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Interrelation of Intensification Processes and Externalities Within the Value Chain of French Bean Production: A Case Study of Nakuru District, Kenya

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Abstract

Since the 1960s, Kenya has been exporting high value crops like French bean to European markets. By the end of the 1990s European consumers started to ask for high quality produce and steady annual supply of fresh products. In order to meet these changes in demand actors along the value chain intensified their processes. In literature the development of French bean production in Kenya is widely discussed, however, intensification processes within the value chain, and resulting environmental and socio-economic externalities, here understood as unintended positive as well as negative side effects are missing in this debate.

Therefore, this study project analyses driving forces of intensification processes and relations and influences among the actors of the French bean value chain. The objective of this project is: to assess the complexity and organisation of the French bean value chain in the Nakuru district, Kenya, focusing on intensification processes and related externalities.

The value chain approach is applied, in order to get a comprehensive view on the organisation of the entire value chain within the case study area. All relevant actors of the chain have been identified by an in-depth literature review and a two-week field trip. Results of this study project are based on 14 semi-structured interviews with mainly open questions in the Nakuru district. The field results (1) give an insight in the actual value chain of the study area and (2) discover new interrelations concerning intensification and related externalities.

The French bean value chain in Nakuru is very complex in its relations and dependencies with tendency to vertical integration, despite the fact that fewer farmers are producers than expected. Direct causalities between intensified French bean cropping and environmental externalities such as decreasing soil fertility can hardly be identified. Socio-economic externalities are mainly positive, e.g. increase in living standards. On the one hand consequences for women are positive due to new employment possibilities while on the other hand due to cropping of French bean an increase in their workload is very likely. Finally, the export-rejected beans are available on local markets and therefore, are an additional ingredient in Kenyan dishes.

Keywords: Externalities, farmers, French bean, intensification process, rejections, value chain, women