



ALRE REPORT ON EVIDENCE DEMAND ON INCLUSIVE AGRICULTURAL COMMERCIALISATION IN AFRICA

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ALRE Research Note 6
April 2022

Acknowledgement

Louise Clark is the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Manager at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) and Joe Taylor is a MEL Officer at IDS, both working as part of the Accompanied Learning for Relevance and Effectiveness (ALRE) team within the APRA programme. This paper is a synthesis of perspectives gathered from a wide range of APRA stakeholders who shared their insights via our survey and Policy Roundtable discussions. We thank them all for sharing their insights and reflections. We would also like to thank Susanna Cartmell-Thorp and the Impact, Communications and Engagement (ICE) team for her support in organising the roundtable events, and Ed Small and Giel Ton for their support in the survey design and analysis.

This research note is funded with UK aid from the UK government (Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office – FCDO, formerly DFID). The opinions are the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Institute of Development Studies or the UK Government.

Introduction

The Agricultural Policy Research in Africa¹ (APRA) programme of the Future Agricultures Consortium² (FAC) has generated new evidence and insights into different pathways to inclusive agricultural commercialisation, in order to assess their outcomes on rural poverty, women's and girl's empowerment, and food and nutrition security in sub-Saharan Africa. This has been conducted with support from the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) over 2016–2022.

As part of APRA, the Accompanied Learning on Relevance and Effectiveness (ALRE) team works to understand how evidence demand has enabled supporting researchers to identify and refine the most relevant and insightful policy messages; in turn encouraging them to go beyond mere analysis of the context and problem and consider how their evidence offers potential solutions to specific policy questions.

The ALRE team also worked closely with APRA's Information, Communication, and Engagement (ICE) team. Together, ALRE and ICE supported the evolution of engagement strategies and engaged in ongoing reviews and refinements of impact pathways. This allowed them to recognise and respond to new policy opportunities as they arose, rather than rigidly following pathways conceived early in the research process. It also encouraged the APRA country research teams to consider the potential for policy influence as they developed their research outputs.

Throughout the APRA programme the ALRE team used a Stakeholder Survey, and also held more focussed group discussions in 2020. These approaches meant they could determine how best to frame APRA research in relation to key policy processes and identify important policy windows and priorities from the demand side, so that practicable responses by APRA and its partners could be determined. The initial Stakeholder Survey provided a valuable baseline and impression of the different country policy contexts and their requirements. The survey results and implications were then presented to government policymakers and other stakeholders for analysis and validation, during a series of virtual Evidence-to-Policy Roundtable conversations held in March-April 2021 in the APRA focal countries. These events provided a rich and deep understanding of the context and possible solutions. Insights on evidence demand from these ALRE-facilitated activities and events are outlined in this document.

Policy maker conversation

During the APRA [Annual Review and Planning Workshop](#), held in Naivasha, Kenya, on 2–6 December

2019, a panel of distinguished policy voices shared their perspectives and offered advice to the assembled researchers on how to guarantee the relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability of APRA findings within the policy space. This panel was comprised of representatives from the African Union Commission, Agricultural Non-State Actors Forum in Tanzania, Japan International Cooperation Agency, Tegemeo Institute of Agricultural Policy and Development in Kenya, the UK's Department for International Development, and independent consultants from across the three APRA regions (East, Southern, West Africa). This blog shares some of the key advice that emerged from this conversation, a summary of which is as follows:

- **Policy is political.** Policymakers are well-informed and understand upcoming challenges and the results required. They want evidence and examples of what does and doesn't work, as unpopular policies lose votes – so they need tested solutions that will deliver progress. Evidence around policy implementation can be more useful than further analysis of a problem, so research should provide evidence-based support to identify implementation best practices.
- **Find a 'hook' to obtain policy traction.** Understand your network and its key players and familiarise yourself with their priorities and drivers. Messages need to be clear and compelling and resonate with the existing institutional narrative if they are to gain traction across different teams and organisational structures. Evidence has to highlight an issue, then provide insights regarding what can be done to bring about change.
- **Ask the right questions.** Engage with potential users before conducting research to understand their demand for evidence. A co-generated research agenda which identifies specific questions to answer can result in a stronger sense of engagement and ownership of results.
- **Make policymakers aware that you (and your research) exist.** Reach out to policymakers and build awareness for potential engagement. Be persistent, but brief. Press coverage may be a better way to get your research noticed; short but frequent pieces in the media can generate interest in your topic and lead to greater attention of detailed aspects.
- **Target the right messages to the right people.** There are multiple levels to the policymaking process. As such, evidence needs to be packaged

1 APRA website: <https://www.future-agricultures.org/apra/>

2 FAC website: <https://www.future-agricultures.org/>

and presented differently for political, managerial, and technical teams, which might mean having multiple briefs for various audiences. Clarify who you are trying to reach and identify what their agenda and priorities are, as well as who they will need to convince to action your recommendations.

- **Understand how the system works.** Understand the connections between key players at different levels, and the instruments and mechanisms through which they converse.
- **Invest in networks, not individuals.** The relevant contacts in development agencies frequently change, so researchers need to engage with a broader network, including donors, in order to maintain connections. Even when research is relevant, uptake may still not occur due to other organisational factors and dynamics.
- **Know your constituent base.** Researchers cannot influence policy alone, and they might not be suitable for advocacy work – so determining the correct communications approach for research will depend on who the information is meant for. Seek well-connected champions who can assist in reaching and influencing decision makers. Also consider building ownership across different groups, so that they can ‘own’ a message, as this can further increase your leverage. Doing so may involve co-branding of outputs and events.
- **Foster relationships that open doors to policy-making domains.** Research programmes require a clear identity and strategy if they are to successfully engage with policy and other institutions, and give credibility to emerging messages. Gaining visibility and validity at the regional level requires stepping out of the scientific world: take advantage of existing networks, and establish relationships with organisations that have a mandate to formulate policy and create a critical mass around your research agenda. Share messages with confidence, persistence, and passion to create awareness and a sustained visibility.

Stakeholder survey on evidence demand

Between January and March 2020, APRA’s ALRE team conducted a Stakeholder Survey to improve understanding of the policy issues related to inclusive agricultural commercialisation in Africa that require better quality evidence.³ The survey collected data on a series

of closed questions to understand: 1) the top five policy priorities to support agricultural commercialisation and the most effective communication methods; and 2) the different factors and the role of research in influencing inclusive agricultural commercialisation. With 166 respondents from across sub-Saharan Africa,⁴ ALRE was able to generate insights and establish a baseline to support researchers in better framing their research on the policy issues that are priorities to stakeholders across the continent.

Priority issues requiring better quality evidence and analysis:

The highest priority issues requiring better quality evidence and analysis were determined as being: improved markets for smallholder products; credit and financial services; the empowerment of youth and women in agriculture; and rural extension and advisory services. Improved markets for smallholder products was the highest ranking priority issue requiring better quality evidence, selected by 50 per cent of respondents. Empowerment of youth and women in agriculture was also a high priority, although policy solutions related to this are less clear.

Regional analysis of respondents’ priority issues requiring better quality evidence:

For the 44 respondents in East Africa, agro-input policies were the highest priority issue, cited by 52 per cent. In contrast, across all regions, agro-input policies were selected by only 36 per cent of respondents as a priority issue. Additionally, although credit and financial services were ranked as a priority issue by 43 per cent of respondents overall (the second highest priority issue), only 32 per cent of those in East Africa indicated it was a priority issue; highlighting that better quality evidence is required. Results from the 42 respondents in Southern Africa indicate that land reform is a higher priority issue, being selected by 38 per cent. However, only 22 per cent of all 166 respondents noted this as a high priority issue, indicating that better evidence is required.

Communication methods for research required by stakeholders:

Workshops and seminars with experts, face-to-face briefings, commissioned technical reviews, and succinct policy briefs, were the top four methods for communicating research that surveyed stakeholders desire more of. Most of these methods involve stronger engagement with experts and policymakers and a higher cost in resources. While 63 per cent of

3 Small, E. and Clark, L. (2020) *ALRE Stakeholder Analysis: Key Findings*. Brighton: Future Agricultures Consortium. Available at: <https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/handle/20.500.12413/15843>

4 166 respondents represented various stakeholder groups: research (31 per cent); policy (22 per cent); civil society (21 per cent); private sector (14 per cent); and producer groups (8 per cent).

policymakers surveyed selected succinct policy briefs in their top three most needed approaches, only eight per cent of policy implementers selected this method. Instead, policy implementers prefer more in-depth methods of communication, such as commissioned technical reviews (selected by 50 per cent).

Has research on agricultural policy and markets contributed to increased inclusive agricultural commercialisation?

Respondents perceived that the roles of four key factors (the private sector, policies and regulations, farmer organisations, and market dynamics) marginally improved in supporting inclusive agricultural commercialisation in Africa from 2016–2019, with research viewed as having made a fair contribution.

Policy roundtables for qualitative feedback

During March and April 2021, the ALRE Team convened a series of ‘Evidence-to-Policy Roundtables’ in the six APRA focal countries (Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Nigeria, Tanzania and Zimbabwe). These meetings were facilitated by the Regional Coordinators and created a space for over 40 policymakers and decision-makers to discuss their key policy priorities and processes with APRA researchers. These meetings uncovered a broad range of evidence needs and recommended the most effective formats and communication channels for APRA researchers to engage with decision-makers.

The objectives of the Roundtables were to: 1) better understand evidence-use behaviours of potential policy audiences: discuss policy priorities within the region and focus countries to set the scene to reflect on the *relevance* of APRA research; 2) provide feedback on the online quantitative survey results on policy priorities to participants, triangulate key findings, and validate these based on the realities of COVID-19; and 3) continue to build relationships and better understand how APRA research could meet the needs of policymakers and build their confidence in APRA and the evidence generated.

Each meeting focussed on specific issues relevant to the particular national context. However, some general themes emerged across the region, such as the need for evidence to inform policy decisions on themes including: investment in modernisation and infrastructure, and the requirement to create employment activities for youth in rural small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs); supporting and promoting private sector extension models; the role for state regulation to create an enabling environment for commercialisation; and concerns surrounding land degradation and climate change. In terms of suggested communications channels, these Roundtables highlighted the importance of focussing on policy frameworks and targeting legal reform processes. They also assessed potential entry points

for accessing Ministries and Ministry officials, and through which to build partnerships and coalitions with other interest groups – such as farmer organisations – to work alongside their existing advocacy channels and organisational structures.

The main priorities and discussion points from the roundtables hosted in each APRA focal country are outlined below. These country summaries are followed by a collation of the cross-cutting themes.

Ethiopia: 31 March 2021

APRA evidence can help to identify which policies can generate stronger incentives for farmers to produce and process good quality rice. For **import substitution** to be a viable option for rice in Ethiopia, the huge gap in quality between what is currently imported and what is produced in rural areas would have to be filled. Therefore, APRA research could provide information on the realistic steps involved in filling this quality gap and help identify the different actors working in this space that require information to support improvements. In order for import substitution to work, there also needs to be a regulatory aspect to **revise existing market standards** to overcome any low prices which may disincentivise producers and traders. Ethiopia needs to develop a pricing mechanism and markets based on **quality**. Processing machines are very old and inefficient, which impacts on the **quality** of rice processing. There is no incentive to replace or invest in **new technology** because the markets function regardless of quality; and, even with the incentive, importing technology is challenging due to the **shortage of foreign currency**. Furthermore, the existing **banking system** does not adequately support small-scale farmers, so a new finance mechanism would greatly help with the adoption of mechanisation and improvement. Understanding the **political economy** of the rice value chain was also highlighted as being key to comprehending the policy environment and informing effective and applicable policy recommendations.

Malawi: 7 April 2021

The **diversity of country experiences**, in terms of agricultural commercialisation and commodity exchanges across the APRA programme, were seen as vital in providing Malawi with alternative recommendations to consider. Participating policymakers in Malawi identified that **clear market linkages** – policies to assist farmers in having assured markets and structured marketing – and improving the connections between farmers and these systems, should be prioritised by the Ministry of Agriculture. There are also **pricing issues** with the farm gate marketing process within the Ministry-led market information system, as the process is currently not cost effective for some farmers. Improving this would attract more farmers and enhance the warehouse system roll-out. Suggestions also included

engaging other sectors and ministries beyond agriculture, such as trade and **private sectors**, to enhance an enabling environment for inclusive business models for agricultural commercialisation. Similarly, the relevance of APRA findings should be considered in other policy areas, and APRA should lobby and engage both policy makers and **farmers' unions** to build support for any recommendations. Further recommendations included investing in commodity value chains to **support production**, inputs and market infrastructure, and improving **access to quality seeds** for commercialisation. More generally, policymakers identified numeric data and **simple reports/policy briefs** that speak to existing frameworks as being key to targeting priorities and strengthening arguments, given the time constraints of policymakers and ministers.

Zimbabwe: 7 April 2021

The key policy areas discussed in the Zimbabwe Policy Roundtable for focus and targeting by APRA work included: **macroeconomic policy; produce pricing export; climate change; incentive structures of different value chains**; and **market access** at national, local and district levels, which can **incentivise investment** in and purchase of products. For crops other than maize and tobacco, there is no direct **link between global and domestic finance and farmers**, so more information is needed on what farmers should produce at what point to obtain a certain price. It is important to learn from the success of tobacco and maize commercialisation and recognise which combination of policies are enabling this success. The National Agriculture Policy Framework and National Development Strategy 2021–25 provides an opportunity for APRA evidence to **feed into existing Ministry of Agriculture policy and frameworks**. APRA should bring its evidence on the potential of small-scale farmers, and the importance of medium-scale farmers for growth led by the agriculture sector, to discussions with government and development actors, as well as the **private sector**, to feed into these strategies. It is critical to address the issue of **market access** so that producers can be connected to markets and manufacturers, and so that the right people have the correct resources and skills to deliver on the commercialisation potential of crops. Due to **inconsistent pricing**, it is difficult for farmers to forecast the value of their crops more than a year into the future. As such, the government needs to provide more consistent insights into the pricing potential of crops, so that farmers can calculate the potential returns on investments in crops for planning purposes.

Ghana: 15 April 2021

Policymakers highlighted the potential value of APRA evidence in helping identify which other commodities and crops should be invested in and what could be

done to support these markets. More evidence is needed to understand **longer-term production cycles** to inform policy for tree crops and to identify where is best for further investments. Research has highlighted that a stronger focus on **sharecropping** is required as an alternative mechanism to support families, so they can gain secure access to land. There was interest to know more about **market access** and the main pillars to **modernise agriculture**, along with the increase **uptake of agricultural technologies** – with a particular **interest in youth** to counter the aging agricultural work force. Public sector extension is expensive, so it would be useful to have a better understanding of whether farmers would pay for extension services. Policymakers suggested it would be beneficial to have more evidence on farmers' production systems and the portfolios of farmers' investments, in order to understand how resources dedicated to tree crops may limit the resources available for food crops. The **political economy** of research must be considered to ensure findings can be targeted and that opportunities for influence can be used. Policy recommendations should also be aligned to benefit the general population and value chain actors, and for politicians to satisfy political agendas. It was suggested that **short evidence briefs** should be shared with key stakeholders so that their comments and inputs can be incorporated, and to develop a consensus around recommendations before these are submitted to key policy makers.

Nigeria: 20 April 2021

Rural infrastructure development is needed to support transportation to towns and markets, so it is easier for **young people** to access cacao (and other) production chains. APRA research should highlight the various constraints of farmers who are not able to commercialise – for example, issues of **seeds and trust, agrochemicals and poor soil fertility, political instability**, and lack of **extension services**, as crops need to generate values that match investment and labour. **Zoning policies** are required to identify variable policies that enable coherence and comparisons across Federal and State levels. **Land**, especially that which is arable and not being cultivated, should also be allocated for agricultural purposes. Insights into how **private enterprises** can support the diversification of agricultural activity – for example, through provision of fertiliser and mechanisation – should also be sought to identify **innovative extension models**. There is a need for a stronger emphasis on **agribusiness** rather than productivity, and on how an educated youth and medium-scale farmer population can support delivery of inputs (seeds, fertiliser, and pesticides). This is in addition to the role they can play in other services that lead towards a more **private sector**-led system, which would increase productivity and provide more

structured market access for farmers. **Climate change** is a growing concern, so irrigation systems are needed to improve the quality of cacao and reduce the environmental impacts – and the government should play a role in supporting this investment. Greater public interest is required regarding the issue of **access to land** and scrutiny of state government's plans to resolve land issues. **Partnerships** are needed between those who have the land and those who are investing. A government review is necessary to ensure that land is made available for cultivation at community level and to generate revenue, in a way that remains inclusive and beneficial for **women and youth**. Potential interactions between **medium-scale farmers and smallholder farmers**, that can encourage medium-scale farmers to provide extension services which benefit the smallholders, should be identified and then packaged to policymakers to support uptake.

Tanzania: 20 April 2021

In Tanzania, there is a need for evidence to provide insights on the right policy incentives to encourage the involvement of **private sector** actors in seed marketing. When farmers are exposed to new varieties and see increased yields, then there is increased demand and the private sector starts to invest. Policy recommendations are required to build the capacity of SMEs to improve their access to financial services, as well as to create a more supportive policy environment to promote business development. Inputs are expensive for smallholder farmers, so there is a need to **support farmers to access technology and private sector knowledge – and this requires smart partnerships**. The cost of fertiliser and other inputs should include advice on how to use such inputs effectively. There are increasing issues related to **land degradation** and the expansion of sunflower production. Therefore, national-level discussion and guidance on seed and crop protection to increase productivity is needed. Inclusive green growth and support for small- and medium-sized farmers to take care of the soil, minimise use of tillage and fertiliser, and invest in improvements such as irrigation, should be incentivised. Investment in small, affordable machinery could create incentives and engage youth in **machinery production**, which can help intensify production and reduce degradation. Skills development in machinery maintenance is also a potential area for investment. Academia should have structured engagement with policy makers, so that they can make **clear and practical recommendations** to help government make decisions between different policy options.

Cross-cutting priorities that emerged from the policy dialogues

Several cross-cutting themes that emerged from the national roundtables highlight several common

concerns for stakeholders across the region. These are outlined below.

Expanding production:

1. New technology/infrastructure/innovation:

- There is often a focus on quantity over quality, with processing being done using old machines. How can we modernise these?
 - Need incentives to replace/invest in the technology because markets function regardless of quality.
 - APRA is expected to do more research on how to create stronger incentives for quality production and processing.
- What opportunities would support stronger uptake among those who are not currently using technologies?
- Need to support farmers to access technology or they will be locked out of benefits. Farmers need seeds, knowledge, and technology, and these cannot be sustainably provided by government or donors; it requires private sector interventions.
- Investments in small, affordable machinery could create incentives and engage youth in the production of machinery which can help to intensify production and reduce degradation; for example, using the right amount of seed and appropriate spacing.
- Where are the investments needed in commodity value changes – for example, on production, inputs, and market infrastructure?

2. Market challenges and opportunities:

- Private sector:
 - Some governments do not have sufficient monetary resources, so there is a vital need for a private sector-driven extension system.
 - It is critical to understand the mechanisms required to incentivise private sector interest: the government needs strong evidence of the crucial role of private sector seed companies in the development of new seeds to inform potential of public-private partnerships.
- Upscaling: Showing the potential of small- and medium-scale farmers:
 - How can we upscale community-based extension services to create an extension

support system? Doing so could provide a win-win solution for both the government and farmers.

- What are the potential interactions between medium-scale farmers and smallholder farmers that can encourage medium-scale farmers to provide extension services which benefit smallholders? How can this finding be presented to policymakers to support uptake?
- Investment needs to provide benefits for those that are already on the land, in order to increase production and enable people to remain on their land rather than having to sell and work on someone else's land.
- We must bridge the gap between small- and large-scale farming if we are to facilitate import substitutions.
- Government/state regulations:
 - A regulatory aspect is required to revise market standards. If no regulatory aspect is set, then the low prices would disincentivise producers (small-scale farmers) and traders.
 - There is a need for mechanisms to promote uptake and support new varieties, so that private sector actors can recover investments.
 - Need to assist farmers so they have access to assured markets and structured marketing.
 - The government needs to provide insights into pricing potential, as consistency is key if farmers are to calculate returns on investments in crops.
 - The state is crucial in creating an enabling environment for commercialisation, so having the correct policy priorities to support this are important.
 - More needs to be done by the state to create a supportive macroeconomic environment. There are some positive indicators, but there is still evidence of policy compounding institutional failures at implementation, and issues of corruption. Structural and policy issues need to support economic policy.
 - Issues remain regarding the inclusivity of land ownership and access to land for women and youth.

3. Training/skills/education:

- Educated youth and medium-sized farmers can support the delivery of inputs (seeds, fertiliser, and pesticides) on commission.
- Farmers need to be educated on mixing varieties as they have different qualities; and this has implications for milling.
- It is important for the government and private sector to promote and train farmers in good agricultural practices and the provision of supporting services to producers. If increasing land degradation and fertility depletion are not addressed, any increase in value chains will not be sustainable.
- Increasing the availability of low-cost equipment (ploughs, seed drills, harvesters, threshers, mills, etc.) also requires building skills to operate and maintain. Thus, skills development in machinery operations and maintenance is a potential area for investment and policy incentives.
- There is a role for universities in the commercialisation framework. How can they contribute to innovation hubs and processes to support commercialisation (of outputs)?
- Do the right people have the right resources and skills to deliver on the commercialisation potential of crops?

4. Research and development:

- What other commodities should be invested in? We need to consider new opportunities for expanding domestic and regional markets, where most producers will be able to participate, as well as global commodity markets. What are the factors and evidence that supports markets?
- Empirical evidence is needed on competitiveness and windows of opportunity for export. For example, what are the most appropriate tomato varieties in Ghana and can we produce them?
- The certification of planting materials is key to improving quality. Fastrack access to modern varieties of all food crops, data, and knowledge.
- Facilitate exchange of visits and experiences and support joint training and forums for scientific exchange.
- It would be useful to look at farmers' production systems and their investment portfolios to understand how resources can be better allocated to improve their productivity.
- Evidence to really understand longer-term cycles of changing production patterns and market demand

would be highly valuable in informing policy and providing insights for a foresight or horizon-scanning approach. A long-term perspective is required, e.g., for tree crops to understand how long-term changes affect production cycles.

- There is a need for more information on what farmers should produce and at what point, in order to obtain a certain price.
- An APRA analysis of farmers who are stepping up, would be useful to inform government focus and policies on more production and import substitution.
- For more efficient practice, we need to first know where inefficient or low-quality products are being produced.

Climate/environmental concerns:

- We need to build inclusive agriculture that is also climate-resilient, as many rainfed African farming systems are in complex, diverse, risk-prone environments and therefore exposed to climate-related shocks and stresses.
- Increasing off-farm employment opportunities and diversifying income sources can help mitigate the impacts of climate change, e.g., through loss of a certain crop.
- Guidance should be provided on seed and crop protection to increase productivity. A national-level discussion on the protection of agricultural land is urgently required to promote good agricultural practices.
- It is necessary to incentivise inclusive green growth and support small- and medium-sized farmers to take care of the soil, minimise their use of tillage and fertiliser, and invest in improvements such as irrigation.

Youth:

- There is interest in building small cottage industries to increase interest in the uptake of agricultural technologies amongst youth – and this could help counter the aging agricultural workforce.
- Rural infrastructure is needed to support transportation to towns and markets, so it is easier for young people to access opportunities in both rural and urban areas and strengthen linkages between them.
- Issues remain regarding the inclusivity of land ownership and access to land for women and youth.

- Investment in small, affordable farming equipment and machinery could create incentives for youth and engage them in their operation and maintenance. This would create service-related jobs to support the agricultural sector.
- Training young people to use new agricultural technologies and practices could help to intensify production and reduce degradation; for example, using the right amount of seed and appropriate spacing.

Communications channels and strategies to reach policymakers not directly engaging with APRA

Advice from stakeholders to researchers suggested several communication channels and approaches for reaching policymakers not directly engaged in conversations with the APRA programme at different levels. These were taken on board when planning various national and regional engagement activities and events.

National decision-makers:

- Elicit demand for evidence and advice from national government ministries, platforms, and secretariats to ensure any analysis and recommendations provided speak to their priorities.
- Securing an entry point to the relevant government ministries and departments is key, as they will help open doors to allow the study findings and recommendations to be communicated to the appropriate decision-makers.
- Policymakers appreciate numbers (i.e., good data), as these are useful in making a case and strengthening arguments. The review and updating of agricultural policies and strategies creates an important window of opportunity in which to present this type of empirical evidence.
- When packaging evidence, it is useful to clear and concise terms and formats that are easily accessible that speak to existing policies, frameworks and strategies, e.g., a National Agriculture investment Plan. Policy briefs should highlight key issues and focus discussion on important aspects of a particular policy issue. There is also a requirement for policy briefs to comprise targeted messages and less detail due to time constraints among officials.

Target legal processes:

- Identify how the preparation of any laws or contractual arrangements might be informed or influenced by APRA research. For example, the Ethiopian agriculture law is in the pipeline and

Malawi is currently reviewing its national agrarian policy. Ghana already had a new land law come into force, which may mean a missed opportunity for this research to inform its development.

- APRA evidence should feed into any legal reviews with clear recommendations based on findings, which could help define stand-alone policies or an umbrella policy.

Zoning policies and regulations:

- In countries that combine a general government (the central or 'Federal' government) with regional governments (provincial, state, cantonal, territorial or other sub-unit governments) into a single political system (e.g., Ethiopia, Nigeria) zoning policies and regulations are required that enable coherence and comparisons across State and Federal levels.
- Local district development plans provide an entry point at which to engage practitioners and public and private sector actors, and encourage zoning. It is important to identify whether these priorities are reflected in district and national governments (Tanzania).

Political economy and landscape:

- Research is needed on the policy-targeted communication strategies required to address the rapid turnover of key decision-makers. We need to engage with well-positioned civil servants, who can support the Executive and can influence decision-makers as they come and go.
- Policies need to be aligned and show how they benefit both the general population and specific actors across the value chain so that politicians can satisfy their political objectives. Showing how these political interests and socioeconomic interests align is critical to advancing policy change.
- The conversation needs to be shifted away from approaches sharing specific research findings, and instead focussed on integrating research evidence and insights into policy frameworks. A stronger emphasis on improving policy frameworks and related processes requires a deep understanding of how these frameworks and policies are developed and implemented, and who inputs into them. A political economy analysis that maps the relevant actors, interests, and framings is essential for this process.
- We should look at the policy context on the ground and determine the right people to influence and lobby. State policy is complex and based on a wide variety of scientific evidence and non-scientific

information. The policy process is continuously evolving. There are often key 'moments' that communications can target, which can open up space for the introduction of new ideas and evidence into the process; but identifying these requires good tactics linked to clear, defined phases.

Connections for influence:

- Farmers' organisations and federations can influence government policy on agricultural development, as they are often viewed as key stakeholders by officials. However, they sometimes lack the evidence and technical capacity to inform these processes. Therefore, they may require support from researchers to package and present relevant findings and recommendations for policy makers. A partnership between producer groups and researchers can strengthen the messaging and influence of both.
- Engaging with those farmers' organisations can also allow researchers to better understand their priorities and capabilities, which may help them to identify how producers can be better connected to private sector actors and market opportunities.
- Collaborating with other relevant non-state actors, such as non-governmental organisations and private sector associations, could create alliances to further policy discussions and strategies to support policy change. Researchers can provide fresh evidence and policy lessons that the non-research partners can use in their campaigning and lobbying to inform and influence policy processes.
- Analysing how formal agreements can be facilitated between producers and processors (that are mutually beneficial) could allow farmers to enter into forward marketing contracts, rather than only marketing once the crop is processed.

Clark, L. and Taylor, J. (2022) *ALRE Report on Evidence Demand on Inclusive Agricultural Commercialisation in Africa*. ALRE Research Note 6. Brighton: Future Agricultures Consortium

© APRA 2022

ISBN: 978-1-78118-996-2

DOI: [10.19088/APRA.2022.038](https://doi.org/10.19088/APRA.2022.038)



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The APRA Directorate is based at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), UK (www.ids.ac.uk), with regional hubs at the Centre for African Bio-Entrepreneurship (CABE), Kenya, the Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS), South Africa, and the University of Ghana, Legon. It builds on more than a decade of research and policy engagement work by the Future Agricultures Consortium (www.future-agricultures.org) and involves more than 100 researchers and communications professionals in Africa, UK, Sweden and USA

Funded by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office



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This report is funded with UK aid from the UK government (Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office – FCDO, formerly DFID). The opinions are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of IDS or the UK government