

Mapping the market: participatory market-chain development in practice

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Market mapping is an approach to describe the market systems involving small-scale producers: the value chain, together with support services and the business environment affecting the chain. This article describes a participatory approach to market-chain development that has evolved around market mapping processes, with the example given of the market map for aloe in Kenya. Practical Action has found a number of processes are effective in ensuring positive engagement and outcomes. For example, 'market opportunity groups' are formed to represent and empower producers, enabling them to negotiate with other market chain actors with greater confidence. Interest forums, on the other hand, include decision-makers with influence at local, national and sometimes international levels. Four short case studies of market-chain development work in Zimbabwe, Kenya, Peru and Sudan are presented, which demonstrate how these elements can assist in participatory market-chain analysis, making the move from analysis to action more effective.

MARKETS MATTER to rural producers. Factors that influence how markets operate, including access to information, market institutions, linkages and trade rules, have a powerful influence on the earnings of small-scale producers. Failure to address these factors can mean that the benefits of economic growth, innovative technologies and better infrastructure, simply by-pass the poor.

Surprisingly there is often little attention to market systems and their roles in poverty reduction within the conceptualization and application of livelihood frameworks, or in professional fields such as agricultural research that seek to promote rural development (Dorward *et al.*, 2002). One aim of this paper is to help address this deficiency. In particular we want to describe the conceptual framework and pragmatic approach that has been evolving in Practical Action's work on market systems and rural livelihoods in the last few years.

'Market chains' are a key concept in this paper; they refer to the economic actors who make and transact a particular product as it moves from primary producer to final consumer i.e. including farmers, producers, input suppliers, processors, traders, wholesalers and retailers.

Many private sector development initiatives have sought to strengthen linkages in specific market chains, or to develop markets for the wide variety of business services that support market-chain functioning (BDS). More recently, attention has shifted to the wider 'business environment' as determined by the institutions, rules and practices of governments, large competitors and society at large.

There is often little attention to market systems within the application of livelihood frameworks

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The market map

Practical Action's experience of working with rural producers has led us to try to integrate these three dimensions into a single framework – known as the 'market map' – which describes the overall market system for any given market chain (Figure 1)

The market map describes the overall market system for any given value chain

The market map serves two purposes: it is a framework for conceptualizing the entire commercial and institutional environment in which rural producers operate; and it is a practical tool for market facilitators to develop, visually represent and succinctly communicate this knowledge among different stakeholders. It plays an important role therefore in encouraging market literacy: that is, a better understanding of the institutions, competencies and relationships necessary for specific market systems to work for poor producers.

The central component maps the market chain and its principal competing channels. This encourages map users to become more aware of competitive pressures; of functions and processes that are needed along the chain to satisfy more lucrative or reliable markets; and to realize mutual benefits by improving the 'systemic efficiency' of the chain.

The second (top) component charts the business environment. This enables users to understand the trends that are affecting the entire market chain, and examine the powers and interests that are driving change. This knowledge can help determine avenues and opportunities for realistic action, lobbying and policy entrepreneurship.

The third (bottom) component maps the business services that support, or are needed to support, the market chain's overall functioning. This involves identifying particular service needs and their users within the market chain, as a precursor to conventional forms of BDS market assessment.

A specific example of a market map is shown in Figure 2, drawn from the case study of aloe production in Kenya. Readers will notice that the map shows the flow of income from markets along the chain to primary producers, rather than, as is conventional, the flow of goods in the opposite direction. This counter-intuitive feature encourages a demand-led perspective. It provokes map users to consider how a market system facilitates the flow of revenue to target producers; emphasizes the role of intermediaries, and increases understanding of competitive pressures from other channels. A comprehensive mapping, though not always practicable, will also explore how the chain is governed, i.e. which actors define the conditions for participation, ensure compliance with these rules or provide assistance with meeting them.

A more detailed description of the market map framework is available on the interagency website www.bdsknowledge.org (Albu and Griffith, 2005).

2 BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT	Infrastructure and policies, institutions and processes that shape the market system (a.k.a. influencers)
1 MARKET CHAIN ACTORS and THEIR LINKAGES	The chain of economic actors who own a product as it moves from primary producers to consumers (a.k.a. players)
3 SERVICE PROVIDERS	The business and extension services that support the market-chain's operation (a.k.a. supporters)

Figure 1. Overview of the market map

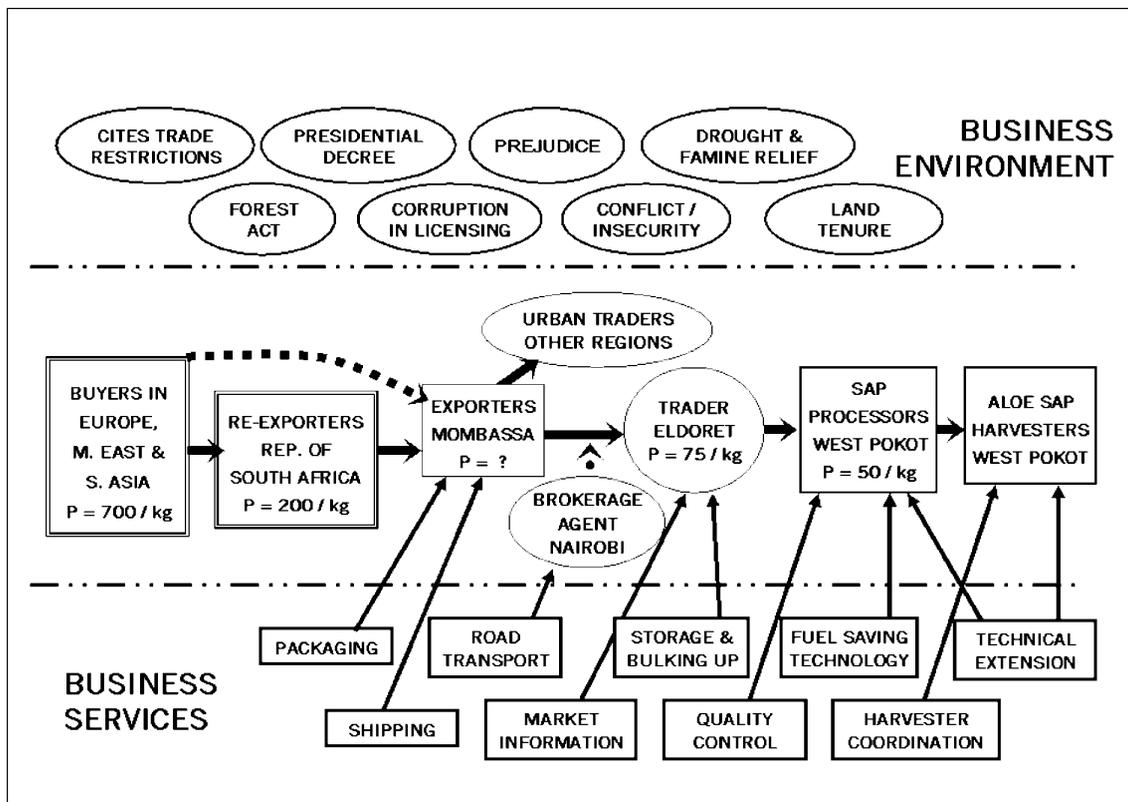


Figure 2. Market map for aloe in Kenya

In Practical Action's early experience as a market facilitator, the process of constructing and elaborating the market map with producers and other market-chain participants, proved to be an important intervention in its own right: leading to improved linkages and relationships between market-chain actors, and preparing the ground for introducing or generating innovation in products, processes and market access. Over the last two years this has led to the emergence of a participatory approach to market-chain development which has mapping the market at its heart.

Participatory market-chain development

Fundamentally, participatory approaches contribute to market mapping that is more accurate and represents a wider range of knowledge. More importantly, however, if managed carefully the process of participation provokes interest and builds trust. Ultimately it can facilitate the collaboration that is necessary for improving linkages and efficiencies within the market chain, for effective lobbying on business environment issues and for co-ordinating activities where producers are numerous but small-scale.

As one might anticipate (and as the case studies here illustrate), there is no single blue-print for this participatory approach. However a number of events and processes are emerging as important components of successful change. These include the following:

Participation can build the trust needed for improving linkages within the market chain

- Preliminary market mapping: to capture and organize information gathered from key informants.
- Hooks: early identification of issues that will attract and engage market-chain actors.
- Market opportunity groups: to represent and empower target producers.
- Interest forums: to convene and engage stakeholders with influence in the market system.
- Participatory market-chain analysis (PMCA) workshops: to bring together market-chain actors in major negotiation, relationship- and trust-building events.
- Moving from analysis to action: in which the relationships, knowledge and trust generated above is used to effect changes in the business environment and access to services.

Most of these steps are illustrated in the case study from Sudan (Box 1).

Preliminary mapping

In ‘preliminary mapping’ the objective is to establish an outline that can be used as a scaffold for existing information and future findings from other participants and sources. It is here that the results of broader studies, such as subsector studies, can be incorporated and tactical decisions – such as not to get involved in a particular market chain – can be taken. An important aspect at this stage is establishing mechanisms for working with market-chain actors and managing the immediate expectations of stakeholders. In practice a ‘quick and dirty’ preliminary mapping that enables rapid progress on to participatory activities may be preferable to a meticulous analysis process that loses people’s interest en-route.

In the case study from Peru (Box 2), the facilitators established a long-term relationship with an agro-marketing consultancy experienced in participatory work who understood the importance of involving and making their findings accessible to microentrepreneurs.

Hooks

The term ‘hooks’ is shorthand for tangible issues or intervention proposals that might attract the initial interest of busy actors in the market chain. It goes without saying that few entrepreneurs, least of all buyers, are attracted by the idea of attending a ‘development project’ meeting – even if it goes with a free lunch. They may suspect the facilitator’s motives e.g. fearing pressure to give their suppliers a better price. The preliminary market map can help facilitators identify very specific issues of mutual interest, and turn these into proposals that will draw diverse actors into the process. Wary players are more likely to attend if they can see a future commercial benefit. Ideally the ‘offer’ should be achievable and directly relate to specific market-chain issues. Vague and overly ambitious offers such as ‘finding new markets’ are less likely to keep actors engaged.

In the case study on Kenyan aloe (Box 3), two specific issues were identified as potential ‘hooks’: certification of aloe exports and the urgent need for quality improvements in harvesting and processing. In this case, improved co-ordination and specific technical services could be seen to create potential for significant added value.

A ‘quick and dirty’ preliminary mapping may be preferable

Wary players are more likely to attend if they can see a future commercial benefit

Box 1. Hibiscus in Sudan

Hibiscus (*H. sabdariffa*) is a minor cash crop in arid areas of Sudan, traditionally consumed as *karkadeh*, a sweet flavoured drink popular during Ramadan. It is drought resistant, requires few inputs and creates income for women farmers. European manufacturers also use hibiscus as the bulk constituent of many herbal teas. In the past ten years Sudanese annual exports more than doubled to 23,000 tons (2001), worth US\$20 million. These earnings are, however, threatened by competition from China and persistent difficulties in meeting export quality standards.

In 2003, Practical Action in Sudan began work with hibiscus farmers (who are mainly women) in remote western Sudan, the main production area. Initially farm plots were used to demonstrate better varieties and harvesting techniques. It soon became clear that the major problems concerned poor relationships and communications along the market chain. A preliminary market mapping revealed:

- Export agents (in Khartoum and Port Sudan) were frustrated by and financially penalized by their European buyers for the low-quality, often contaminated produce they receive.
- There were punishing levels of local transit taxes en route from western Sudan to the port – absorbing up to 50 per cent of all revenue; combined with laborious export processing procedures.
- Domestic traders and transporters had little knowledge or interest in improving quality controls or handling techniques to protect the fragile crop in transit to Port Sudan.
- Farmers had little awareness of exporters' needs, the potential for adding value by improving harvesting methods, or simple technologies for achieving this.

Preparations to develop the hibiscus market chain began with three large meetings involving farmers, traders and village development committee members from 25 villages in north Darfur and Kordofan (the main production area). These two-day workshops explored market opportunities, and also involved service providers (government extension agents, private agricultural inputs suppliers) in understanding the problems and potential of hibiscus.

One objective is to stimulate farmers and traders to collaborate in implementing standards for higher value produce. To this end the village committees instigated a rural marketing network comprising farmers from different villages. The group met initially in Practical Action's office, but is now building a producers' integration centre where activities such as bulking up and quality control could be undertaken.

Meanwhile in Khartoum, Practical Action organized a national workshop that led to formation of an Hibiscus Forum involving exporters, input suppliers and government officials concerned with promoting the subsector. The forum has developed a useful production manual, but has limited capacity to interact with producers from whom they are both socially and physically remote. Practical Action is now aiming to link the rural marketing network with the forum.

Having worked with producers and village councils for many years Practical Action is highly trusted as a market facilitator, but it is less well known among the transporters, exporter agents and input suppliers. A few individuals have been engaged with encouraging results: one exporter is now paying extension workers to train farmers that supply him in a novel harvesting technique.

Further progress relies on identifying tangible initiatives that attract and enable more of these market actors to benefit from upgrading the hibiscus chain. The market opportunities or 'hooks' include higher production standards, lower taxation and more efficient regulation, and better services (seed storage, transportation) to raise revenues along the whole market chain. In February 2006, on the back of its preparatory work, Practical Action secured a project grant from the UK Comic Relief donor agency to step up development of the hibiscus market-chain in Sudan over the next three years using PMCA techniques.

Box 2. Swiss-style mountain cheese in Peru

In the mountainous Andean region of northern Peru, Practical Action has recently begun working to develop the market chain for Swiss-style matured cheese produced by many widely dispersed small-scale herders. This is a relatively new product with a potentially good market in the regional city of Cajamarca and coastal towns such as Chiclayo. However, the local market fair is inadequate to spontaneously generate the necessary demand pull to match the production capability of the area.

Working in a long-term relationship with an agro-marketing consultancy firm (Agromarketing SA.), the project team started in 2005 by studying processing facilities, milk collection and reception, quality assessment, cheese production and transportation, using a subsector analysis methodology. A market study focused on different types of buyers in Cajamarca and adjacent markets. These studies enabled the project team, including two dairy specialists from another project and from the Ministry of Agriculture, to produce a preliminary market map outlining existing knowledge.

The first workshop using PMCA methods was held in September 2005 with 70 participants. Producer focus groups identified key actors in the market chain and the Ministry of Agriculture also suggested participants. Local commercial buyers, Nestle and Gloria, also responded positively to invitations to take an interest, an outcome aided by Agromarketing SA's prior experience of PMCA work in Peru with CIP (Bernet *et al.* 2005).

It is already clear that quality assurance is a very powerful 'hook' to attract interest of a wide variety of market-chain actors. Many traders or intermediaries share familial or geographical ties with producers in the region, which the PMCA methodology taps into well. However, to keep them involved it will be necessary to create more specific hooks that respond to their interests, i.e. business growth for commercial actors and service providers, future elections and popularity for politicians and policy makers.

Practical Action is now planning the first big regional PMCA event for Cajamarca in which a wide range of actors in the regional cheese market will be invited to discuss quality issues. Dissemination of the study results will be one attraction for participants. It is anticipated that market opportunity groups will emerge after this among producers, as a result of the enthusiasm and mutual knowledge generated amongst the participants. A Regional Dairy Forum has already begun building relationships between wholesalers, retailers, cheese processors and the state agency for SME promotion (PROMPYME).

Market opportunity groups

One of the most common causes of high transaction costs and other market-chain inefficiencies is mistrust and misunderstanding between actors. This is very often a reflection of actual or perceived imbalances of power, since the governance structures of market chains involving small-holder farmers and other rural microentrepreneurs tend to be dominated by buyers (Kaplinsky, 2000). Not surprisingly therefore, small producers often fear that participatory processes will be dominated or distorted to their disadvantage.

'Market opportunity groups' offer a way to inform and build the confidence of producers, so empowering them to participate on a more equitable basis in both the PMCA workshops and any subsequent negotiated agreements. The idea, described by CIAT (Lundy *et al.*, 2005), has been used by Practical Action to orientate potentially weaker participants in advance, so they understand their role in PMCA workshops, and have realistic expectations of outcomes.

Such groups are also key to building market literacy among producers by creating more extended opportunities for sharing and absorbing knowledge about the market system in which they operate. This

Box 3. Aloe in Kenya

The livelihoods of pastoralists in northern Kenya are being eroded by declining livestock values, environmental degradation and conflict. However their territories contain valuable natural resources. Extracts of aloe, a succulent wild cactus-like plant, are in increasing demand worldwide. In 2005, Practical Action, Traidcraft and Kenya Gatsby Trust began to see if existing Kenyan producers could be integrated better into these lucrative market chains.

The aloe market chain in Kenya begins with thousands of harvesters in semi-arid districts like West Pokot, who extract raw aloe sap from wild plants. They supply a handful of itinerant processors who reduce the sap in vats to a stable concentrated form called aloe bitters. The bitters are sold to traders in market towns who in turn supply four 'export agents' over 1000 km away in Mombassa. Kenyan aloe bitters are then exported at well below world market prices to South Africa, from where they are re-exported to Europe, the Middle East and South Asia.

A preliminary mapping exercise conducted by the project team revealed that:

- Since 1999, international rules (CITES) on aloe export, and an un-ratified Presidential ban, have pushed the Kenyan aloe trade 'underground'.
- Harvesters are scattered and disorganized. They harbour deep misconceptions about what happens to their product, its value and destination. Mistrust is exacerbated by prejudices about the Somali ethnicity of processors.
- Corruption throughout the chain adds costs and creates distortions of power. For example, processors may bribe the local chiefs who negotiate prices on behalf of harvesters.
- In many areas, the supply of wild aloe is being depleted; so harvesters need advice about sustainable harvesting techniques. Official environmental impact assessments are needed to achieve CITES permission for Kenya aloe production.
- Quality control in harvesting is a problem. Processors have devised a simple technique for testing sap and are well placed to advise harvesters on extraction methods. They would also benefit from knowledge about more fuel-efficient technologies for processing.

Clearly the main issue affecting revenue and margins in this chain is trade regulation (linked to 'unsustainable' supply concerns). In addition, mistrust between actors has costly repercussions: in the past harvesters, discovering the world market price of aloe bitters, inferred incorrectly that processors were making exploitative profit margins and refused to do business.

The aloe market mapping exercise identified two 'hooks' to attract actors to participate: the prospect of obtaining CITES certification for Kenyan aloe exports, so enabling direct sales to final buyers at world-market prices (e.g. \$10/kg instead of \$2/kg paid by South African intermediaries); and the benefits to all actors of quality improvements at critical stages of sustainable harvesting and processing.

The 'market map' summarizing these issues became a key communication tool for the next stage of engagement: a PMCA workshop held in Nairobi in June 2005. The workshop was not a total success: it failed to get any processors involved, for example. However, it was the first systematic dialogue between harvesters, traders, exporters and institutional stakeholders, about problems and opportunities facing the market chain as a whole.

Backing up the workshop were two complementary initiatives. First, aloe harvesters (usually women and youth) created 'Market Opportunity Groups' to discuss new knowledge and formulate their responses to the opportunities revealed by the preliminary mapping and workshops. Coming from isolated pastoralist communities with little exposure to commerce, the group meetings prepared them to engage in an informed way with other market players in the PMCA workshop. The group also established links with an official Working Group on Medicinal and Aromatic Plant Species which will be important in gaining CITES registration.

Second, an Aloe Interest Forum in West Pokot began meeting so as to support initiatives coming out of the PMCA workshop process. The forum has so far involved local chiefs, government forestry officials, researchers and officials from the Kenya Wildlife Services.

Market opportunity groups are a way to build market literacy among producers

distinguishes them from conventional producer-group formations where market-orientation is often painfully lacking.

In the case study from Zimbabwe (Box 4), the farmers' representatives were able to use their market opportunity group as a powerful platform for overcoming social divides and negotiating confidently with a large commercial buyer with whom they share a clear mutual interest.

Interest forums

Sometimes significant improvements in market-chain performance require changes in the business environment, infrastructure or accessibility of services to market-chain actors. A facilitator may need to target decision-makers with influence at local, national and in some cases international levels.

The convening of 'interest forums' has been an important tactic for engaging stakeholders and institutions which, although outside the market chain, still have an important stake or influence e.g. service providers, policy makers and other moulders of the business environment. Many of these stakeholders will be important as sources of information, for example research institutions or government departments, that can validate or question the perspectives of market players.

In the Kenya case study (Box 3), for example, involving the Kenya Wildlife Service and forestry department officials was crucial to any future progress on satisfying CITES regulations. While in the Sudan case study, the Hibiscus Forum promises to be vital for gaining the ear of national government.

PMCA workshops

While Practical Action was evolving the Market Map and associated processes above, the International Potato Centre (CIP) in Peru has been developing a similar participatory market-chain approach, called PMCA for short (Bernet *et al.*, 2005). The two sets of ideas came together initially at a seminar in February 2005 (Almond and Hainsworth, 2005). Practical Action has drawn on CIP's approach subsequently in its own work.

PMCA workshops are the key events in operationalizing the market map, bringing together diverse market-chain actors to stimulate interest, bolster trust and facilitate collaboration in relation to linkages, services or the business environment. Typically the workshop involves participants in reflecting and building on the preliminary mapping in a joint effort to establish a common framework of understanding for action.

Advice for PMCA workshop facilitators includes:

- have a good overview of the subsector but...
- ...beware of pre-empting what the market map will look like;
- work ahead to 'sell' the advantages of participatory analysis to different market actors;
- anticipate complaints and grievances of particular groups that may dominate the interactions, so...
- ...negotiate 'norms' for running workshops through individual mediation, e.g. establishing clear agendas in advance;
- understand that market actors may expect rapid results or changes as a result of the analysis process so...

PMCA workshops are the key events in operationalizing the market map

Box 4. Guar in Zimbabwe

Guar is a leguminous crop with commercial uses as a food stabilizer, mineral coagulant in mining and animal feed. After demand was expressed by one large mining company in 2002, Practical Action provided some 500 smallholder farmers, mainly women, in the semi-arid Zambezi valley in northern Zimbabwe with inputs and advice to begin cultivation. By 2005, the farmers began to think about how they could market their growing output more widely.

At this point, formerly production-orientated project staff realized they needed to think about the market system for guar. A preliminary market mapping was conducted in October, drawing on international literature and contacts in the sector. Four years' work with guar farmers helped give the study team credibility in the eyes of other stakeholders. The preliminary study showed that developing the guar market system would require co-ordinated action by several market chain actors and support institutions. The market chain in Zimbabwe is dominated by a single buyer (Agriseeds Ltd) which exports guar to South Africa for processing. However, if sufficient guar production were assured, the company is keen to develop a Zimbabwean processing facility to meet demand from domestic mining and livestock sectors. However guar processing plants are expensive and need high volumes to be viable, so this sort of investment is risky.

The study identified two main 'hooks' to engage Agriseeds Ltd and other stakeholders in a market development process: an offer of significant increases in the quantity and reliability of guar supplied to the Zimbabwe market, and help with developing the livestock feed market for guar. This was a successful approach and Agriseeds Ltd agreed to send several managers and one of its directors to participate in a PMCA workshop. Meanwhile, two complementary processes were being implemented.

First, guar farmers were assisted to form a Market Opportunity Group through a series of informal workshops where they could discuss issues and select representatives. Some farmers inspired others with a vision of what could be achieved in the subsector. Representatives, 90 per cent of them women, were selected on the basis of leadership, farming capabilities, negotiating skills and articulacy. The group prepared for the PMCA workshop with a collective strategizing session led by the farmers themselves. Practical Action's staff carefully encouraged the group to consider the bigger market system map in addition to just prices.

Second, project staff identified support institutions with an important stake in guar sector, who could contribute to a Guar Interest Forum in future. These include: Henderson Research Station, doing research on guar as stock feed and developing drought-resistant, higher yielding cultivars; Ministry of Agriculture's extension services, whose advisers could provide advice to farmers; and the Department of Livestock, with an interest in alternative sources of feed. Practical Action's work with guar farmers meant they knew these institutions well.

The first major PMCA workshop in March 2006 brought together farmers, Agriseeds managers and other interested stakeholders. Prior concerns that the agenda might be overwhelmed by the diversity of participants proved unfounded. In fact, the farmers led the agenda and took control, ensuring a healthy atmosphere of 'give and take'. They were confident, articulate and well organized: their own association contributed to the costs of their participation. The project team attributed this success to the way expectations about the purposes of the workshop were managed beforehand.

The most important outcome of the workshop were 'statements of intent'. Agriseeds Ltd made commitments to provide farmers with timely inputs of treated seeds, fertilizer, chemicals; to establish easily accessible buying points at strategic centres; to support farmers' access to guar as a stock feed, and to pay farmers competitive prices (taking into account world market prices and production costs). The farmers agreed to use inputs for the sole purpose of growing guar; to expand production to at least 500 tons a year (a 100 per cent increase over previous season); and to supply all their guar production exclusively to Agriseeds Ltd. Both parties produced a timetable and agreed milestones for the next season.

Practical Action is already able to take a back seat in the process.

Avoid being seen as 'extractive'

- ...try to ensure interactions lead quickly to practical activities, gaining credibility for process;
- avoid being seen as 'extractive': drawing out knowledge from market actors, without giving much back.

Sometimes it is important to minimize the visibility of the facilitating agency, especially where this is an NGO whose involvement may create unwelcome expectations. One strategy might be to get better organized market actors (e.g. an exporters' federation) to front PMCA workshop events. However is important to mitigate perceptions of commercial bias. Alternatively, it may be possible to exploit government agencies that have a mandate to promote particular sectors. In this case, the facilitator needs to be aware of perceived political biases.

Moving to action

It may be wise to tackle less contentious constraints first, as steps towards building trust

One of the main insights Practical Action has gained so far is that a reflective, pragmatic and iterative style of facilitation is essential. There is no fixed blue-print for the approach, and various components may need to be prioritized at different times. In particular it may be wise to identify and tackle less contentious constraints first, as steps towards building trust, even if these are not the most important issues facing a market chain.

When successful, PMCA workshops can become a practical tool to improve co-ordination and stimulate innovation. They can encourage more powerful actors to be aware of and engage with issues that negatively impact on weaker players. This can be particularly important where their influence is needed to improve policies or practices that harm producers who have little power of their own.

PMCA workshops can also help diagnose problems regarding access to specific services: contributing to accurate information about the shape of demand, particularly for less visible embedded services. By kick-starting co-ordination, they can also help aggregate demand from many small producers for services. This makes service provision more commercially viable, and thus encourages better supply. Of the case studies presented here, the best example of this is in the Zimbabwe example (Box 4).

Implications for practitioners

Market-chain development implies systemic thinking. The interaction between different actors, services and business environment components in any particular market chain determines its overall performance. As facilitators we need to think outside the boxes (e.g. services, input supplies, infrastructure, regulations) that have traditionally compartmentalized rural development programmes.

The result should be a more nuanced, coherent and co-ordinated response to opportunities for pro-poor growth. It should generate solutions that are commercially viable and led by emerging market opportunities, rather than being determined by whatever services or interventions particular agencies are hoping to push.

One issue is that, like many organizations with a strong poverty focus, Practical Action has tended to outsource market analysis and more commercial aspects of project planning and implementation. Our experience suggests this should be avoided unless, as in the Peru example, long-term partnerships with experienced consultants are possible. Market-chain programmes benefit from the sort of participatory and facilitatory skills

that many community-development practitioners have developed. Unlike short-term consultants accustomed to problem solving on behalf of their clients, such staff are more comfortable with the premise that participants themselves can develop solutions and innovations.

More generally, within Practical Action the market map approach has had a significant influence on strategic planning, - principally by providing a common language and set of concepts with which to develop coherent international objectives. Operationalizing these at country programme level has demanded new ways of working in project design and implementation and the building of new competencies.

In early 2006, Practical Action won a grant from USAID's Accelerated Microenterprise Advancement Project (AMAP) to invest further in developing and sharing lessons from the sort of research described in this paper. Over the next 18 months, research will test the market mapping approach and refine PMCA workshop techniques in different countries. Comments and comparative contributions from organizations doing similar work would be very welcome.

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