanda. Here, farmers and small-scale processors cooperate to create a viable sector accessible and beneficial to resource-poor farmers while offering (temporary) employment. After the dip in cassava production between 2002 and 2007 that was caused by the cassava mosaic virus, this crop now occupies again some ten per cent of the cultivated land in Rwanda. Higher productivity of new cassava varieties has boosted national production from one million to two million tons of tubers, annually. It is in this context that INGABO with its fifteen thousand members, sought to improve processing and marketing of this important food crop.

In the Rwanda pilot, the VC4PD programme collaborated with INGABO and the Rwandan Institut Supérieur d’Agriculture et d’Élevage (ISAE) and with several local professionals in action-oriented research to find levers that make cassava value chains more-competitive and more-inclusive. Our action research activities included the compilation of farm-life histories of some one hundred eighty cassava farmers, the self-assessment of thirty-six cassava cooperatives, the exploration of options to improve cassava processing, storage and marketing, the possible introduction of a warehouse receipt system for dried cassava and cassava flour, and the assessment of possibilities to improve linkages among different stakeholders. Also, on the basis of national statistical data, a decision model was developed with the aim to attract more investments to the cassava sub-sector.

One of the outcomes of our participatory action research in Rwanda is that strategic choices have become viable at the policy level: The Rwanda Agricultural Development Agency (RADA) and the Netherlands’ Embassy in Kigali have shown keen interest in exploring the results obtained in the cassava pilot for the further innovation and development of cassava value chains. Also, encouraged by the Netherlands’ NGO COC, the strategy based on cluster formation will be incorporated in new research activities by the Partnership Resource Centre (PRC), of which Wageningen UR is a founding member. Key issues to be addressed will include:

- Access to production factors;
- Strategies to improve the performance and resilience of emerging cassava cooperatives;
- Public-private investments in local cassava processing units such as renting or leasing publicly-owned and supervised infrastructure.

Oilseed in Uganda: Defining priorities and building collective capacity in a sub-sector platform
planning and management of production and trade at a level beyond the individual farm (Devaux et al., 2007). The specific nature of the oilseed sub-sector in Uganda, where locally-sourced oils can be substituted by imported palm oil, strongly conditions the perspectives for collective action. At the same time it makes the sector dependent on price fluctuations in the international market.

One of the major players that generated the dynamics of the OSSUP platform has been UOSPA, the Uganda Oilseed Producers and Processors Association. UOSPA has labeled the sub-sector platform as an institutional and political experiment, the outcome of which was not predetermined. The platform approach has received strong commitment from Dutch development organizations, including AgriProFocus and its members Agrierra and SNV Uganda. In 2006, AgriProFocus supported a sub-sector scoping mission (Bindraban et al., 2006). OSSUP, working at national level, linked to two regional platforms that were supported and facilitated by UOSPA. In this way, the platform provided space for a producer-based organization to develop a new strategy and to connect to other chain and non-chain actors. Most specifically, the platform provided linkages between the operations of lead firms and sub-sector policies and support schemes for collective marketing endeavours by farmer organizations and cooperatives. In turn, this allowed for economies of scale, and it enhanced the farmers’ bargaining power in the management of common pool resources (Devaux et al., 2009; Shephard, 2007).

At a more general level OSSUP adopted a strategic focus on enabling policy and regulation. This entailed:
- Advocacy for coherent sector-specific policy and legislation;
- Stimulating the development of stronger linkages with decision-making levels at decentralized governmental units; and
- A more-functional division of responsibilities between stakeholders in public-private partnerships.

The VC4PD team, composed of staff and students of Wageningen UR, Van Hall Larenstein University of Applied Sciences, part of Wageningen UR, and Makerere University, contributed to the formation of the platform and the implementation of its activities. Initially, platform members had to find their ways to cooperate and develop a ‘common language’ to interact. Along the way, however, the platform was able to prioritize its strategic focus. Concurrently, our research provided empirical evidence for dialogues on market coordination, innovation and technological upgrading, and on the functioning of the commodity platform itself. Among the important actors that came about was a joint letter to the Ministry of Agriculture of Uganda, asking for the immediate release of improved planting materials. A less conspicuous effect of the process was the growing appreciation for the role of lead firms, and of associated farmers, in overall sector performance.

Following a three-year period of internal dialogue and priority setting, OSSUP organized a Strategic Dialogue in 2009 in Kampala. Central to this dialogue, which was supported by SNV Uganda and by the VC4PD research team, was OSSUP’s claim that a competitive and pro-poor oilseed sub-sector would require targeted policy support and coordinated action. OSSUP went on to define three priority areas for policy advocacy and implementation:
- Market coordination;
- Access to quality seeds and planting material; and
- Innovative capacity.

In support of this agenda-setting discussion the VC4PD team prepared policy briefs and research papers. Also, our team assisted OSSUP in the process of making the dialogue effective.

The coordinated effort and the shared priorities of OSSUP were highly appreciated by the Government of Uganda and by FAO, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, who are jointly designing the second phase of a public support programme for the oilseed sub-sector of Uganda. Their commitment to use the OSSUP agenda as a guideline for that programme is promising as it also implies a defined role for the platform itself. The ongoing dialogue and information exchange spurred by the platform, and the improved coordination and mutual benefit that resulted from it, have attracted other players such as banks and local government officials to adopt constructive roles in solving problems around finances and the access to quality planting material. A less conspicuous effect of the process was the growing appreciation for the role of lead firms, and of associated farmers, in overall sector performance.

In 2009, OSSUP organized a ‘Research and Development Market Place’ which connected developers and users of technology packages in the sub-sector with research institutes and universities. This market place is yet another example of the functionality of the platform in terms of enhancing connectivity. Where this may stimulate problem-solving and joint actions by chain actors at local level, the actual activities of the platform itself are still somewhat remote from such concrete practices.

From pilots to strategies
In the sections above we described how the six VC4PD pilot studies, rooted as they were in local change processes, supported groups of actors in collecting and analysing information and in organizing dialogues. This was the prime task of the VC4PD programme. A second task was to address high-level questions of strategic importance beyond the specific case at hand. This task was strongly embodied in ongoing strategic debate on development practice and policy. Our programmatic focus, i.e. institutional change in value chains of non-perishable products for domestic and regional markets, has been instrumental in finding linkages to processes with a strategic orientation. As these chains involved large numbers of smallholder farmers across a large geographic area, this also necessitated a discussion on scales and leverage. Both, scale and leverage issues encouraged us to find new types of intervention logic and practices and to explore the implications of change processes and interventions at levels quite remote from the direct beneficiaries.

The practices and nodes of bulking in the value chains on which we worked in the VC4PD programme, turned out to be cross-case elements. Likewise, scaling of interventions and pilots was another common element. A third common element, but with a methodological dimension, lead to impact evaluation: How to detect processes that generate development outcomes in time and place, and that are replicable?

Bulking as entry points for development interventions
Bulking, the activity of assembling volumes of agricultural products, emerged as a functional activity both for the actual development of value chains as well as for their performance. Bulking brings people, organizations, staffs and material together. In the VC4PD pilots concerned, farmers that were linked to the respective value chains, negotiated their terms of inclusion with the other chain actors. At the bulking nodes the interest of all chain stakeholders to ensure reliable and consistent flows of volumes of their products became evident. Also, the advantage of working with associated farmers, capable of delivering volumes and arranging relations with individual producers, was clear at these nodes.

In our pilots we explored different types of ‘buttons’ that could be pressed at the bulking nodes. In doing so, we targeted different forms of collective action, joint problem-solving, the
management of inter-dependencies, and the terms of trade among chain actors. The bulking focus was also important in terms of achieving connectivity with endeavours at other levels. The latter included, in particular, the implementation of commodity-specific policy, an arrangement by commercial banks to finance agricultural production initiatives, and linkages with research and development efforts at universities and research organizations.

An insight resulting from the above is that a focus on functional elements of value chains, such as bulking, may be important to realize constructive arrangements between different chain actors and to direct development interventions to upstream farmer organizations. This is an ongoing process that may be affected by unexpected problems in production or by external pressures from markets or from policy. Hence, the inclusion of farmers in value chains can best be considered as a continuous process rather than a desired endresult of development policy and practice.

The focus on bulking, as adopted in the VC4PD programme, reveals the variable nature of inclusion. In addition, development outcomes seem to be contingent on capacity to manage internal tensions and to respond to external pressures. This was clearly visible in the actual practices at the bulking node. Our suggestion for development policy and practice is to continue working with the type of interventions tailored to the processes at bulking nodes as they were investigated in the pilot studies.

Scaling, coordination and partnerships

In an attempt to scale-up and include larger numbers of smallholder farmers in development endeavours, the VC4PD programme cooperated with various organizations working on value chains in a multi-stakeholder workshop entitled 'Scalability of sustainability: How to make dependencies and risks in value chains manageable?' This workshop, in November 2010 in Nairobi, Kenya, provided a starting point for a discussion on scalability related to institutional crafting of, and directing, behavioral patterns in, the nodes configuring (associated) smallholder farmers with actors in value chains and market systems at levels that are spatially and institutionally remote. In terms of developing a knowledge agenda, the directions suggested in the Nairobi workshop are complementary to the agenda on knowledge development that was discussed in the context of the Netherlands’ Development Policy Research Network (DPRN).

Towards the end of the programme, we shared our insights and interests in scaling with those of other organizations working on value chains in a multi-stakeholder workshop entitled ‘Scalability of sustainability: How to make dependencies and risks in value chains manageable?’ This workshop, in November 2010 in Nairobi, Kenya, provided a starting point for a discussion on scalability related to institutional crafting of, and directing, behavioral patterns in, the nodes configuring (associated) smallholder farmers with actors in value chains and market systems at levels that are spatially and institutionally remote. In terms of developing a knowledge agenda, the directions suggested in the Nairobi workshop are complementary to the agenda on knowledge development that was discussed in the context of the Netherlands’ Development Policy Research Network (DPRN).

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The strategy and outcome of our programme in terms of a focus on bulking and scaling, fits with the orientation of analysis, debate and policy that prevails in multilateral organizations. Through invited participation in expert meetings and seminars, the VC4PD programme was able to connect its hands-on experience in pilot studies to policy debate in multi-lateral organizations. This applies in particular to the interest of UNDP in mechanisms that make business models work for development, to the interest of UNGI and UNIDO in systemic change and industral policy, to the interest of UNRISD in social justice, and to FAO’s interest in various forms of commodification based associations. In addition, the results of the programme informed the ongoing discussion among peer researchers and the dialogues with private-sector organizations, NGO’s and governments in the context of the project ‘Value chains, social inclusion and local economic development’ of the Netherlands’ Development Policy Research Network. Furthermore, our action research served as an input for dialogues and workshops organized under the auspices of the Research Programme Cluster International (BOC) of the Netherlands’ Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation.

Methodological considerations in impact evaluation

Finally, our involvement in local pilot studies encouraged us to develop a more systematic approach to explicate the impact models underlying the change processes concerned. As we found it necessary to begin exploring the methodological implications for impact evaluation of action-oriented research, we presented papers on this issue at the 9th Wageningen International Conference on Chain and Network Management (WICaNeM), in May 2010. At this conference the VC4PD programme organized a special track of four sessions on development impacts of value chains. Some of these conference papers have been published in scientific journals since (e.g., Ton et al., 2011).

Also, the VC4PD programme spurred thinking about ways to monitor and evaluate activities in such diverse pilots as those in which we engaged, with their strongly divergent contexts, interventions and expected outcomes. We managed to develop a monitoring instrument that responds to the challenges of...
Implementing an action-oriented research programme helped us to discover the key assumptions in the logics of multi-stakeholder processes in value chains. To this end, additional information was collected through action research, that fed strategic discussions in the different value chain partnerships. A continued discussion on the underlying processes central to the logic models served as a monitoring instrument for the VC4PD programme coordinator. This monitoring created room for adaptation to changed circumstances while helping to check consistency with, or deviation from, the original rationale behind the pilots as reflected in the inception documents.

Through its methodological endeavour, the VC4PD programme linked to one of the initiatives of the Donor Committee for Enterprise Development (DCED, 2010; Tanburn, 2008) that aims to generate credible and comparable information on donor-funded value chain interventions. The suggestion from this initiative, and from our own work, is that impact evaluations need to find combinations of measuring lean sets of minimum standards to report on private sector development outcomes, with theory-laden inquiries on the generative mechanisms in specific contexts. Such combinations would result in a body of evidence on plausible regularities emanating from value chain support that would lend itself for comparative analysis and bench marking. The discussion on scaling and replicating pilot interventions may benefit from rigorous methodologies for impact evaluation. In a follow-up to this aspect of the VC4PD programme, Wageningen UR now links up with the current discussions within DCED, Dutch NGO’s including Oxfam Novib, IOCO, Hivos and Cordaid, the Private Sectors ResourceCentre, the Netherlands’ Initiative for Sustainable Trade, and the Dutch and international research community. In addition, Wageningen UR is involved in the discussion on methodological directions for impact evaluation framed by IOB, the Policy and Operations Evaluation Department of the Netherlands’ Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Our pilot studies focussed strongly on different intervention strategies that aimed to make the bulking node work for the development of poor farmers. Linking research to practice and policy helped to get a more precise understanding of the underlying processes set in motion by specific interventions. Conversely, the alignment of research with development practice made it possible to sharpen and focus interventions. By focusing on the logic in the interventions, and not only on possible effects, our research contributed to an open discussion on the different roles of partners and chain actors in an overall development endeavour.

References


Selected pilot studies in the action research programme Value Chains for Pro-poor Development (adapted from Vellema, 2010)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Commodity</th>
<th>Scope</th>
<th>Objective of action research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Burkina Faso</td>
<td>Shea nut (karité)</td>
<td>Networking, strategizing and repres in the shea nut sector</td>
<td>Conceptualize workable modalities to empower women in the various economic realms of shea nut and in policy Support to networks of the sub-sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>Sesame</td>
<td>Institutional measures reducing transaction risks in the sesame trade</td>
<td>Test institutional arrangements to modify the interface between the vertical column and farmers Support coordination and mutuality in a commodity-based platform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mozambique</td>
<td>Edible oils</td>
<td>Cooperation in the buying of rice from farmers acting in vulnerable conditions</td>
<td>Encourage strategic dialogue among actors involved in making a 2-tier cooperative model work in the Zambézia region Contribute to reliable and remunerative market access for rice farmers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niger</td>
<td></td>
<td>Joint actions and farmer-initiated trade hubs in the Tahoua onion belt</td>
<td>Stimulate formulation of, and agreement on, joint actions to support establishment of transparent pricing mechanisms and region-based growth models</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td></td>
<td>Farmer-led cluster development for socially embedded domestic food chains</td>
<td>Build strategic connectivity and informing foresight capacity in farmers’ led and sociallyjust agribusiness clusters in Rwanda’s agro-food filières</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td></td>
<td>Platforms achieving stability and competitiveness in the oilseed subsector</td>
<td>Provide evidence for strategizing and policy advocacy by the Uganda Oilseed Subsector Platforms Identify workable models to reduce uncertainty and instability faced by producers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Focus of pilot for pro-poor value chain development:

- Encourage a women’s network with improved negotiation, representation and agenda-setting skills in decision-making on strategic support to different value chains (primary food chains, specialized cosmetic chains and bulking chains for food industries)
- Reduce transaction risks in the Ethiopian sesame chain with incentives to alter behavioral patterns and enabling conditions for remunerative and committed participation of smallholder producers based on transparent arrangements
- Embed generic models for cooperative structures for the purchase of rice in volatile market contexts and develop region-specific ways of connecting transparent governance of rice buying to existing value and economic arrangements in different rice producing areas
- Install trade-hubs that reduce vulnerabilities in the onion trade as part of collective marketing efforts initiated by specialized farmers and embed the onion producers in networks of existing farmer organizations with traders, processors and enabling institutes
- Build strategic management capacity in producer organizations to combine pro-poor interventions in farmers-led and sociallyjust agribusiness clusters with robust economic partnerships and flexible connectivity to innovation networks
- Support collective, meso-level strategies of a subsector platform that a semblance private and public actors and up-scaling and multiplying chain-based development interventions in market coordination and technological innovation.
Value Chains for Pro-Poor Development (VC4PD)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aim/objectives</th>
<th>Working with practitioners and policy makers to validate intervention strategies and support practices in agro-based value chains.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project location</td>
<td>Rwanda, Ethiopia, Uganda, Burkina Faso, Mozambique and Niger.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Project partners | In the Netherlands  
- LEI, part of Wageningen UR  
- Wageningen UR Centre for Development Innovation  
- Agri-ProFocus  
- Agriterris  
- Partnerships Resources Centre (PRC)  
- The Netherlands’ Initiative for Sustainable Trade (IDH)  

- In Uganda  
  - Oilseed Sub-Sector Uganda Platform (OSSUP)  
  - Uganda Oilseed Producers and Processors Association (UOSPA)  
  - SNV-Uganda  
  - Makerere University, Kampala  

- In Ethiopia  
  - Ethiopian Pulse, Oilseed and Spice Processing Exporters Association (EPOSPEA)  
  - Ambo Farmers Cooperative Union  
  - Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR)  
  - SNV-Ethiopia  
  - Kaleb and AgroProm: Ethiopian export companies  

- In Rwanda  
  - Rwandan Union of Agriculturists and Animal Breeder (INGABO)  
  - SNV-Rwanda  
  - International Centre for Soil Fertility and Agricultural Development (IFDC)  
  - Institut Supérieur d’Agriculture et d’Elevage (ISAE)  
  - Initiative pour la Promotion de l’Entrepreneuriat Rural (IPER)  

- In Mozambique  
  - Associação de Promoção de Agricultura Comercial (APAC)  
  - EOZ 2nd-tier cooperatives and aligned 1st-tier cooperatives  
  - Resilience Consultants Ltd  
  - Banco Terra da Moçambique (affiliated with the Rabobank of the Netherlands).  

- In Burkina Faso  
  - Réseau Rural de Femmes du Burkina (REURF)  
  - Centre d’Études, de Documentation et de Recherches Economique et Sociale (CERES)  
  - Centre de Recherche et d’Intervention en Genre et Développement (CREGID)  
  - Centre d’Analyse Politique Économique et Sociale (CAPEIS)  
  - Université de Ouagadougou  

- In Niger  
  - Association National des Professionnels de la Filière Oignon (ANFO)  
  - Comité d’Orientation et de Régulation de la Filière Oignon (CORFO)  
  - Observatoire Régional de l’Oignon (ORO/AOC)  
  - SNV/Niger  
  - Oxfam Novib-Niger  
  - Réseau des Organisations Paysannes et de Producteurs de l’Afrique de l’Ouest (ROPPA)  

| Website | www.dgis.wur.nl/UK/VC4PD |

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2.3 Facilitating Rural Entrepreneurship

Ted Schrader with contributions by Simone van Vugt, Hans Nijhoff and Karèn Verhoosel, Wageningen UR Centre for Development Innovation

Introduction  
As the second component of Theme 1 “Sustainable Agro-Supply Chains” of the DGIS-Wageningen UR Partnership Programme, “Facilitating Rural Entrepreneurship” supported the AgriProFocus initiative “Promotion of Farmer Entrepreneurship” in which learning and innovation trajectories were developed to catalyze agricultural entrepreneurship in Africa. This initiative involves consortia of stakeholders that are working on themes, sub-sectors, value chains and agribusiness clusters in nine so-called “AgriHubs” in countries selected by AgriProFocus (see textbox). Each of these AgriHubs groups some fifty to one hundred local stakeholders who are being facilitated in the implementation of specific activities under the initiative. In addition, in each AgriHub various AgriProFocus member organizations are actively engaged in the respective initiatives. This opens perspectives to make a difference in exploring innovative collaboration arrangements, for example by improving coordination, by harmonization of efforts, or by creating complementarities. This is done in a policy-practice interface.

Thematic priorities of the AgriHubs relate to the general challenge to make value chains more competitive, more sustainable and more inclusive. Access questions (i.e. availability of inputs, financial services and agri-advisory services), gender and social inclusion, capacity development and empowerment of producers are high on the action agendas. In all countries involved, the establishment of learning and innovation networks at different levels typifies the AgriHubs initiative. These are being implemented within the matrix framework “Theory of Change” as shown on page 42.

Objectives of the Agri-hub approach

- Establishing solid, transparent and action-oriented support programmes with local partners and other development actors to promote rural entrepreneurship and to increase performance in commodity chains;
- Enhancing cross-cutting collaboration and learning among Agri-hub partners, both local and international;
- Supporting local partners in establishing platforms for joint generation and circulation of knowledge, and
- Supporting local partner and governing structures to establish sustainable modalities to promote rural entrepreneurship.
In the framework of the Partnership Programme, Wageningen UR Centre for Development Innovation facilitated entrepreneurship development processes in the Agri-hubs in Rwanda, Niger, Uganda and Zambia. In Niger, Rwanda and Uganda these activities were complementary to the pilot action researches implemented by the VC4PD programme, that are described in the previous section of this booklet. In Kenya, Ethiopia and Mozambique, the Royal Institute for the Tropics (KIT, the Netherlands) was the process facilitator. As from 2011, new Agri-hubs are being established in Benin and Mali. In all Agri-hubs web-based portals (‘nings’) are used for information-sharing and online discussion between the various partners. General coordination of the Agri-hub initiative is with Agri-ProFocus in the Netherlands. At country level, the Agri-Hubs are being coordinated by lead member institutes of Agri-ProFocus: ICCO for Rwanda and Ethiopia, Oxfam Novib in tandem with SNV for Niger and Uganda, SNV for Kenya and Uganda, Cordaid for Zambia and KIT (temporarily) for Mozambique. SNV and ICCO will coordinate the new Agri-hubs in Benin and Mali respectively. In the sections below, the Agri-hub activities in Rwanda, Niger, Uganda and Zambia are being highlighted.

Rwanda

Agri-hub activities in Rwanda originated from existing value-chain related initiatives of the Agri-ProFocus members ICCO, Agriterra, Terrafina, SNWRwanda, Wageningen UR, Oxfam Novib and KIT. These members joined forces with local NGOs, farmer organizations, micro-finance institutions, IAE (Institut Supérieur d’Agriculture et d’Élevage), IFDC-Rwanda and ILO-COOPAfrica (the ILO Cooperative Facility for Africa, a technical collaboration programme that aims to promote development of cooperatives). These partners, collaborated in the Tractable pour la Promotion de l’Entrepreneuriat Rural (PER), with the aim of supporting agribusiness initiatives of local chain actors. The PER initiative oscillates around the dynamics of fifteen practical agribusiness clusters, each working on different value chains (rice, maize, potatoes, wheat, cassava and honey) in different parts of the country.

Among the main outputs of PER are:
- An inception report ‘Promoting farmer entrepreneurship through capacity strengthening, agribusiness cluster formation and value chain development in Rwanda’;
- Various workshops and workshop reports including ‘Atelier PER: Démarrage des pôles d’entreprises agricoles’ which resulted in the mapping of the value chains in which the stakeholders’ main interests lay, and their configurations;
- Report on cooperative entrepreneurship in cassava and in rice, and on warehouse-voucher receipt systems in rice;
- Thirteen trained local process facilitators-cum-agribusiness-coaches;
- A Cassava Action Research Plan;
- A conference on value chain financing, jointly with Terrafina, and
- Exchange visits with other Agri-hubs (e.g. Uganda).
The IPER coalition has succeeded in raising interest among many international, governmental and non-governmental organizations including USAID, Aquasha (a Belgium-based NGO), ISAR (Institut des Sciences Agronomiques du Rwanda), UNIR (Université Nationale de Rwanda), PAR (Institute for Policy Analysis and Research), RCA (Rwanda Cooperative Agency), RADA (Rwanda Agricultural Development Authority), ROB (Rwanda Development Board), BRD (Banque Rwandaise de Développement) and the Banque Populaire de Rwanda. The growing interest of different governmental organizations is crucially important in the context of the country’s agricultural development and enables the IPER initiative to be brought to a higher strategic level.

Detailed information on the Rwanda Agri-hub initiative, and its achievements, is available at http://apf-rwanda.ning.com. By the end of 2011, this network engaged some one hundred and fifty professionals and practitioners in Rwanda’s smallholder agriculture sector.

*Niger*

In Niger, Oxfam Novib, Agriterra, ILEA, SNV Nijer and Wageningen UR and their local partners, UPA-DI (Union des Producteurs Agricoles de Développement International), a Canadian not for profit corporation, IMAN (Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique du Niger), the Université de Niamey, OSC (Organisation de la Société Civile) and Mooren (OSC and Mooren are farmer organizations), IICD (International Institute for Communication and Development) and Wageningen UR (as a local consultancy firm) cooperated in developing initiatives related to agricultural entrepreneurship and value chains. These initiatives addressed issues such as the importance of enabling environments and institutions, and questions like ‘how does farmer entrepreneurship lead to increased food security?’, or ‘how will increased lobbying power of farmers contribute to their better alignment in value chains and to greater impact?’.

As a “spin-out” of the Niger Agri-hub, Oxfam Novib is now providing substantial financial support (€ 400,000 for four years) to the programme ‘Supporting the promotion of farmer entrepreneurship’ (APEA) in Niger. This programme was drawn up by a consortium of Nigerian Agri-ProFocus partners headed by Mooren. In the APEA programme specific actors deal with thematic issues such as quality seed development and seed supply systems, the marketing of onions, cattle and dairy, and land use planning.

As highlighted in the previous chapter toward the end of 2010, SNV Niger and Wageningen UR Centre for Development Innovation jointly organized the workshop ‘Episuper Toqajoun’ (Pestering the onion) in Birni NKonn, Niger, as a wrap-up of the WAPD pilot action research on onions. The goal of that research was to identify possibilities for collective action in the onion value chain. The research focused on leverage points that induce changes that make the onion sub-sector more competitive, more inclusive and more sustainable. The results were shared with some hundred stakeholders and stimulated dialogue that resulted in ‘Les vingt-cinq résolutions de Konni’.

Further information on outputs, planning and discussions in the framework of the Niger Agri-Hub can be found at http://apf-niger.ning.com. By the end of 2011, the Niger network engaged some eighty-five practitioners and professionals working on value chains and smallholder agriculture.

*Zambia*

In Zambia, the Agri-hub initiative was implemented jointly by Cordaid, SNWZambia, ICD (International Institute for Communication and Development), Woord & Daad, Humana, Heifer International, Hivos, Agriterra and Wageningen UR. In the early stages of the initiative a multi-stakeholder inception workshop was organized in Zambia with participation of representatives of the Golden Valley Agricultural Research Trust (GART, a para-statal agency active in the interface between applied research and extension), the Zambia Dairy Processors Association, the Cotton Development Trust, the Zambia Honey Council and other sector organizations as well as agencies. The participants (over seventy in total) mapped out a joint agenda on the needs and opportunities to promote farmer entrepreneurship, joint actions in specific value chains (rice, cotton, biofuels, honey and dairy were selected) and follow-up actions, as well as rules and responsibilities in the various processes. In addition, three cross-cutting issues were identified for joint action:

- **Access to finance:**
  - Access to market information, and
  - Capacity strengthening in producer organizations.

The Agrihub team working on rice achieved an impressive success as, through their intervention, the Zambian Rice Association was founded. The absence of such an association had been listed as a hot issue during the inception workshop. Likewise, the cotton group, headed by the Cotton Association of Zambia, booked progress and had ‘Best Practice Manuals’ prepared and disseminated. In addition, the group is working on alternatives for cotton farmers away from the contract-farming arrangements hitherto prevailing. As for biofuels, the focus was on policy influence. In order to demonstrate practical benefits of Jatropha, attention was put on the crop’s multiple use character, including its potential for the production of soap, as an additional means of income for farmers. With regard to the cross-cutting topic ‘Access to Finance’, Agri-ProFocus members Cordaid, Woord & Daad and ICD, jointly with the local partner ZATAC (Zambia Agribusiness Technical Assistance Centre) organized a workshop that built on the recent RIT/IRP Publication ‘Value Chain Finance’ (NT and IRP, 2010). The AgriHub initiative in Zambia has drawn the interest of a number of international development partners including FAO, ILO and SIDA, the Swedish Development Agency. In fact, the Swedish Cooperative Centre in Lusaka has expressed its interest to formally join the network.

Further information and discussions relating to the Agri-hub activities in Zambia are being shared at http://apf-zambia.ning.com. The Zambia network has over one hundred and fifty participants engaging in debate and information exchange (December 2011).

*Uganda*

Thirteen Agri-ProFocus members are actively involved in the Agri-hub process in Uganda, including KIT, SNV-Uganda, the Ugandan Oilseed Sub-Sector Platform (USSP), the Uganda Oilseed Producers and Processors Association (UOPSPA), Makerere University, and the NGO Participatory Ecological Land Use Management (PELU-Uganda). The Uganda Agri-hub was launched during a multi-stakeholder meeting in November 2009 in which over seventy representatives of local farmer organizations, development organizations, financial and business service
providers, the public sector and private enterprises participated. The workshop defined and analyzed the critical issues for promoting farmer entrepreneurship in Uganda and identified possibilities for coordinated action in five priority areas: Financial services; Policy engagement; Farmer organizations; Market information, and Farm services.

In subsequent stakeholder meetings two additional themes were incorporated in the Agri-hub action plan: Gender in value chains, and Food security.

The policy engagement group is linking its activities with the ESFIM initiative (Empowering Small Farmers in Markets) which, in Uganda, is involved in action research to audit the effectiveness of the National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS). In the farm services group focus is on innovation platforms in rice. The group has established links with the National Rice Secretariat of Uganda. The Uganda Agri-hub also includes the activities related to the VC4RD action research platform on oilseeds, a joint initiative of OSSUP, SNV Uganda, Makerere University, AgriProFocus and Wageningen UR. The OSSUP action research platform is highlighted in the previous chapter of this booklet.

Further information on the activities of the Uganda Agri-hub is available at http://apf.uganda.ning.com. By the end of 2011 over eight hundred professionals and practitioners in the smallholder agricultural sector of Uganda had subscribed to this ning.

Reference