



Agricultural Policy Research in Africa



# ALRE STAKEHOLDER SURVEY ANALYSIS

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ALRE Research Note 2  
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## Introduction

The Agricultural Policy Research in Africa (APRA) programme has an innovative monitoring, evaluation and learning approach known as the 'Accompanied Learning on Relevance and Effectiveness' (ALRE), which is being delivered by a small team of embedded evaluation specialists. ALRE has conducted a survey on agricultural commercialisation with key stakeholders in Africa to improve understanding of the policy issues related to inclusive agricultural commercialisation that require better-quality evidence. The insights generated are intended to support researchers to better frame their research around stakeholders' priority policy issues across the African continent.

The survey was developed in consultation with APRA research fellows from the Institute of Development Studies. Invitations to complete the survey were sent between December 2019 and March 2020 to stakeholders working in a broad range of fields,<sup>1</sup> from farmer organisations to policymakers, to gain a wide perspective of the dynamics of research demand. By analysing insights from stakeholders working in the agricultural commercialisation sphere across all regions of Africa, the survey findings provide an initial reading of the demand for better-quality evidence and research on specific policy issues related to making agricultural commercialisation more inclusive.

All survey responses were collected prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is therefore to be expected that some policy priorities may have since shifted in

light of the pandemic's impact. A series of virtual focus groups are planned in each of the regions in December 2020 to validate these findings and reflect upon how the events of 2020 have affected these concerns.

## Method

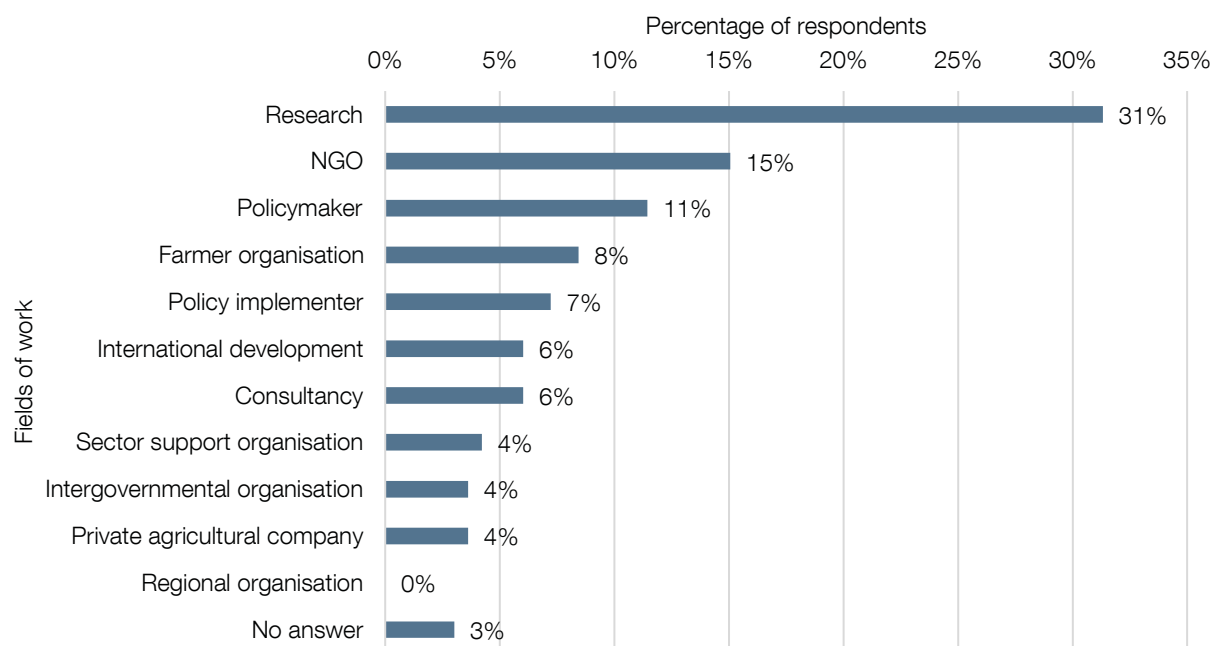
The survey was developed in SurveyMonkey and distributed to APRA contacts across Africa and promoted via the APRA newsletter. The survey consisted of two sections; the first of which included two key questions:

1. What are the top five priority policy issues that require better-quality evidence and analysis in order for agricultural commercialisation to become more inclusive in your region of Africa?
2. What are the most effective methods of communicating research to inform policymakers?

The survey's second section consisted of questions related to four factors that influence agricultural commercialisation in Africa: market dynamics, farmer organisations, policies and regulations, and the private sector. Respondents were asked:

- To what extent is each of these factors currently supportive of inclusive agricultural commercialisation in your region of Africa?
- To what extent has the factor's role in inclusive agricultural commercialisation changed between 2016-2019?

**Figure 1 Respondents' field of work**



Source: Author's own

<sup>1</sup> Consultancy, farmer organisation, intergovernmental organisation, international development, non-governmental organisation (NGO), policy implementer, policymaker, private agricultural company, regional organisation, research, sector support organisation.

- How much has research on the factor contributed to this change?

All questions were closed to limit the time needed to respond. The data generated were analysed through a regional lens to provide findings specific to each of the APRA focal regions of East, Southern and West Africa, and also comparatively to examine trends across the regions.

A total of 166 individuals responded to the survey. The majority of respondents were based in West Africa (35 per cent), East Africa (27 per cent), and Southern Africa (26 per cent), and a smaller number in Central Africa (4 per cent), Asia (2 per cent), Europe (2 per cent), North Africa (1 per cent), and Latin America (1 per cent). An additional 2 per cent of respondents did not indicate their region. There was strong representation across the APRA focal countries. In response to the question asking which countries are relevant to your work, between 20-30 per cent of respondents stated that they worked directly in one of the following APRA focal country countries: Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Nigeria and Zimbabwe. Only Tanzania (19 per cent) and Mozambique (11 per cent) were relevant to fewer than 20 per cent of respondents. Overall, 150 of the respondents confirmed at least one of the APRA focal countries<sup>2</sup> was relevant to their work, suggesting the findings are based upon stakeholders' priorities in the countries where APRA is active.

The respondents represented a wide range of professional fields as presented in Figure 1. Of the 11 career options, the only professional field not selected was regional organisation. Disaggregating survey respondents by gender revealed that 77 per cent of respondents were male, 22 per cent were female and 1 per cent did not answer.

## **Section 1: Supporting more effective evidence for policy issues**

### **1.1. What are the priority policy issues requiring better-quality evidence?**

#### **Overview of priority issues requiring better-quality evidence and analysis**

Figure 2 presents an analysis of responses to the question 'What are the top five priority issues that require better quality evidence and analysis in order for agricultural commercialisation to become more inclusive in your region of Africa?' The results indicate that improved markets for smallholder products was by far the highest-ranking priority issue requiring better-quality evidence, which was selected by 50 per cent of respondents. Regional analysis also supports this view, as the same issue was rated a top priority by respondents based in all three APRA focal regions.

The empowerment of youth and women in agriculture was also indicated as a high priority issue. This is significant due to the emphasis on inclusion, although the policy solutions related to this issue are less clear. The issue is generic and not linked to a specific agricultural area, such as production, processing or marketing activities. Other high-priority policy issues were credit and financial services, and rural extension and advisory services.

Figure 2 shows taxation, trade and land reform were relatively low-priority issues for all stakeholder groups. This result suggests that respondents do not associate these types of macroeconomic policy reforms with inclusion. Research that explores how issues such as taxation, trade and land reform support more inclusive commercialisation need to make those linkages explicit.

Although the top-ranking priorities, overall, were highly prioritised across most stakeholder groups, there were a small number of notable exceptions. For example, 'business support services' were ranked the 11th highest priority issue overall, however, stakeholders working in international development rated it as their joint-highest priority issue, with improved markets for smallholder products only their fifth highest priority. Likewise, 'sector policies and value chain development' were only the sixth highest priority across stakeholders but, for policymakers, this emerged as their joint-highest priority. This demonstrates how different stakeholders have different priorities and suggests a disconnect between the priorities of international development actors and national policymakers that researchers should be aware of when generating evidence to influence policy.

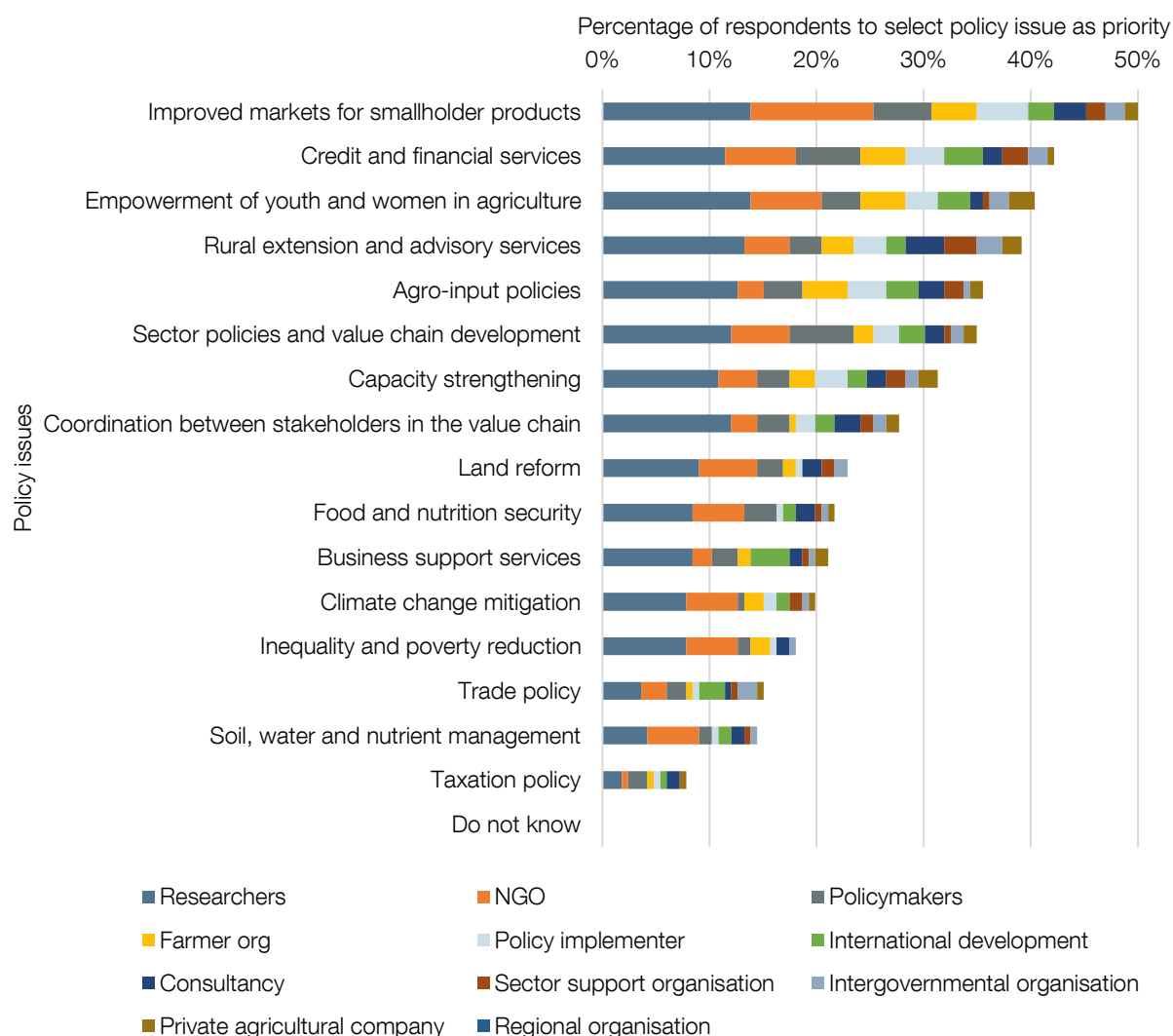
#### **Regional analysis of respondents' priority issues requiring better-quality evidence**

Annex 1 presents an analysis of responses from stakeholders based in the APRA focal regions. The results reveal that the West Africa-based respondents' (56 individuals) priority issues were broadly similar to the overall priorities presented in Figure 2, whilst respondents based in East Africa (44) and Southern Africa indicated a number of notable differences in their regional priorities. For example, as Figure 8 in Annex 1 demonstrates, for East African respondents, agro-input policies were the highest-priority issue with 52 per cent of respondents selecting this issue. In contrast, agro-input policies were selected as a priority issue by only 36 per cent of respondents across all regions. Additionally, although credit and financial services were ranked a priority issue by 43 per cent of respondents overall (the second highest priority issue), only 32 per cent of East Africa-based respondents indicated it was a priority issue requiring better-quality evidence.

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2 Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Tanzania and Zimbabwe.

**Figure 2 Priority issue for stronger evidence by field of work**



Source: Author's own

Results from the 42 respondents based in Southern Africa, displayed in Annex 1 (Figure 9), indicate that land reform was considered a higher-priority issue requiring better evidence than in other regions, as 38 per cent of respondents from this region selected this issue, compared to only 22 per cent across all 166 respondents.

## 1.2 What methods of communicating research do stakeholders require more of?

### Regional analysis

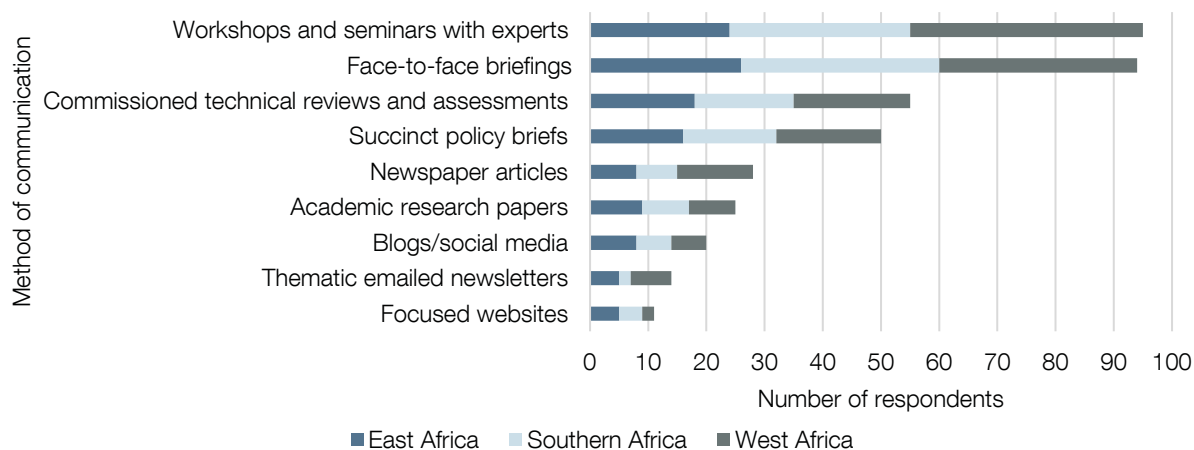
Across the 142 respondents based in the three APRA focal regions, there was little variation in answers to the question 'What are the top three most effective methods of communicating research to inform policymakers that you require more of?'

Figure 3 demonstrates that the top three most-required methods for communicating research were the same in each region, with workshops and seminars with experts and face-to-face briefings the most in demand, followed by commissioned technical reviews and assessments. The common factors between these methods are stronger engagement with experts and policymakers

and, consequently, a higher cost in financial and human resources to implement this engagement. The next group of methods that respondents would like to have more of were also the same across the three regions, and included succinct policy briefs, newspapers and academic research papers – all types of written media. The methods of communication considered least important are all linked to internet content, i.e. blogs/social media, thematic emailed newsletters and thematic or specialist websites.

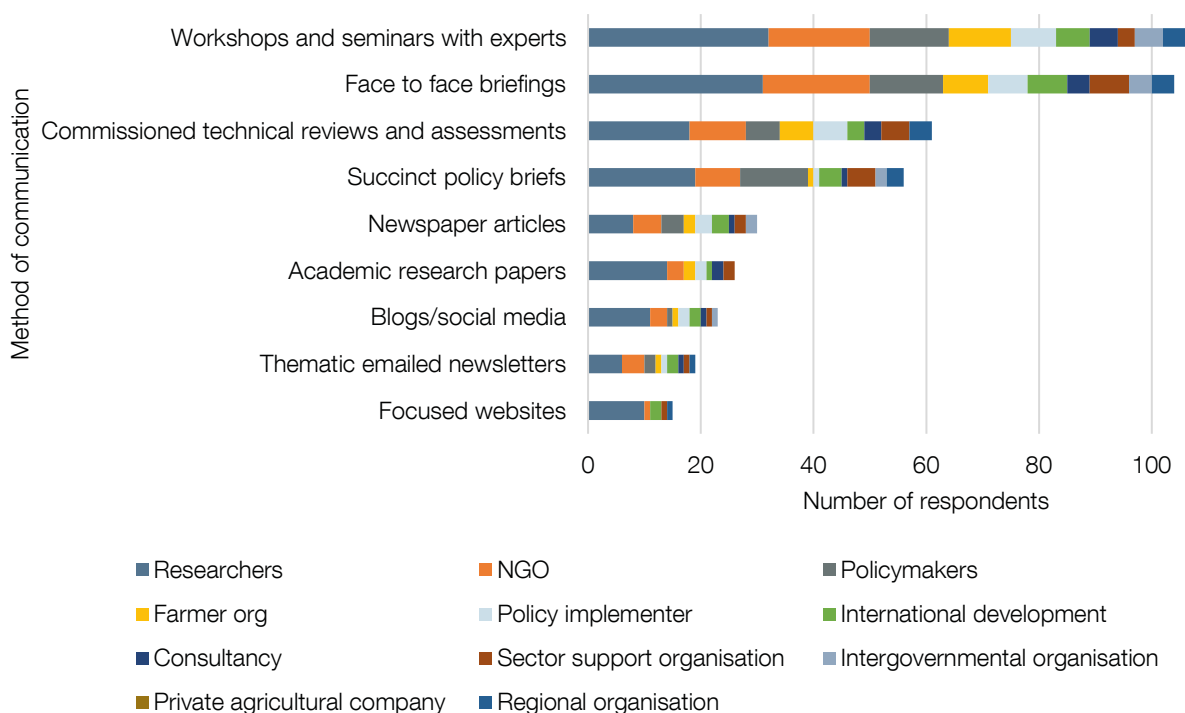
In reality, researchers use a combination of these methods to communicate research to inform policymakers, however the survey data indicated that there is a higher demand among stakeholders for methods that involve stronger engagement with experts. This finding may be strategically useful for researchers and other advocates of inclusive agricultural commercialisation to consider when devising plans to influence policymakers' decisions in the APRA focal regions. However, since the survey was conducted there has been a significant shift in engagement due to COVID-19 and it will be interesting to reflect on the ways in which the pandemic has affected these findings.

**Figure 3 Most-required communication methods**



Source: Author's own

**Figure 4 Most-required communication methods by field of work**



Source: Author's own

**Field of work analysis**

When disaggregating the answers of all 166 respondents by their field of work, as demonstrated by Figure 4, there was broad agreement across the sampled professions on the four methods of communicating research that respondents require more of, with few notable exceptions.

For instance, 63 per cent of policymakers selected succinct policy briefs in their top three most-needed methods, just behind face-to-face briefings and workshops and seminars, whereas only one policy implementer (8 per cent) selected succinct policy briefs within their top three preferences. Policy implementers within the sample prefer more in-depth methods of communicating research, with 50 per cent selecting commissioned technical reviews and assessments, compared to only 32 per cent of policymakers who

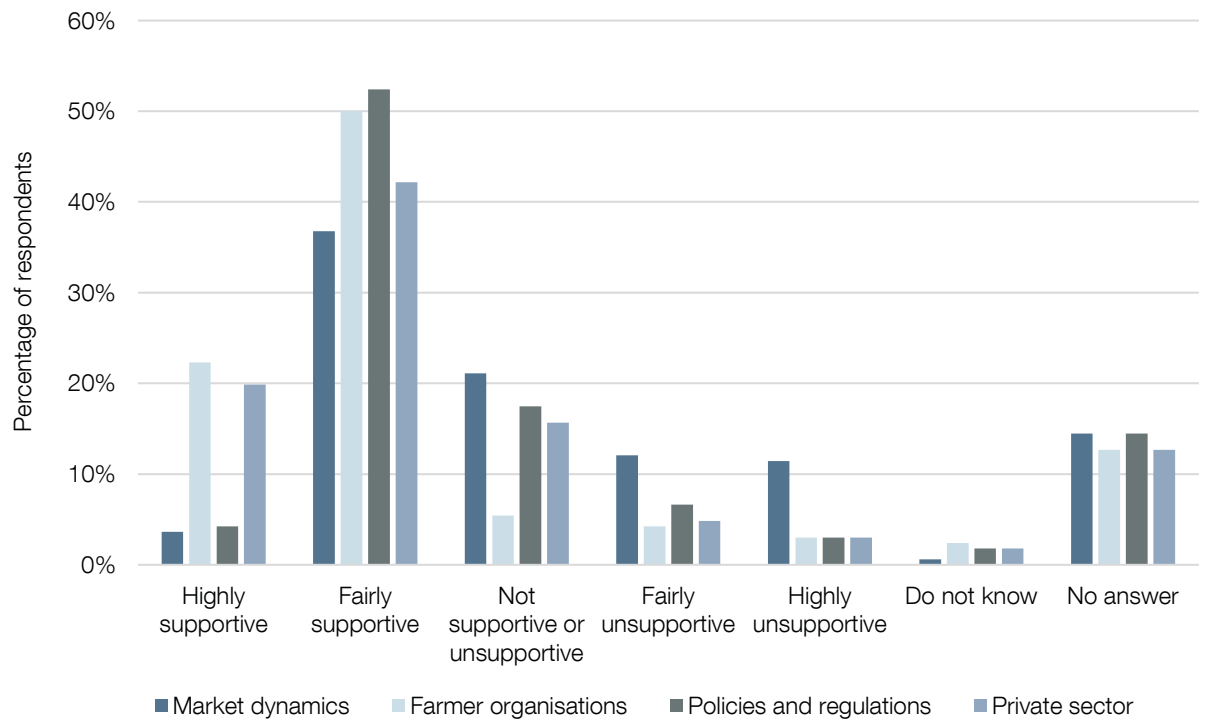
selected this method in their top three. This finding highlights the different needs of decision-makers and the technical staff who implement policy decisions and the importance of understanding audiences and their needs. Respondents from farmer organisations and consultants also ranked succinct policy briefs as less needed, preferring workshops and seminars with experts.

**Section 2: Contribution of key factors to support inclusive agricultural commercialisation**

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

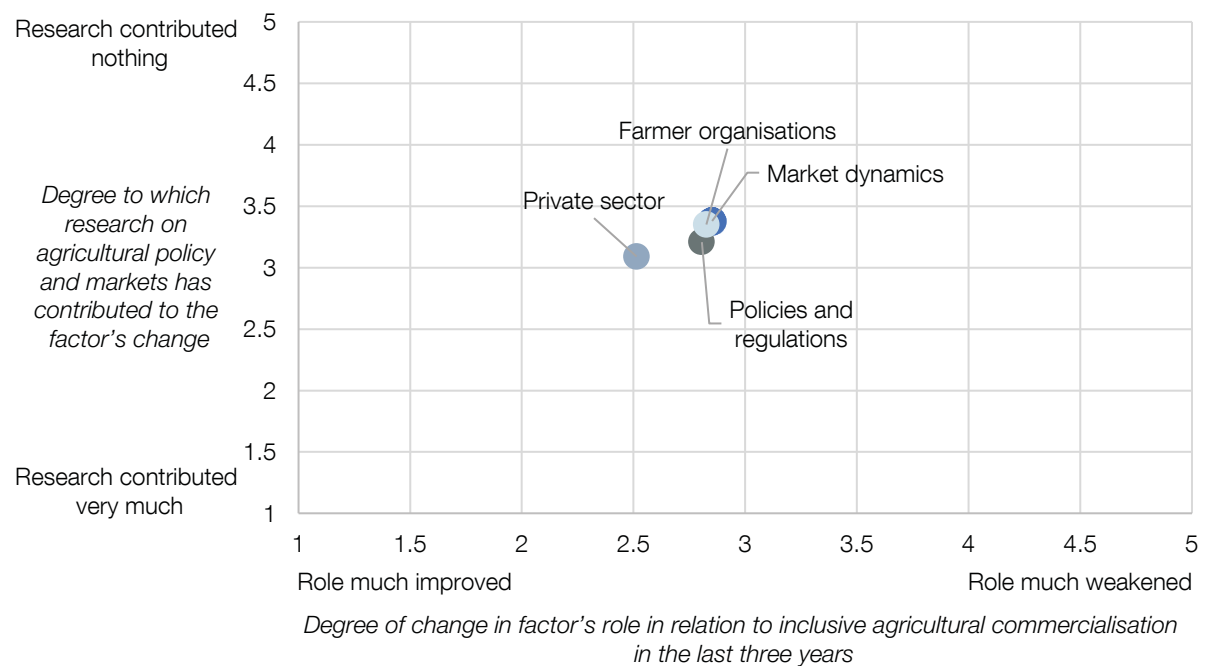
The secondary purpose of the ALRE stakeholder survey was to improve understanding of the role that

**Figure 5 Perceptions of how different factors support inclusive agricultural commercialisation**



Source: Author's own

**Figure 6 Perceptions of how different factors support inclusive agricultural commercialisation**



Source: Author's own

key factors – market dynamics,<sup>3</sup> farmer organisations, policies and regulations, and the private sector – have played in supporting more inclusive agricultural commercialisation in Africa, and whether research has contributed to any change in those roles.

Analysis of all 166 responses found farmer organisations and the private sector were deemed the most supportive factors of inclusive agricultural commercialisation in the respondents' respective

regions. For instance, farmer organisations and the private sector were rated as highly supportive by 22 per cent and 20 per cent of respondents, respectively, compared to just 4 per cent for market dynamics and policies and regulations. Market dynamics were rated the least supportive, with 11 per cent of respondents rating the factor highly unsupportive of inclusive agricultural commercialisation. This finding should be considered in the context of the findings from Question 1 above, in which improved markets for smallholder

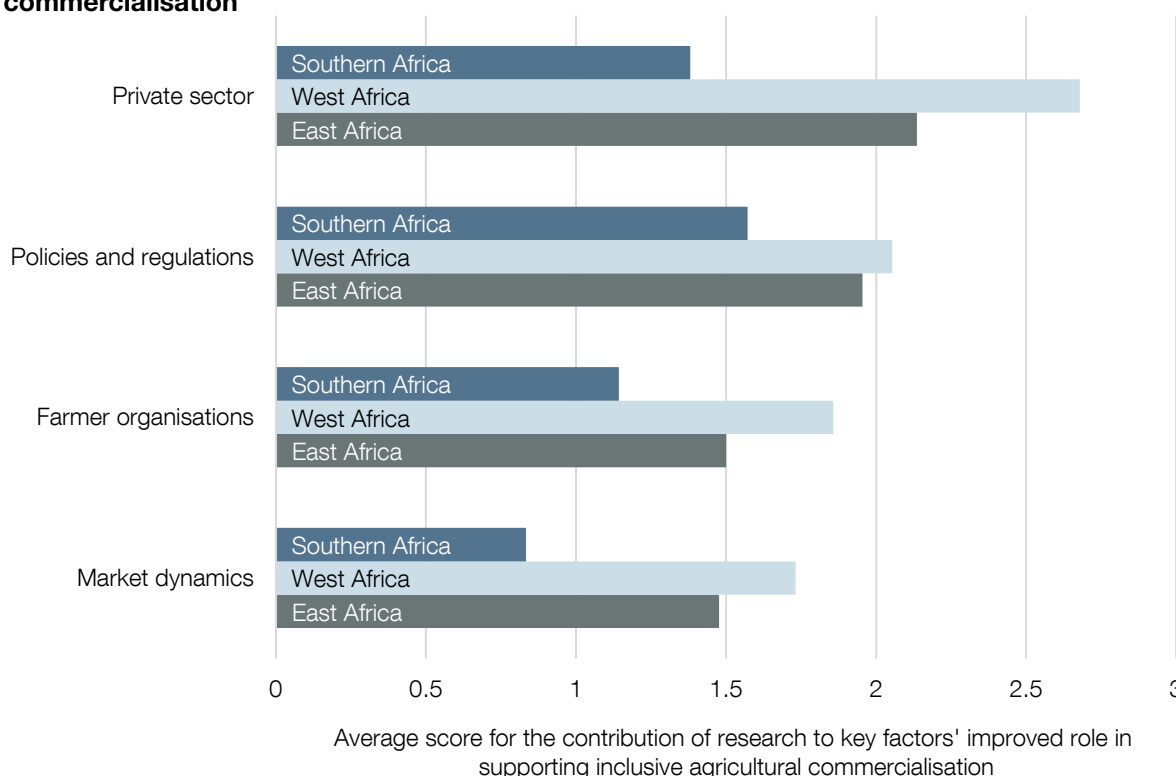
3 The interaction between forces of demand and supply and the pricing signals they generate. In most free markets any significant part of market dynamics is beyond the control of any firm or group.

**Table 1 Example of recoding scheme and questions to which it was applied**

How much has research on agricultural policy and markets contributed to this change in market dynamics?	Very much	Much	Fair	Little	Nothing
<b>Have the market dynamics in relation to inclusive agricultural commercialisation changed in the last three years?</b>					
Much improved	8	6	4	2	0
Improved	7	5	3	1	0
Not changed	0	0	0	0	0
Weakened	-7	-5	-3	-1	0
Much weakened	-8	-6	-4	-2	0

Source: Author's own

**Figure 7 Regional variation in perception of role of evidence to support inclusive agricultural commercialisation**



Source: Author's own

farmers ranked as the number one priority across all three APRA focal regions.

On average, respondents thought the role of each factor in relation to inclusive agricultural commercialisation had slightly improved between 2016 and 2019. On a scale of one to five, with one being much improved and five being much weakened, the average for each factor was lower than the median (three). The private sector was rated the most-improved factor and market dynamics the least improved. In terms of the perceived contribution of research on agricultural policy and markets to the factors' improved roles, on average, respondents thought research had made only a fair contribution (between 3 and 3.5) to each factor's improvement.

## 2.2 Regional analysis of research contribution to change

In order to conduct a detailed analysis of the contribution of research to the perceived changes in the roles of

four key factors in supporting inclusive agricultural commercialisation, survey responses were recoded using the system presented in Table 1 to generate single contribution scores.

Calculating the average recoded contribution score among respondents in each APRA focal region provided insights into the extent to which research may have contributed to changes in how the four key factors relate to inclusive agricultural commercialisation in each region, as presented in Figure 7. Across the APRA focal regions, respondents in West Africa perceived research as having contributed most significantly to improvements in the roles of each key factor in supporting inclusive agricultural commercialisation. Respondents from East Africa viewed research as slightly less influential, and respondents based in Southern Africa perceived research as having significantly less influence on improvements for all four key factors.

When comparing between the key factors in Figure 7, the low scores for research contribution towards changes in market dynamics are unsurprising given that 'improved markets for smallholder products' was by far the highest-ranking priority issue requiring better-quality evidence, selected by 50 per cent of respondents. This is particularly true for Southern African respondents, 57 per cent of whom selected this priority issue, but had a low perception of the contribution of research.

The findings related to the perceived contribution of research to changes in the role of the four key factors across the three APRA focal regions give rise to further questions. Qualitative follow up through focus group discussions with key stakeholders in each country will aim to capture different perspectives to better understand:

- How has the private sector improved its supportiveness of inclusive agricultural commercialisation in comparison to other factors during 2016-2019?
- What are the barriers to market dynamics becoming more supportive in relation to inclusive agricultural commercialisation across all APRA focal regions, besides a lack of evidence on the issue of improved markets for smallholder products?
- What specific research on agricultural policy and markets has had an influence on the four key factors in relation to inclusive agricultural commercialisation?
- What would make research on agricultural policy and markets more influential?
- Why did West African respondents perceive the contribution of research to change in the supportiveness of the private sector to inclusive agricultural commercialisation more positively than respondents from other regions, particularly Southern Africa?
- Why did respondents in West Africa perceive the contribution of research to changes in supportiveness of all key factors more positively than respondents in other regions?
- How has COVID-19 affected the findings in this survey, both in terms of the implications for the priority issues identified as well as the most effective means of communicating research?

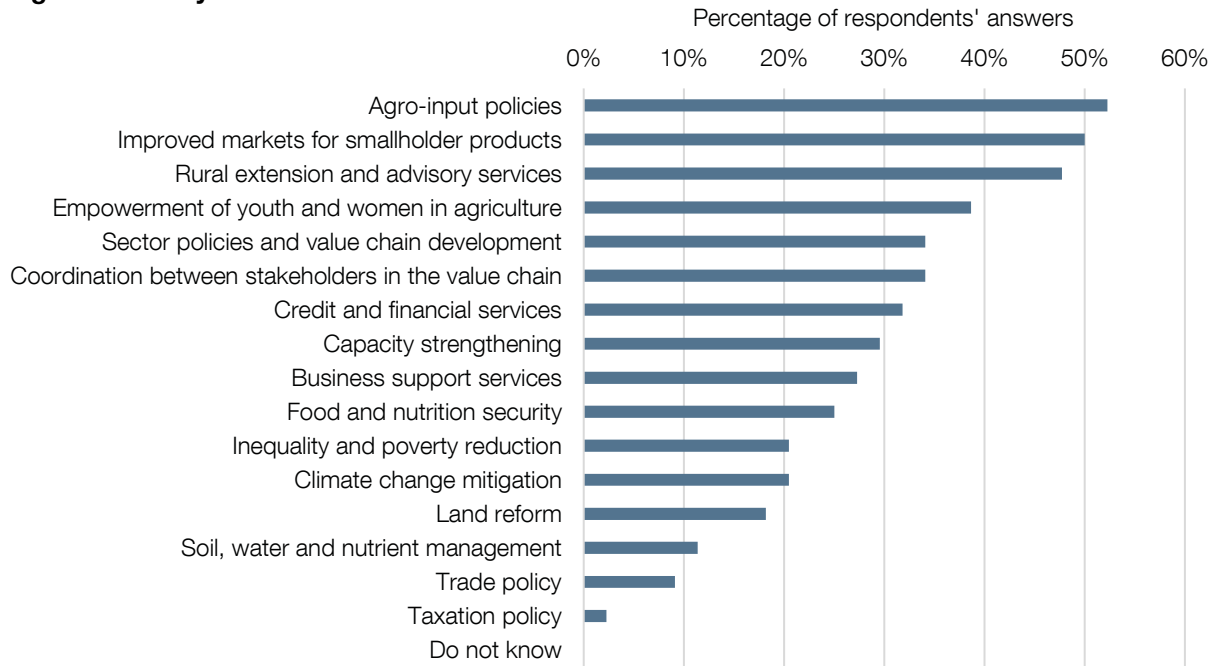
### **Next steps**

The ALRE team, working with APRA country teams, will convene a series of qualitative focus groups with key stakeholders during the final quarter of 2020. This will enable the survey findings to be validated and for additional questions that arose from the survey analysis to be discussed.



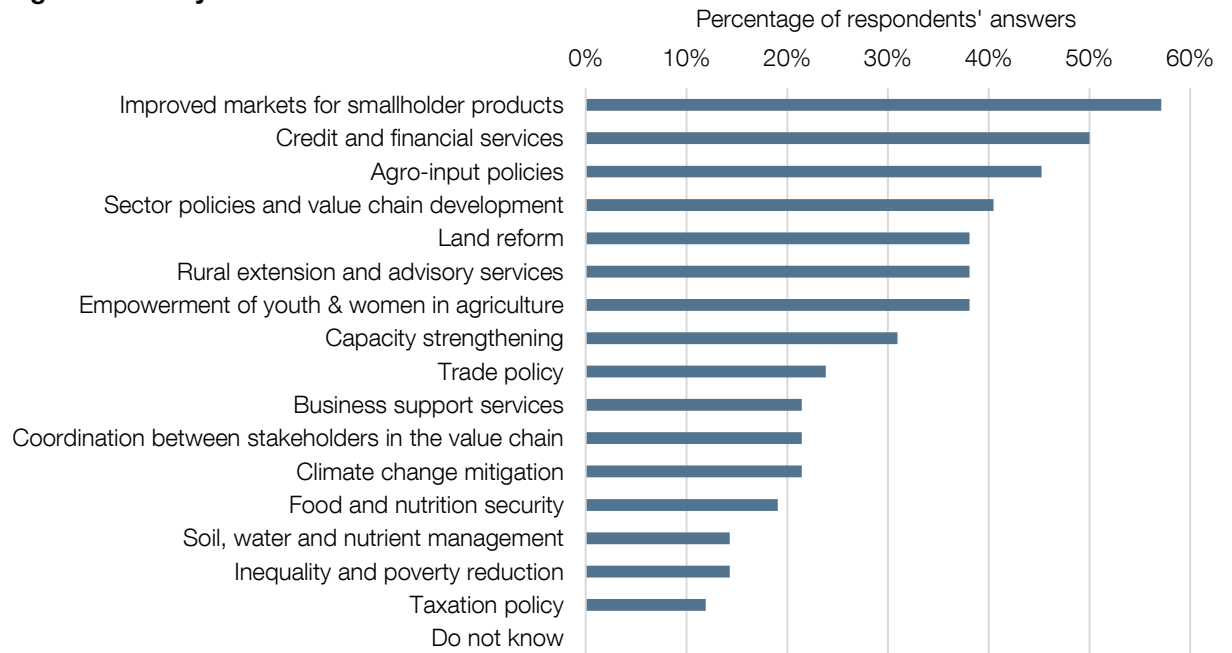
## Annex 1: Regional priorities for better quality evidence

**Figure 8 Priority issues in East Africa**



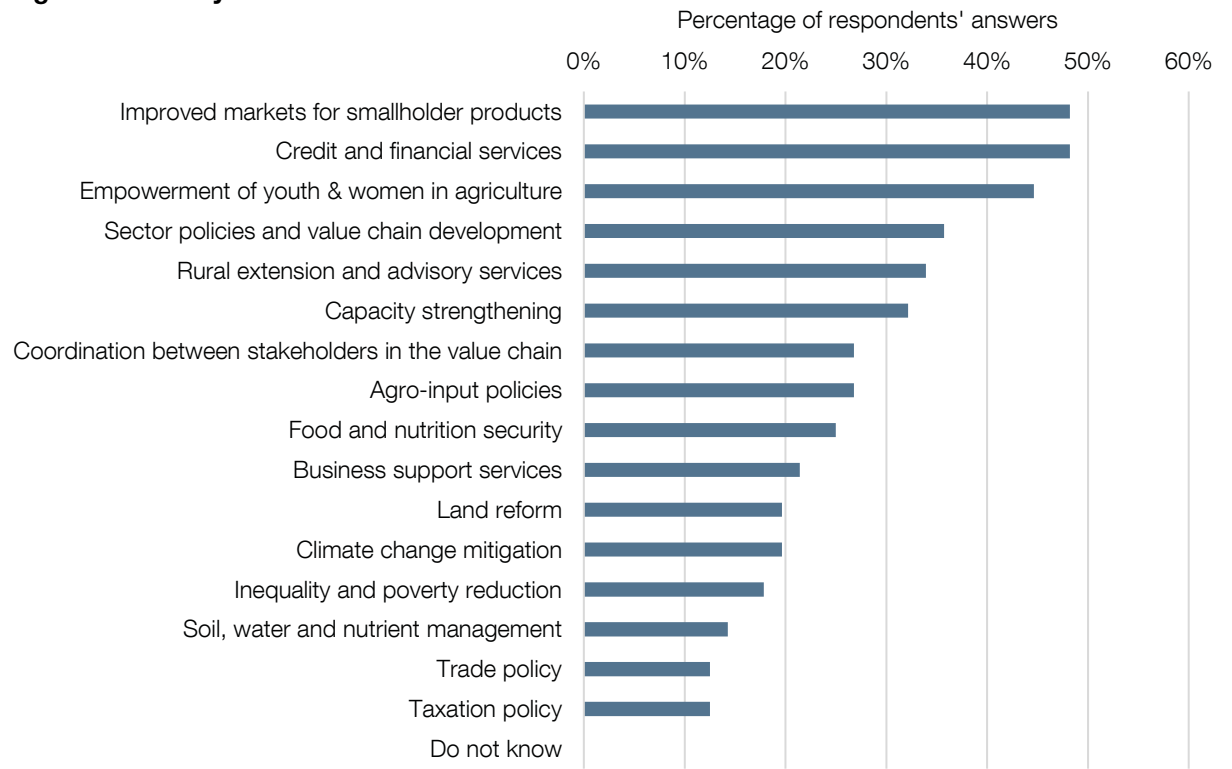
Source: Author's own

**Figure 9 Priority issues in Southern Africa**



Source: Author's own

**Figure 10 Priority issues in West Africa**



Source: Author's own

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The APRA Directorate is based at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), UK ([www.ids.ac.uk](http://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](http://www.future-agricultures.org)) and involves more than 100 researchers and communications professionals in Africa, UK, Sweden and USA

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