

Annex : AGRICULTURAL MARKETING AND RURAL LIVELIHOODS

1 Questions for pro-poor analysis of rural livelihoods and markets

- Who are the poor, what are the assets that they hold, what activities are they engaged in, what are their aspirations and livelihood strategies?
- What markets are important for the livelihoods of the poor (or should be important for them) now or in the future, directly or indirectly?
- How well do these markets currently serve the poor, in terms of ease of access, security of access and conditions of access?
- How do these markets fit into supply and value chains? How do these chains operate: where are the constraints, where are the high returns being made?
- What stakeholders are involved in these markets and what are their roles, their interests, their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOTs)?
- What are the barriers to entry and the transaction costs and risks for different stakeholders?
- What is the institutional environment like and what are its effects on key markets— is it enabling or disabling? How could these be developed or modified to improve market access for the poor?
- What institutional arrangements are currently in place? Why are they in their current form? How could these be developed or modified to improve market access for the poor?
- How are these markets changing and how are they likely to change as a result of wider, external processes of change? What opportunities are there for support to wider process of growth?

This is a complex and challenging set of questions which could rapidly become unmanageable, and analysts need to use the earlier questions to narrow down the range of markets and issues that they focus on. It is also important to have a unifying framework for the examination of the way that particular markets work, and here the widely used concepts of market structure, conduct and performance (SCP) are useful. Figure A1.1 (overleaf) highlights the relationship between the broader environment; government policy; government, civil society and private sector organisations; markets; and stakeholder livelihoods. This framework also helps to structure discussion of recommendations.

2 Initial Application of the Analytical Framework

We began with an initial application of the analytical framework outlined above by considering in some detail the first two questions it poses, and then briefly discussing the remaining questions.

2.1 Who are the poor, and what are their assets, activities and livelihood strategies?

There was little information to hand about the poor in the specific geographical areas that were the focus of the study. We therefore used incomplete information on poverty at both national and area level to construct some ideas on the characteristics of the poor, their assets, their livelihood strategies, and the markets that are most important to them.

Drawing on this limited and disparate information and on more general knowledge of common characteristics of the rural poor elsewhere in rural Africa we developed a set of working hypotheses of the key characteristics of livelihood strategies of the rural poor in these areas:

- Small scale agricultural production by the poor is likely to be concentrated on staple food crop production as this often requires lower financial capital and is not so dependent on wider social networks for purchase of inputs and for sale of produce. Producers are likely to obtain low yields (due to lack of access to purchased inputs and sometimes due to low or late labour inputs) and to sell some produce soon after harvest because of the need to raise cash to pay debts and/or because of poor storage facilities. They may then need to purchase staple foods later in the season when their limited stocks are exhausted. They are thus both buyers and sellers of staple foods. Sale, storage and consumption of staple foods may involve some processing, particularly of staple root crops. This processing may either pose further costs to the poor (increasing the margin between

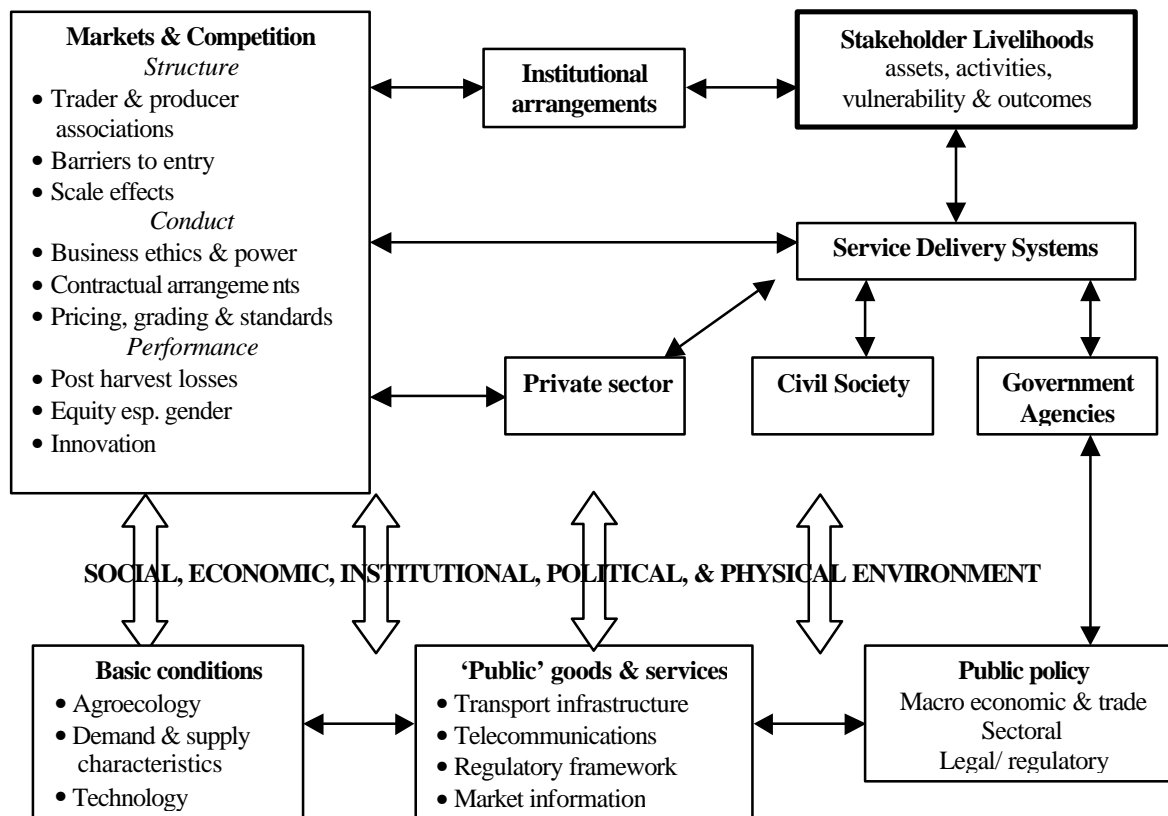


Figure 1 Livelihoods and Market Structures, Conduct and Performance

sales and purchase prices), or offer income opportunities if they can engage in labour intensive, low cost processing.

- Poor households may also supply casual, agricultural labour to better off farmers. This may be to work on food or cash crops. They may also supply labour to other enterprises owned by better off local people. Where poor households are also cultivating some of their own land, seasonal food or cash shortages may require them to hire labour out to others at the cost of timely labour inputs to their own fields.
- In some areas poor households may rely upon the gathering of wild natural resources for their consumption and for sale. Firewood gathering is a widespread example of this, but wild fruits and fibres may also be important.¹
- The supply of low skill, low investment services in the local economy is another common income generating activity of the rural poor. Examples of such services may be petty trading, simple food processing such as cooking snacks or brewing, water carrying, local transport (porterage), etc.
- The poor may also rely upon seasonal or long term migrant labour, outside their local communities in urban areas or in other rural areas. Closely associated with this is the importance of remittances from migrant family members working in these areas.

¹ Pastoralists constituted a distinct subset within this group, but we had insufficient information on the numbers of pastoralists in the areas or on their livelihoods to explicitly consider them further.

2.2 What markets are important for the livelihoods of the poor?

Using this stylised identification of the livelihood strategies of the poor, we then suggested markets that may be important for their livelihoods, both directly and indirectly, and allowing for both current and potential importance. For agricultural producers, key assets and inputs were identified as land, labour, seasonal inputs (such as seed and fertilisers), and seasonal capital (such as food stocks and cash for domestic consumption and for inputs). Staple food markets were important to poor producers in terms of the farm gate prices at or shortly after harvest, and in terms of prices paid as consumers at other times of the year. Consumer prices for staple foods are important to all the poor, for whom staple food expenditures account for a large proportion of total expenditures and incomes. Wages received for agricultural and non-agricultural employment depend upon the workings of labour markets, and upon the demands for labour. Agricultural labour demand depends largely upon output prices, for both staple and cash crops, and upon labour productivity, determined by technology and larger farmers' investments in seasonal and longer term capital. Non-agricultural labour demand depends largely upon local incomes and demands for local goods and services.

Table A1. Markets impacting upon the rural poor

Livelihood Strategies	Markets with direct impacts <i>Italics indicate potentially important markets not widely accessed at present</i>	Markets with indirect impacts
Poor agricultural producers	Staple food sales Staple food purchases <i>Agricultural inputs</i> <i>Seasonal finance and savings</i> Land	(1) Wider national and international markets for crops, inputs, transport and finance, and their interaction at different points in market chains. Local competitors' access to these other markets.
Poor agricultural processors	Staple food sales Staple food purchases <i>Processing inputs & equipment</i> <i>Financial services</i>	(2) Wider markets (see (1) above). (3) Wider financial markets.
Agricultural labourers	Labour Staple food purchases <i>Financial services</i>	(4) Commercial farms' access to markets for cash & food crops (for labour demanding crops), inputs, finance and land. Wider markets (see (1) above). (5) Wider markets (see (1) above). (6) Wider financial markets.
Non-agricultural labourers	Labour Staple food purchases <i>Financial services</i>	(7) Local markets for non-agricultural goods and services, employers' access to finance and input markets. Wider markets (see (1) above). (8) Wider markets (see (1) above). (9) Wider financial markets.
Petty trade, services, etc.	Local goods & services Production inputs (raw foods, processing equipment, etc) Staple food purchases <i>Micro-finance / financial services</i>	(10) Local labour markets (11) Wider markets (see (1) above). (11) Wider markets (see (1) above). (12) Wider financial markets.
Migrant labour & remittances	Migrant labour markets <i>Money transfer, & other financial services</i>	(13) Wider urban, rural & cash crops markets (see (1) above). (14) Wider financial markets

Table A1 presents a summary of the markets expected to have direct and indirect impacts on different livelihood strategies. It sets out hypotheses for testing as regards predominant livelihood strategies in

specific areas ², and suggests markets whose functioning is directly or indirectly important to the poor. We also considered how, as a rural economy develops, the relative importance of different markets might change. This led to consideration of how specific markets might be identified for initial attention in different areas.

2.3 Further questions

The analytical framework developed above then posed further questions about the nature of the markets that are important to the poor, the way that the poor are currently served by them, their structure, the different stakeholders in these markets, their institutions, and their dynamics. Three general issues were raised: first, that the way that these questions should be addressed varies between markets that are of direct and indirect importance to the poor; second, that an analysis of stakeholder interests in these markets might reveal that, although widely denigrated, non-competitive restrictive practices of trade associations and cartels need very careful examination, as middlemen often perform useful market functions and in doing so often engage in substantial risks³; third, that it is essential to ground all analysis in an understanding of the broad institutional environment (for example trade and macro-economic policies and conditions, business and government practices, governance) and of specific institutional arrangements whereby buyers and sellers make contact and agree, conduct and enforce transactions. Such understanding must recognise the reasons (market and non-market costs, returns and risks; social and cultural factors) for particular agents adopting particular practices. Three other broad interlinked themes were also addressed with regard to trade and macro-economic policy (a) the macroeconomic environment, (b) agricultural and trade policy, and (c) governance. For each of these it was necessary to consider differential impacts on food and export production.

3 Recommendations

Recommendations on moving forward addressed both the process of developing a marketing programme, and the focus, aims and content of such a programme.

3.1 The process of developing a marketing programme

In developing our analytical framework, we developed and began to work through a set of steps necessary for developing a programme to address marketing constraints and opportunities facing the poor.

- Identify which markets are important for the poor with most potential for improvement
- For these markets identify critical opportunities and constraints.
- Assess how these may be addressed, and the stakeholders involved
- Relate these to stakeholders' resources, objectives and existing activities
- Prioritise issues for potential actions, identify actions, identify further information and stakeholder consultation needed.

This process should take account of

- The need to consider issues in different sectors, and the varying interests and responsibilities of different national and local government agencies, and of NGOs and private sector agents in those

² For example we hypothesised that agricultural products (food and cash crops) were the major locally produced tradables; that increased local incomes would lead to increased demand for locally produced, non-tradable goods and services; and that this would increase demand for hired or self-employed labour, providing the major pathway for increasing incomes for the rural poor.

³ While grossly inequitable returns between traders and farmers and corrupt and violent means to maintain market positions must be condemned and attacked, such action must recognise (a) the power of these associations, (b) the value of the services they provide, and (c) the skills, difficulties and risks which are involved in providing these services. The latter often prevent poor farmers and farmer associations from providing these services themselves and also require high returns for traders and protection from competitive risks if they are to provide these services for an acceptable profit (Smith, H.M. and Luttrell, 1994).

sectors (important sectors here were identified as including transport, telecomms, governance, finance, and broader trade and macro- policy, in addition to agriculture);

- Different types of action and roles that external parties may take (for example advocacy, technical assistance, investment, and coordination), and the different roles, resources and constraints of government (federal, state and local authorities and parastatals), civil society, private sector and donor agencies and of course of the different groups among the rural poor themselves.
- The importance of partnership and participation by different stakeholders in this process.

3.2 Marketing constraints and recommendations

Limited reports on agricultural marketing in the study areas identified a range of constraints to improve producer output marketing with broad similarities across different areas. These included problems with roads, market information, standardisation and grades, market facilities, market regulations, processing, storage, finance, and restrictive and exploitative practices by middlemen and market managers. The list of common constraints to marketing was all-encompassing but typical of many developing economies.

We recommended that feasible solutions for overcoming the marketing constraints should be sought primarily through increasing the involvement of the private sector (private firms and intermediary/trade associations) as well as working through central and local government and other structures within the civil society (CBOs, NGOs). We recommended an indirect approach to reducing the constraints by tackling the underlying causes of market imperfection and failure and suggested appropriate partners as entry points, expected actions or outputs. Table A2 overleaf presents recommendations applying to a greater or lesser extent to different agricultural markets, but these recommendations needed prioritization and targeting to suit particular markets, local conditions, and the concerns of local communities and other stakeholders, in accordance with the processes and principles outlined earlier.

We grouped the marketing constraints identified above into a set of principal causes of market imperfection and failure as follows:

- **Physical access** is of considerable importance, and poor roads and other infrastructure raise marketing costs of transport inputs and products, increase post-harvest losses, and create a rationale for high margins. There is a need for advocacy, coordination and facilitation among donors and local and central government actions in this sector, addressing both major road infrastructure and feeder roads. The latter take on more of a community- or private good characteristic and need not be funded solely by Government out of a necessarily limited budget. Responsibility for such roads and local efforts to improve them could be sought through partnerships with local civil society (NGOs and CBOs). Private transport services should respond to improved road conditions and increased demand.
- **Information** (like many of the issues raised) is a complex issue both in respect of its kind, collection and delivery (Poole *et al.*, 2000a; Poole *et al.*, 2000b). Information has both public and private good characteristics, and some of the problems of access to reliable and relevant information will be met through improved telecommunications. It is here above all that the interests of the private sector firms to extend operations into rural areas can help to overcome informational imperfections and increase the competitiveness of the trading system (Lynch *et al.*, 2001 Poole, 2001) – notwithstanding the much wider social and civil benefits that will accrue from better access to telephones. Government agencies and the telecomms sector need to establish and implement policies whereby telecommunications can be rolled out into rural areas in such a way as to alleviate, not exacerbate, poverty. External agencies may have an important role in supporting this, as both technology and institutional innovations (such as private/ public partnerships and community participation) are needed. Experience is limited in this area, but the current commercial environment and the rate of technological change offer both opportunities and threats for poverty alleviation. Private sources of investment are likely to be attracted into this area.

Table A2. Principal Causes of Market Failure and Possible Donor Entry Points

Principal causes of market imperfection and failure		Partners	Actions/ outputs	Donor role
Poor physical access	Poor roads and physical infrastructure Weak transport systems	Government (central, regional, local) Civil society (CBOs)	Road construction & maintenance (trunk, feeder) Institutional innovation (e.g. participation & financing systems), technology	Technical assistance Finance Coordination of government and CBOs
Poor informational access	Lack of communications	Government (central, regional) Private sector firms	Telecomm networks, village phones, local radio, institutional innovations	Technical assistance Coordination of government and private sector firms
Inappropriate regulatory framework	Over-licensing	Government (regional, local)	Clear and enforced, minimal regulations	Technical assistance for deregulation
Poor market organisation*	Competitive local market structures Local market systems Linkages between small and medium/ large-scale firm sectors	Government (regional, local) Civil society (NGOs, Trader associations, CBOs) Private sector firms	Transparency, empowerment, information, incentives, regulation, effective governance	Technical assistance Coordination of government, civil society and private sector firms
	Lack of utilities & 'public goods' (Power, Water)	Government (central, regional, local)	Infrastructural investment, financial management & control, maintenance systems, SMEs	Technical assistance & coordination for privatisation & government & private sector investment
	Physical infrastructure & services Market places SME trading/shop places	Government (local) Civil society (Trader associations, CBOs)	Infrastructural investment, financial management & control, maintenance systems, SME promotion, reduced market losses, health and sanitation improved	Coordination of government & civil society
Inadequate finance*	Inadequate credit and savings systems for traders, processors, producers, & consumers; lack of effective demand for production inputs	Government (central, regional, local) Civil society (Trader associations, CBOs) Private sector firms	Institutional innovation (e.g. financial systems) for indirect provision of inputs and technology to end users through market intermediaries.	Technical assistance & coordination for government, civil society and private sector intermediaries
Weak business skills	Weak entrepreneurship	Government (regional, local) Civil society (NGOs)	Capacity building	Technical assistance Finance Coordination of government and civil society organisations
Unpredictable macro economic and trade conditions	Ad hoc & rent seeking policies Bias to cash rather than food crops Over-reliance on oil exports	Government (central, central bank)	Transparent, accountable & consistent policy making & implementation	Advocacy Technical assistance

- There was evidence of the small business sector suffering from **over-regulation** that imposes high costs on entrepreneurship and prevents starts-ups and business growth. This element of the regulatory framework needs to be studied, leading, if necessary to deregulation or re-regulation in a more business-friendly way. While sound regulation serves an important quality control function, and generates revenues, its purpose should be to promote rather than limit entrepreneurship.
- We perceived three ways in which **market organisation** was weak:
 1. competition within and linkages to the wider economy (for example the non-competitive practices of trader associations);
 2. provision of utilities which are normally considered to be ‘public goods’
 3. provision of local marketplace infrastructure, which is normally considered to be a ‘public good’, and trading space.

Some of the **competitiveness issues** could be addressed by improved business skills, by promoting alternative (and competing) market channels, and by reducing over-regulation. Other ways to mitigate the inevitable inequities in market power included the development and implementation of customary (traditional) and modern contract law. Contracts may serve to enhance business attitudes and ethics, and reduce transaction costs (Poole *et al.*, 2000c). Public market information systems could also have a limited but real function in improving competitiveness. This is a difficult area that needs more attention.

Questions also arise in the provision of ‘public good’ **utilities** of power and water that make small-scale agro-industry possible, and that create a healthy and congenial trading environment particularly in traditional market places. These needed to be tackled initially in government. Privatisation policies may lead to the introduction of private sector involvement and coordination is needed between donors and government approaches to removing these constraints.

Finally, the need for physical infrastructure in **market places** needed to be tackled at local government level, together with the participation of civil organisations such as CBOs and trader organisations. The collection of local market fees suggested the potential for government resources to be invested in appropriate infrastructure. Local governments should be in a position to ensure that spatial planning and land use takes account of the need for small-scale industrial development and environmental concerns.

- **Finance** is always a constraint to input and output marketing activities, and financial assets of the poorest are the most difficult to address. Government at all levels have a role to play that needs to draw on expertise available to donors and development organisations. Facilitating finance to intermediary agencies – private firms, CBOs, traders and associations - is an important strategy in its own right to increase scale and scope of business enterprise, and upgrade technology. Facilitating finance to intermediary agencies also can improve the delivery of inputs to farmers and introduce liquidity into output marketing. Moreover, delivery of credit can be linked to savings, the other important element in rural finance. Interlocking input, output and finance markets may be a key strategy (Dorward *et al.*, 1998). Our view is that there is currently no workable sustainable mechanism for the direct delivery of seasonal finance to smallholders (Dorward *et al.*, 2001). However, finance can sometimes be delivered successfully to smallholders – at a cost – through intermediate agencies such as traders, and there is scope for imaginative institutional innovations here (such as, for example, the CARE-Agent model in Zimbabwe, Rusike *et al.*, 2000).
- **Business skills**: Because farmers often have to await buyers’ visits, because of lower levels of educational attainment, and possibly because of intimidation at market places, entrepreneurial skills are expected to be relatively undeveloped among many farmers. We did not envisage direct interventions to bring about better grading and standardisation of products, but more emphasis on consumer satisfaction, quality control and safety of food products. This could be encouraged by better coordination of efforts to channel expertise in business skills through universities, technical institutes, NGOs and school curricula. Developing appropriate teaching materials and delivering them through various channels is not a complex task, and could lead to long term improvements in trading and serve somewhat to redress the imbalance in economic power between smallholder sellers and trader buyers.

- **Macro-economic and trade conditions:** It had been noted that private sector activity and in particular food crop production (and marketing) were inhibited by the unpredictable macro-economic and policy environment. A major task facing the government, and one needing substantial donor support, is to promote transparent, accountable and consistent policy making processes that support rather than inhibit more equitable private sector investment in productive and trading activities.

These recommendations were by necessity often very general, but provided a context for further investigation and for the process of developing a programme to take forward attempts to promote markets supporting pro-poor livelihood development.

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