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Dynamics of the restructuring fresh produce food markets in the southern African region*

By

André Louw[i], Davison Chikazunga[ii], Choolwe Haankuku[iii] & Leah Ndanga[iv],

i. *Professor & ABSA Chair in Agribusiness*: Dept. of Agricultural Economics, Extension and Rural Development, University of Pretoria, Pretoria 0002 South Africa. E-Mail: andre.louw@up.ac.za Tel: (+27 12) 420 5772 Fax: (+27-12) 420 3247
(Corresponding Author)

ii. *PhD Student:* Dept. of Agricultural Economics, Extension and Rural Development, University of Pretoria, Pretoria 0002 RSA. E-Mail: dchikaz110@yahoo.com Tel: (+27 12) 420 5767 Fax: (+27 12) 420 4958

iii. *M.Sc. Student:* Dept. of Agricultural Economics, Extension and Rural Development, University of Pretoria, Pretoria 0002 South Africa. E-Mail: choolweh@yahoo.com Tel: (+27 12) 420 4584 Fax: (+27 12) 420 4958

iv. *M.Sc. Student:* Dept. of Agricultural Economics, Extension and Rural Development, University of Pretoria, Pretoria 0002 South Africa. E-Mail: lzbndanga@tuks.co.za Tel: (+27 12) 420 4584 Fax: (+27 12) 420 4958

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Abstract

Agri-food markets are restructuring, characterised by an increased consolidation and concentration of the industry, as supermarkets continue to expand at an exponential rate throughout the region. Unlike the global phenomenon where the formal markets are replacing informal markets, this is not so in the region. The informal sector is also expanding characterised by a significant level of restructuring. The major supermarkets have restructured their procurement strategies through the introduction of private standards, centralised procurement systems and distribution centres. Despite the increase in agri-food commodities emanating from the expansion of the retail sector, there have been little or no opportunities for smallholder farmers. The restructuring process is likely to exclude farmers from food markets in two ways; firstly through displacement of traditional markets by formal food chains; and secondly, the restructuring process will exclude farmers through the introduction of private standards. Previous studies have ascertained that smallholder farmers prefer informal markets such as hawkers as there are fewer complications with these markets. Informal markets are therefore integral for the survival of smallholder farmers. To redress the negative effects of the restructuring process certain issues need to be addressed. This calls for different stakeholders (public and private sectors and producers) to harmonise their objectives and visions for the sake of smallholder farmers in order for the great potential there is in harnessing the benefits of the restructuring process to be realised.

Key words: fresh produce, restructuring markets, southern Africa

1. Introduction

Global retail chains are increasingly spreading throughout the world, especially into developing and transition economies. This evolution has significant impacts on agricultural systems and food supply chains, largely due to the insistence by global retail chains on improved quality standards. The instituted changes include centralised procurement systems, the use of specialized-dedicated wholesalers and preferred supplier systems, and the demanding requirements of private contracts (Reardon, *et al.,* 2003). However, global retail chains do not invest uniformly in all countries and some, especially poorer countries; have been left behind in the retail revolution (Minten, 2007:4).

There have been many efforts by different stakeholders on creating market linkages for poor farmers, but less effort has been put on developing relevant intervention frameworks backed by sound economic theory. This paper seeks to review and understand the changes in regional and local agrifood markets by analysing market concentration in the food processing and retail sectors and hence make recommendations against exclusion of small-scale producers in the face of dynamic restructuring food markets.

To develop a robust market linkage intervention framework there are several questions which needs to be answered beforehand. The main research questions are "What drove and drives exclusion and inclusion of small farmers in the Southern African Development Community (SADC)[1] region?" Therefore:

- How is the market restructuring process characterised in the SADC region?

[1] The fourteen SADC member states are Angola, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

- What have been the changes in supermarkets chains and processing companies over time?
- What have been the changes in supermarkets' procurement systems?
- When have these changes taken place and, can different periods be identified?
- How are supermarkets spreading (e.g. rise of franchise stores)?
- What is the significance of public policy drivers, private strategy drivers and other macroeconomic factors (exchange rates, etc)?
- What are the main market channels and their evolution?
- Which market channels have been restructuring and how? Can we properly distinguish between restructured and traditional markets? (Markets usually considered as traditional can also be dynamic).
- What is the spill over between market channels driven by the restructuring process?
- What role does the informal sector play in market access for small holders?

This study is a succinct compilation of the Regoverning Markets studies in southern Africa which forms part of a global initiative of 18 countries in five regions. It is a cross-country comparative study based on an in-depth literature review and value chain analysis within regions and across regions, reflecting varying degrees of food industry restructuring and the different policy environments The study is a collaborative research and policy support programme, designed to understand the keys to inclusion of small-scale producers in dynamically restructuring regional and local agri-food markets. The Regoverning Markets programme seeks to analyse market concentration in the food processing and retail sectors, as well as to predict future dynamics in the sector so as to ensure that small-scale farmers can better prepare themselves against exclusion from the restructuring food chains. . It consists of cross cutting recommendations based on each country's study findings.

2. Patterns in the dynamics of market restructuring

Agrifood markets are restructuring, characterised by an increased consolidation and concentration of the industry. An important development has been the substantial increase of large retailers in the agribusiness supply chain in the SADC region. It is mainly due to the extension and expansion of South African companies into the agribusiness supply chains in the SADC region through FDI since 1995, leading to vertical integration and concentration in the agribusiness chain. Supermarkets are the major format operated by grocery retailers across this region with Shoprite, Pick n Pay and SPAR taking the lead. Figure 1 gives an indication of South African retailers' expansion into Sub-Saharan Africa and serves as a "footprint" of their involvement in Africa. The implications of these changes are that farmers' produce markets are changing in the region (Heins, 2006; PlanetRetail, 2007b).

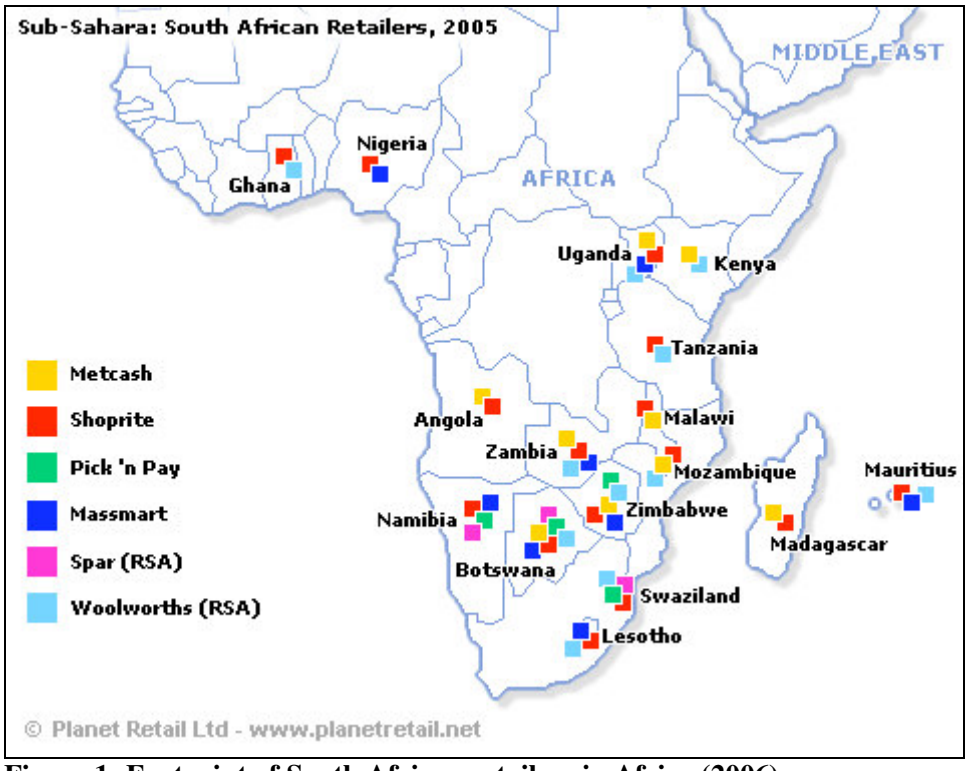

Figure 1: Footprint of South African retailers in Africa (2006)
Source: Heins, 2006:17

Unlike the global phenomenon where the formal markets are replacing informal markets, this is not so in the region. The informal sector is also expanding, characterised by a significant level of restructuring. The major supermarkets have restructured their procurement strategies through the introduction of private standards, centralised procurement systems and distribution centres.

The restructuring process is likely to exclude farmers from food markets in two ways; firstly through displacement of traditional markets by formal food chains that will leave smallholder farmers with no alternative markets. Secondly, the restructuring process will exclude farmers through the introduction of private standards such EurepGAP which make it difficult for smallholder farmers to attain compliance. In light of these threats the restructuring process favours large agribusiness to smallholder agriculture.

3. Drivers of change

A number of factors have acted as drivers of change in the SADC agribusiness supply chain including global factors such as globalisation, trade liberalisation; increases in migration, urbanisation; population growth, an increase in the economic middle class; information and technological change; and improved grades and standards. The impacts of these driving forces and other environmental factors have resulted in the agribusiness supply chain shifting away from buying products in bulk from farmers and wholesalers to specialist packaging-houses for fresh produce supplying new kinds of retailers such as supermarkets and fast food restaurants with value added products (Louw *et al.,* 2004). This is especially applicable to South African agribusiness supply chains, since the agribusiness supply chains differ vastly in SADC countries and are still in their infant stages, ranging from being relative non-existence to informal establishments (McBain, 2007).

In Tanzania, the factors influencing change are market demand, technology, barriers to entry, input supply, profitability of different niches, risks and policy environment. For fresh fruit and vegetables the major forces are: heavy reliance on the Dar es Salaam urban market which consumes over 50 percent of urban consumption, thereby determining traded volumes, prices, and quality standards; irrigation technology; and market access by farmers close to major consumption areas (Ashimogo & Greenhalgh, 2007:1)

Increasing differences in consumer dynamics are also hypothesized to contribute to the dynamic changes and restructuring being observed in the Southern African food sector. The most pertinent changes in consumer dynamics observable in the South African case are the emergence of a black middle class (Black Diamonds) which is fuelling consumption and the increasing importance of food safety and quality standards.

Due to changes in consumer demand in terms of quality and safety of the food products, supermarkets have a potential to play an important role in meeting consumer requirements in southern Africa than food produce sold by informal traders. According to Hughes (2003), people in developing countries appreciate the range of products, the quality, and the price offered by supermarkets.

Rising incomes, urbanisation, greater female participation in the workforce, delayed retirement and wider media penetration—all are driving the demand for higher-value products, semi-processed and processed products, pre and pro-biotics and convenience foods. There has also been increased consumer attention to food quality and safety due to recent food scares. Diets are globalizing too, with local consumer preferences influenced by

international tastes. Studies have shown that as an economy develops and urbanises, the proportion of disposable income spent on processed food increases away from staple foods to convenience foods and pre-prepared meals. Changing consumer demand is also driving the growth of the food processing and food service industries. "Eating out" is also becoming popular (McBain, 2007; World Bank, 2007:124).

4. Changes in Procurement Systems

In most countries in the SADC region the food retail sector consists of formal and non-formal sectors. The informal sector consists of producers producing for subsistence and sell surpluses to their neighbours and neighbouring markets. The sector also consists of street vendors, hawkers and those traders selling food products in housing estates. The formal retail sector consists of supermarkets and neighbourhood stores, 'cash-and carry' and other independent retail stores. It was noted that the small-scale traditional marketing system and independent stores have continued to dominate even in urban areas. Food sales through formal markets have remained minimal, except for South Africa, while street markets and informal vendors are still the main conduits of food retailing for most countries in the region.

The conclusion from the Regoverning Markets' meso national studies on South Africa and Zambia asserts that food markets are restructuring at different levels and different rates with South Africa being the most advanced. The main retail chains have since started procuring directly from farmers, including the introduction of private food safety and quality standards. The meso local studies also conclude that there is market channel continuum rather than the global dichotomy of modern versus traditional markets. It was noted that the wholesale function and the informal markets still play a very significant role in terms of the fresh produce supply chains - in fact these channels are expanding and also experiencing certain

levels of restructuring. The conclusion from the meso local study in South Africa is that most supermarkets still have dual procurement structures, with corporate shops engaged in centralised procurement through distribution centres whilst franchise store formats procure locally. Supermarkets have limited success in penetrating the rural markets.

The study also illustrated that wholesalers and travelling traders are vital in linking smallholders to markets, but they suffer from counterproductive public legislation (for example legislation to organise wholesale markets can have unintended consequences) and a lack of donor support. Wholesalers provide convenient services that others often cannot provide and are able to respond at different levels of retail restructuring. Wholesalers often act as a buffer that filters retail modernisation, alleviating impacts at farm level. Midstream component of the food value chains is key to the inclusion of smallholders in dynamic markets, but most attention goes to either upstream or downstream. There are some exciting innovations of 'doubly-specialised intermediaries' that provide both market demand and farmer support. These are often initiated by non government organisations (NGOs) and donors but also sometimes by the private sector. Such specialised agents provide brand marketing, production support and procurement flexibility and add value enabling participation at a higher level for small-scale farmers.

Zambia's fresh fruit and vegetable sector operates in a regional context exporting and importing through both informal and formal channels. Imports largely come from South Africa, Zimbabwe, Malawi and Tanzania while significant informal exports go to the DR of Congo. A yearlong study of informal cross border trade estimates that approximately US$60m worth of agricultural produce (approximately 20 percent of total) were traded in the year ending 1998 without government recordings of these transactions (Haantuba, 2003). On

the international scene, fruit and vegetables are produced mostly by commercial growers for export mostly to Europe with a focus on high value vegetables. Some horticultural farms such as York Farms engage vegetable outgrowers, both individual farmers and cooperatives. The horticultural sector contributes significantly to the country's non traditional exports, accounting for between seven percent and 12 percent.

4.1 Informal retail value chain

The entrance of many of these chain supermarkets has led to the closure of some of the smaller retail stores (general dealer shops). The benefits of supermarkets' increased FDI in countries such as Botswana are the increased competition among retailers and subsequent lower prices of some food products. Generally throughout the SADC, low-income township consumers: spend their grocery budgets in three places: spaza shops (a small informal convenience store that operates from a residence) (chains 1 & 2); large wholesalers located on the periphery of the townships (chain 3); and supermarkets near their work (chain 4). Figure 2 presents the value chain to show the key actors and their relationships in this informal market (Bear, *et al.,* 2005:9).

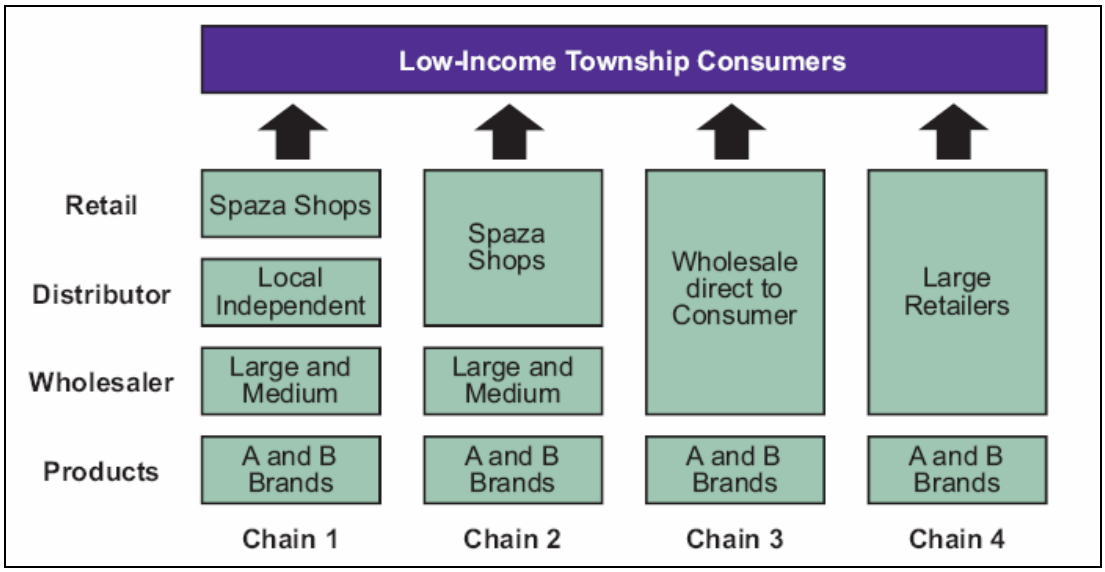

Figure 2: Value Chains for the spaza market
Source: Bear, *et al.,* 2005:9

The "spaza market" refers to the value chain that links low income township consumers of basic grocery items with spaza shop retailers and their trading partners: distributors, wholesalers and suppliers of products and services. It should be noted that despite its informal nature, a market size of $110 million per year and an estimated 14 200 spaza shops in South Africa alone underscore the critical importance of this market to poor people as consumers and business owners. (Bear, *et al.,* 2005:22).

4.2 Formal market

In terms of procurement in the formal food market a number of trends are observable. The trends in procurement for the formal market are observable in three different formats. The first is corporate stores, the second voluntary trading groups and the third franchise stores.

4.2.1 Corporate stores/distribution centres and preferred supplier schemes

Figure 3 illustrates the typical flow of fresh produce from growers to corporate stores.

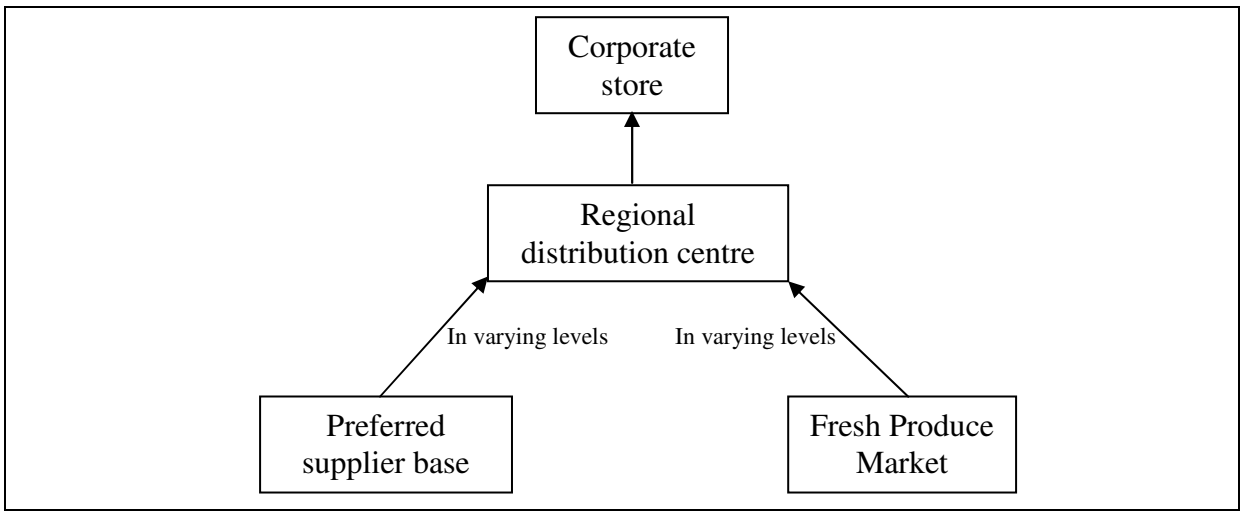

Figure 3: Procurement channels for fresh fruit and vegetables for independent stores trading within a voluntary trading group and possible income per capita of households at constant prices of 2000
Source: Louw *et al.,* (2007:33)

The phenomenon where corporate stores only procure fresh produce through their distribution centres who in turn only procure from a select few suppliers is a well established procurement practice which is the most widely used in supermarkets throughout southern Africa. However, this does not play a similar role in all the countries since most procure from South Africa.

4.2.2 Voluntary trading group

The wholesalers cum distribution centres in this instance function on very much the same principles as the distribution centres as discussed above in terms of their procurement practices and the provision of growing contracts to a few selected producers. Figure 4 illustrates the typical flow of fresh produce from growers to independent stores within a voluntary trading group.

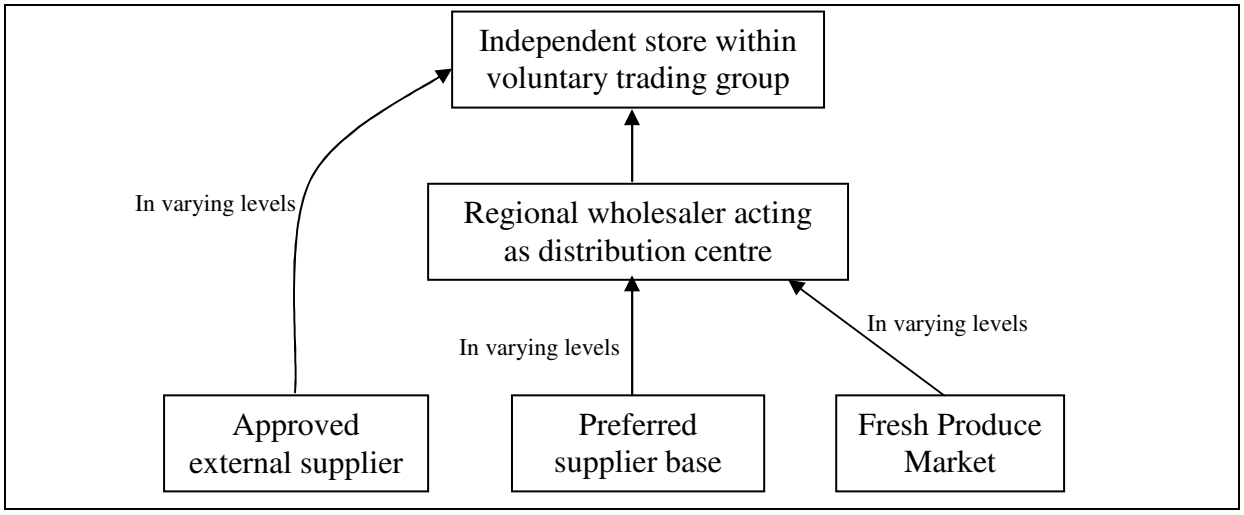

Figure 4: Procurement channels for fresh fruit and vegetables for independent stores trading within a voluntary trading group
Source: Louw *et al.,* (2007:34)

4.2.3 Franchise format stores

Figure 5 illustrates the typical flow of fresh produce form growers to franchise stores.

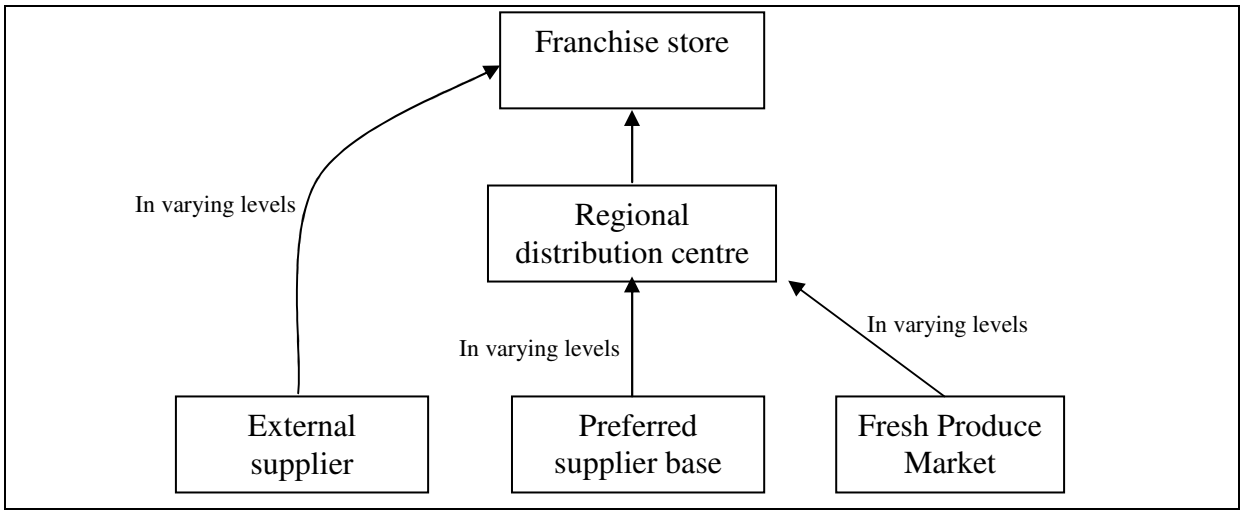

Figure 5: Procurement channels for fresh fruit and vegetables for franchise type stores
Source: Louw *et al.,* (2007:36)

Franchise format stores, like independent stores within voluntary trading groups are encouraged to procure all fresh produce from the retailer's regional distribution centres. This encouragement sprouts from possible cost advantages that could develop from buying products from the distribution centre since the distribution centre (wholesaler trading in the voluntary trading group) is a bulk buyer and would be able to negotiate for good prices. Franchise format stores function very much along the same lines as stores within a voluntary trading group since they too, are allowed to procure products outside the distribution centres directly from producers at their own discretion after the specific producer has been approved as a suitable supplier.

5. Market Access for Small Producers

The meso household studies concluded that farmers, driven by their search for a better price bargain, use multiple marketing strategies driven. Farmers do not have discrete market choice behaviour. They trade with both formal and informal supply chains depending on which

chain offers them a better bargain. The majority of the emerging or small farmers in South Africa still market their produce through the informal sector, but in Zambia, smallholder farmers are shifting away from informal market channels (Hichaambwa, *et al.,* 2007). Small farmers in South Africa prefer the informal marketing channels because they do not have the capacity to meet the stringent quality and quantity demands set by the modern markets.

The case studies on the best practises concluded that franchise stores or independent store formats provide the best chances for smallholder farmers' inclusion into the supermarket chains, but the degree of inclusion varies with production expertise provided by the owner. According to the project's component 3 on policy analysis and dialogue studies, it was found that a certain mix of individual strategies (collective action, marketing timing, and technology adoption), business models (corporate social responsibility, mentorship, partnerships, and contracts) and the right policies are key to smallholder farmers' inclusion in dynamic markets. Although these were specific for the case of Zambia and South Africa, the formats could be used elsewhere within the region.

In Zambia, several private firms have been increasing their out grower base to small producers in order to meet increasing international market demand. They provide extension services through monitoring the production and quality control activities in order to meet international standards. The demise of Agriflora had a huge negative effect on the horticulture sector as evidenced by reduction in export revenue in 2004. However other horticultural industries have taken over with mounting emphasis on production of organic vegetables in line with international consumer demands. (Hichaambwa, *et al.,* 2007:5). This is an example of other "local" firms taking the initiative to include small farmers in the supply chain.

Currently, in Mozambique, small producers and wholesalers of fruit and vegetables bring their produce to the Malanga market in Maputo where both wholesale and retail trade is undertaken. Produce includes locally produced produce and fruit from South Africa. It is this market which supplies retailers and bazaars (Nair & Coote, 2007:2). This arrangement is similar to the functioning of the wholesale fresh produce markets in South Africa and Mbare market in Zimbabwe. All of these markets perform both wholesale and retail functions and are open to small scale farmers.

5.1 Constraints for smallholder fresh produce farmers

Supermarkets are a challenge for the small farmers who cannot access markets in the SADC region. This is mainly due to the fact that small farmers in this region are generally not able to produce products of sufficient quality for the supermarkets with the required sustainable supply because of the lack of infrastructure, capital, information and knowledge. Overall, in SADC, the major challenges faced by small-scale producers in supplying modern markets are (Proctor, 2007b):

- High consumer quality demands and preference.
- Lack of a conducive public policy environment that is supportive of small-scale producers in the market including at municipality level.
- Imbalance of market information.
- Farmer quantities produced are small and non continuous.
- Need to improve productivity and lower production costs including high cost of inputs.
- Failure of the credit market to meet small-scale producers' needs including dependency on traditional credit providers.
- Inadequate cooperation between farmers and need for cooperative action.

6. Influencing Agricultural Policy

The lack of trust between key stakeholders and a common agenda or understanding is a key barrier to change. Policy makers need to understand the dynamics and the drivers of market restructuring (global, national, local) and their impact on smallholders as well as on the wider rural economy (poverty). There are a number of potential public policy pitfalls that policy makers should be alert to:

- creating unrealistic expectations
- policy reform without implementation
- lack of implementation capacity
- forgetting the losers

In order to address the above-mentioned constraints and safeguard the important role of the agricultural sector in the region, increased government support is urgently needed. The private sector recognizes the financial constraints that African governments face and therefore does not necessarily expect direct subsidies. Aid to agriculture in SADC member states declined as a proportion of total aid from 20 percent in the early 1980s to 8 percent by 2000. However, neither NEPAD nor any other initiatives to stimulate agriculture will succeed without private sector support. To achieve success, the private sector must be committed to contribute through increased investment in the agro-processing sector as well as to encourage primary production. Retail chains operating in the region should undertake a commitment to support agriculture by sourcing local products and not simply import everything from South Africa. Such a step would boost local production and encourage an increase in quality standards.

7. Recommendations

Southern Africa presents a unique case study when it comes to the dynamics and restructuring of food markets. Thus the nature of the recommendations which are presented here are a shift from the norm. There are basically five areas of recommendations which emanated from this study. These are recommendations for farmers, in terms of their possible strategies; for agribusinesses in terms of innovative business models of integrating poor farmers; for government involvement with regard to policy analysis, dialoguing and implementation; and lastly recommendations on what research should be undertaken to support the current and future developments in the regional agribusiness sector.

7.1 Recommendations for Farmers

There are three recommendations which farmers should adopt. They include:

- Farmers need to manage production and marketing risk, in order to minimise their production and transaction costs.
- Diversify enterprises focusing on niche markets where economies of scale are not as important.
- Formation and regulation of farmer groups (cooperatives, producer organisations, out grower schemes, associations and agri-business units) should be promoted and empowered to enable smallholder farmers to position themselves strategically in agricultural supply chains.

8.2 Recommendations for Agribusiness

There are several recommendations which the private sector can adopt to make their business pro-poor and pro-development. Some of these recommendations include:

- Given the poor performance of agriculture in many SADC countries, contract farming brings about improved marketing opportunities, incentives, and increased income for farmers.
- Low cost credit schemes which enable farmers, especially the resource constrained, to finance production inputs.
- Enhance dissemination of marketing information through marketing information systems/technologies so that farmers have access to real time prices.

8.3 Recommendations for Governments

Governments in the region should be actively engaged in developing policies and institutions to encourage agribusiness investment needs in a large policy context. These include good public governance, stable political and macroeconomic climate, enforceable commercial laws, appropriate financial services, protection of property rights, and adequate infrastructure. With regard to creating an enabling environment for linking smallholder farmers to formal agribusinesses, several policy recommendations should be adopted. These recommendations include:

- Market support services,
- Extension and training:
- Infrastructure:
- Governments need to review institutional mandates for influencing, regulating and supporting private sector investment in agribusiness and agro-industry.
- Public private sector dialogue and activities should be supported in order to develop networks and synergies.

8.4 Recommendations for Regional Initiatives

The agricultural policy of the region should focus on transforming the sector to generate higher and sustainable farm incomes, which implies increasing rural per capita incomes and employment. A regional policy or strategy should therefore include:

- Exploiting the diversity in the region to unlock its comparative advantage and agricultural potential especially in the northern parts of the region.
- Allow diversity (in needs, production potential, in soil and climate, comparative advantages and stages of development) to stimulate rural development and trade in the region.
- Create a development path which optimises the regional bargaining position in intra-regional and international markets.
- Facilitation of market chain actors, building vertical integration and reduction of transaction costs.
- Provide research and analytical services and develop national capacity at centres of excellence.
- Encourage participation in national, regional and international trade negotiations and agreements.
- Professionalise the civil service to provide market based services (or support their provision by third parties).
- Develop and provide demand-driven new extension and advisory services to meet market chain needs.
- Prioritise 'south to south' and intra SADC trade and avoid entanglements in unrealistic Customs Union agreements.
- There is need for a unified NEPAD through CAADP strategy focusing on agricultural markets.

8.5 Recommendations for research

There is need for establishing a regional think-tank, similar to the Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN), which undertakes empirical and policy research in the following areas:

- Analysing country, regional and global trends, changes and factors affecting the transformation of agro-food systems and focusing on the potential effect on smallholder agriculture.
- Characterisation of agro-industries in the region, focusing on leveraging the regional supply chains.
- Development of information and knowledge management systems for agribusiness, as well as small-scale producers and processors, and inter-professional organisations.
- Analysis and formulation of business models or strategies for improving the agribusiness sector in the region while focusing on country specific strategies.
- Setting policy dialoguing platforms with countries at the regional level, bringing interested stakeholders (civic, both public and private sectors, as well as individuals) to debate on important matters regarding agriculture and agribusiness.
- Analysis of models or arrangements linking smallholder farmers with commercial farmers, exporters or agro-processing firms in long-term relationships combining cooperation, coordination, and services provision.
- Design and implementation of initiatives that improve the capacities of smallholder farmers and small agro-enterprises to participate in value chains for high value products including branded and certified products.

8.6 Cross cutting recommendations

There are several cross cutting recommendations at a macroeconomic level that need to be put in place. These include:

- Increase the domestic savings rate to strengthen development investment from domestic savings.
- Target structural fiscal deficit (e.g. the process used in Chile).
- Eliminate restrictions on capital outflows.
- Maintain current inflation targeting
- Improve transparency and stability of fiscal and monetary policies through public engagement in five year target setting and monitoring process.
- Eradicate corruption at all levels of governance.

8. Conclusions

The main finding from the study is that agrifood markets are restructuring, characterised by an increased consolidation and concentration of the industry. Supermarkets are expanding at an exponential rate throughout the region. These are mostly South African main retailers with Shoprite, Pick n Pay and SPAR taking the lead. Unlike the global phenomenon where the formal markets are replacing informal markets, this is not so in the region. The informal sector is also expanding characterised by a significant level of restructuring. In addition to this the wholesale function is still vibrant and is also going through some restructuring process, especially in the case of South Africa. The major supermarkets have restructured their procurement strategies through the introduction of private standards, centralised procurement system and distribution centres. The central distribution centres are their main procurement strategy currently used by most supermarkets, but in some special cases there are still engaged in decentralised procurement.

South Africa and Namibia have the most advanced cases of the restructuring process; most countries are at an early stage of restructuring with the informal sector still being the main conduit of food distribution. Population growth, income growth, urbanisation and change in consumer taste and increase in health consciousness are the main drivers of the restructuring process in the region; these are similar to the global drivers of the restructuring process.

Despite the increase in agrifood commodities emanating from the expansion of the retail sector, there have been little or no opportunities for smallholder farmers. The restructuring process is likely to exclude farmers from food markets in two ways; firstly through displacement of traditional markets by formal food chains that will leave smallholder farmers with no alternative markets. Secondly, the restructuring process will exclude farmers through the introduction of private standards such EurepGAP which make it tough for smallholder farmers' to sustain compliance. In light of these threats the restructuring process favours large agribusiness to smallholder agriculture. This is in spite of the presence of a vibrant informal market throughout the region (even in South Africa) to which smallholder farmers can supply their products. It was also ascertained in previous studies that smallholder farmers prefer informal markets such as hawkers, because they offer better bargain in terms of prices. In addition they are not stringent on quality they take anything availed to them and also that there are less transaction and bureaucracy costs incurred by farmers in supplying their commodities .

To redress the negative effects of the restructuring process certain issues need to be addressed. This calls for concerted efforts from all stakeholders: public and private sectors and farmers. The challenging issue is that smallholder farmers are not as efficient in their

production systems, thus their average cost of production is the main barrier to entry into the formal markets. Thus there is need for sustained capacity building targeted for smallholder farmers so as to improve their competitiveness. In addition farmers should be encouraged to take advantage of collective action either as cooperatives, producer organisations or other forms of associations. There is need for collaboration between the public and the private sector in terms of linking smallholder farmers to formal markets. Since the empowerment of smallholder farmers is a public good, governments in the region should prioritise designing policies which enables integration of smallholder agriculture into formal agribusiness. Lastly, there is need to invest in more research work on the restructuring phenomenon, this allow designing of relevant business models, public policies and individual strategies for farmers.

There is a great potential in harnessing the benefits of the restructuring process but there is need for different stakeholders to harmonise their objectives and visions for the sake of smallholder farmers. This is because agriculture holds one of the few keys through which smallholder farmers and the SADC region can escape poverty and lead to the achievement of some of the important millennium development goals (MDGs).

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