Newsletter 2 – November 2016
WOTRO programme ‘Inclusive value chain collaboration’

Update
Welcome to our second Newsletter! It reports on new insights gained into heterogeneity among small-scale tree crop farmers; the second series of learning platforms in Ghana and South Africa; a workshop with the Ghana Agricultural Associations Business & Information Centre (GAABIC) in Accra to develop a value proposition for work with oil-palm farmers in Ghana; and the Lead Farmer project with the South Africa Subtropical Growers’ Association (Subtrop) and Agricultural Research Council (ARC) in South Africa to promote peer-to-peer learning among macadamia farmers. For more detailed information please contact project leader Mirjam Ros via e-mail: m.a.f.ros-tonen@uva.nl or one of the team members listed under Who’s who, or check the reports on our website (https://inclusivevcc.wordpress.com/home/).

Insights into tree crop farmer heterogeneity
Policymakers and value chain actors are increasingly aware that ‘small-scale farmers’ are not all the same. They differ in household characteristics, institutional support, access to resources and production and marketing strategies, hence smallholders face different opportunities and production constraints. Gaining insight into the diversity among them is therefore key for policies and value chain collaborations that aim to improve livelihoods and create sustainable and food secure farming systems.

A baseline survey among 167 tree crop farmers in Makhado, Muthale and Thulamela (Limpopo Province, South Africa); 148 cocoa and oil palm farmers in the Eastern Region; and 60 cocoa farmers in the Ashanti Region (Ghana) was a first step towards uncovering this diversity. It showed that tree crop farmers in both countries are an ageing population (generally over 50) who perceive themselves as food secure (although with seasonal challenges for some in Ghana). With 6-8 ha land on average, small-scale tree crop farmers own more land than the <2 ha generally mentioned for smallholders in the literature.

Whereas tree crop farmers in South Africa and oil palm farmers in Ghana are predominantly male, cocoa farms in Ghana are run by both males and females, whereas women dominate oil palm processing. Small-scale macadamia farmers in South Africa are generally homogenous; avocado farmers are more diverse in terms of assets, monetary endowment and product diversification. In South Africa heterogeneity is mainly explained by age, gender, full- or part-time orientation, and crop choice. Gender and crop choice also explain differences among small-scale cocoa farmers in Ghana, along with geographical location and landholding size. Differences among oil palm farmers depend on the value chain in which they engage. Multiple oil palm value chains co-exist, hence the sector accommodates both peasant and entrepreneurial farming styles – with some farmers alternating between the two.

For more information see the infosheets and MSc theses on https://inclusivevcc.wordpress.com/publications/.

Fig. 1. Cocoa farming as a ‘joint venture’ of spouses

Capacity building
Capacity building is integrally part of the inclusive VCC project and targets MSc and PhD students, farmers and those who work with them, and consortium partners. First, Northern and Southern partners jointly supervise PhD and MSc students and build their capacities in trans-disciplinary research and reporting. Students from various countries enrolled in the Master and Research Master International Development Studies at the University of Amsterdam (UvA) provide strong inputs to the programme through their MSc thesis projects. In Ghana, these students make intensive use of local student assistants, thus further building research capacity. Their en-
Engagement in the project enables these research assistants to do their own Master at UENR on topics of relevance to the project, thus generating further spin-offs.

Second, through action research with farmers, researchers are responsive to their capacity needs. Capacity building occurs mainly through the Learning Platforms. These create a platform for farmers, value chain actors, NGOs and government agents to engage in cross-level and peer-to-peer learning, knowledge sharing and networking. They also promote new, inclusive methodologies (e.g. participatory scenario building) and institutional options for knowledge sharing and learning, while providing an opportunity to validate the results of research. In South Africa, farmers received training in water harvesting techniques, whereas macadamia farmers will be further trained in business and leadership skills through the Lead Farmer project (partnership ARC-Subtrop).

Third, consortium partners have gained from joint activities where novel methodologies were applied and new research identified. An example is the value proposition workshop with GAABIC (see elsewhere in this Newsletter).

Learning platforms
In August 2016, over 150 farmers, extension officers, buyers, processors and researchers participated in one of the three learning platforms organised in Ghana and South Africa. Learning platforms provide a space for knowledge co-creation and collaborative learning. They involve stakeholders with various perspectives, experiences and expertise who jointly define, share and discuss solutions to issues that farmers are facing. This year the theme was ‘changelmakers as brokers of knowledge, innovations, resources and access to markets’.

The project team identified several types of changemakers: purchasing clerks (PCs) and district and regional officers of cocoa and oil-palm-buying companies; lead and chief farmers; representatives of institutions such as the Oil Palm Research Institute (OPRI) in Ghana or Subtrop in South Africa; and input suppliers. Changemakers among individual farmers (M/F) were “shakers and movers” for being innovative in either technologies applied, networking for support, or helping organise farmers in saving groups or associations. During the platforms, the changemakers were interviewed about their motives and experiences. Having a vision, a network, and a drive to change farmers’ life for the better came to the fore as changemakers’ most important characteristics.

In order to make knowledge exchange more relevant to the farmers, the learning platforms were organised at district/provincial level. This was already the case in South Africa, but meant a change in Ghana, where the first learning platform was held in Accra. This change implied that the workshop was held in the local language (Twi), with actors closer to the farmers.

Particularly in Tepa (Ashanti Region) the presence of highly motivated changemakers from the private sector, government and communities resulted in genuine knowledge sharing which enthused all participants. Active engagement of professionals from the Cocoa Health and Extension Division (CHED) of the Ghana Cocoa Board (Cocobod), the Departments of Agriculture (MoFA), extension officers, licensed buying companies and government officials from the District Assembly ensured that farmers found a real platform to discuss their concerns about e.g. the mass spraying programme. They also shared knowledge of innovations ‘from below’. Particularly soap makers from the Central Region were excited to learn about how adding colour to soap could make it resemble ‘Omo’.

[Figure 2. Proposal workshop in Ghana]

[Figure 3. Learning Platform participants in Tepa (Ashanti)]

[Figure 4. Innovation from below: adding colour to soap made from palm oil (Tepa, Ashanti Region, Ghana).]
The aim is to have a better market for oil palm processors, particularly those involved in developing tailor-made production plans with each farmer and farmer training. For the second year (still to be awarded) the project aims to develop a monitoring system with value chain actors and agricultural extension officers. By building capacity amongst extension officers, this pilot project aims to promote a system of continuous monitoring and to stimulate a more adaptive and individualised approach to extension.

Value proposition for an oil palm processors’ association
On 19 August 2016 Anna Laven (KIT) moderated a small workshop at GAABIC’s office in Accra to develop a value proposition for an oil palm processors’ association. There is no support structure for oil palm like in the cocoa sector, hence GAABIC is developing plans to create such an association in Kwaebibirim District (Eastern Region). The goal of the association would be to enhance the processors’ productivity, innovative capacity and negotiation power. The Strategyzer – Business model Canvas was used to define the activities (‘customers’ jobs’), pains and gains of the women processors, with the gains being those challenges (‘pains’) that can be turned into opportunities for change. Based on that analysis, a value proposition was developed to improve the quality of palm oil, create a better market for oil palm processors, and raise living standards through the organisation of oil palm processors at the village level. The association envisages providing capacity building, financial services, creating relations with buyers for value chain finance, joint marketing, and creating an information database. The workshop report can be found on the Inclusive VCC website.

Peer-to-peer learning in Lead Farmer project
In South Africa, the introduction of a new statutory levy for macadamia nuts positively affected the project in two ways. First, boundary partner Subtrop is now partly responsible for developing policies for opening up the tree crop sector to black small-scale farmers. Second, the team is excited and grateful that it received, as part of this policy, additional financial support (EUR 13,800 for year one) from Subtrop’s SAMAC Transformation project fund for an action research Lead Farmer project to be carried out by the ARC. The Lead Farmer project will provide tailor-made trainings to seven farmers (M/F) in leadership and business skills and macadamia production and marketing. The farmers were selected together with farmer representatives and officials from the Vhembe District Municipality Department of Agriculture. The aim is to have a good representation of different farmer profiles, based on gender, age, commercial orientation, commitment to farming, potential, study group participation and investment. The project aims to promote peer-to-peer learning by empowering these farmers to become self-reliant and act as role models for other aspiring farmers. The project team is involved in developing tailor-made production plans with each farmer and farmer training. For the second year (still to be awarded) the project aims to develop a monitoring system with value chain actors and agricultural extension officers. By building capacity amongst extension officers, this pilot project aims to promote a system of

Fig. 6. The Strategyzer – Business model Canvas used by GAABIC to develop a value proposition for an oil palm processors’ association in Kwaebibirim District

Insights from MSc research
Students enrolled in the Master and Research Master International Development Studies of the University of Amsterdam make a strong contribution to the programme. Through their 10-weeks’ fieldwork, they address questions that emerge during the implementation of the programme. Their theses are freely downloadable from the Inclusive VCC website. Here are some major insights.

Advanced VCC in Ghana’s cocoa sector (i.e. VCC which invests in relationships with farmers and promotes certified production) has more impact on farmers’ livelihood assets and autonomy than conventional VCC that focuses on the mere buying of farmers’ produce (Deans 2015). It also creates space for deliberation through which farmers negotiate access to agricultural inputs, financial support and knowledge with purchasing clerks, particularly when
In memoriam
It is with great sadness that we had to announce two bereavements in a short time. In April this year, our PhD student Kwabena Asubonteng suddenly lost his wife, Alice Abena, at the age of 34. On 27 October Mrs. Rosaline Baatuolkuu Obeng-Ofori, married to Prof. Daniel Obeng-Ofori (UENR), unexpectedly passed away due to heart failure. Two lives have ended far too early. They were, and still are, mourned deeply by many. The funeral rites for Mrs. Obeng-Ofori will be performed on 16-17 December 2016.

these are locally present (Kooijmans 2016). Companies differ however in providing opportunity structures. Empowerment outcomes among farmers of similar agency can therefore differ greatly (Le Guillouzic 2016). Since multiple value chains co-exist in the oil palm sector, farmers operate between entrepreneurial and peasant modes of farming. Alternating between the two modes creates possibilities to adapt production factors to farmers’ knowledge and resource availability (Manley 2016). VCCs in the oil palm sector differ significantly regarding risk-sharing, the direction of resource flows and local embeddedness (Guo 2016).

Research in South Africa showed that macadamia farmers are a group of educated, male, part-time farmers who face risks when engaging in international value chains. Consequently, macadamia VCC fails to transform South Africa’s market structure thus far (Jaskiewicz 2015). Avocado farmers are more diverse regarding assets, monetary endowment and product diversification. They participate in both national and international value chains, facing entry barriers and risks in the latter. The multiple value chains offer possibilities to exercise agency in marketing (Chawiche 2015).

TREEFARMS project
The Resource Management Support Centre (RMSC), UENR, Rural Development Youth Association (RUDEYA) and UvA won the proposal submitted to the Food & Business Applied Research Fund of WOTRO Science for Global Development. The project looks at opportunities for improved production, processing and marketing of non-timber forest products in small-scale tree farms. The project has a collaborative learning component with a focus on knowledge co-creation among academic and non-academic partners. We expect that this component will create a lot of synergies with the inclusive VCC project.

Who’s who?
Team members:
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• Kumasi Institute of Tropical Agriculture (KITA) (Mr Samuel Owusu-Takyi), Ghana
• Lindt Cocoa Foundation (Dr Pierre Waibel), Kilchberg, Switzerland
• Oil Palm Research Institute, Ghana (Dr Sylvester Kuuna Dery)
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