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“Development on the margin”

## Banana (*Musa* spp. AAA-EA) Marketing in Uganda. Should Bananas be Weighed in the Future?

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### Abstract

In cooperation with banana farmers, banana marketing group leaders and bulk banana buyers, their knowledge and improvement suggestions regarding banana marketing were surveyed in Uganda. Banana group marketing activities could be verified in the southwestern and the southeastern regions. There banana production is ubiquitous and the surveyed groups have established informal, but dedicated relationships with buyers who they work with on a regular basis. 56 % of these buyers supply Uganda's capital Kampala. A minority of 7 % is exported to Rwanda. Banana bunch maturity and size were evaluated as the most important criteria for bunch price evaluation. Weighing is currently not practised, except when produce is exported to Rwanda. Accordingly, bunch evaluation and pricing is subject to negotiations among experts with respective tacit knowledge. Neutral price information systems often have entry barriers, they are for example cell phone based, and are mostly based on weights. Consequently they are little used, while information asymmetry and word of mouth communication prevail. A pan-Ugandan introduction of banana weighing could help improve marketing procedures. 96 % of the group members surveyed, 87 % of the non-group members and 74 % of the buyers think it would be good to weigh banana bunches. Critics among the farmers argue that through weighing new ways of beguilement in banana trade may be introduced. The possible manipulation of scales and cheating in the weighing process may cause severe problems they say. But the current total dependency on trust also hampers business transactions, while weighing is at least an option to reconfirm sensory estimations. Infrastructural problems, nutrient exports and input scarcity put severe strain on most banana production systems and weighing could provide for improvements by enabling farmers and their advisors to calculate estimations regarding the degree of biomass extraction from their agro-ecosystem and aid haulers and traffic planners in avoiding road damages. The benefits of weighing thus go notably beyond market organisation and fair price finding, potentially helping to recover and preserve the banana agro-ecosystems in Uganda which have over decades of intensive, unsustainable use been depleted.

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