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## Emergent Value Chains for African Indigenous Vegetables and Poverty Reduction: Smallholder Participation in Kenya

BENARD OTIENO ABEL<sup>1</sup>, WOLFGANG BOKELMANN<sup>1</sup>, CHRITOPHER GOR<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Albrecht Daniel Thaer-Institute of Agricultural and Horticultural Sciences, Germany*

<sup>2</sup>*Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology, Dept. Agribusiness and Food Security,*

### Abstract

The emerging high value markets presented by rapid diffusion of supermarkets retailing African Indigenous Vegetables (AIV) in urban areas present great opportunities for smallholders to participate in lucrative value chains in Kenya. This study focuses on the hypothesis that smallholder participation in agricultural value chains can provide a meaningful approach to food security and rural development. Many international development agencies are promoting value chain approaches for smallholder market participation for accelerated poverty reduction. However, integration of smallholders into commercial agri-food chains remains poor despite market intervention strategies by government and development agencies. This has been attributed to high cost of transactions, poor infrastructure, and high cost of inputs among others. A further possible reason could be that market interventions tend to focus on production efficiency and quality of produce while neglecting the influence of the power relations between actors in domestic value chains. The growing demand for AIV provides low capital intensive with high returns, which could greatly improve income and employment among smallholder farmers. This study provide a holistic analysis of value chains for AIV by mapping out actors and their activities, power relations, underlying reasons for current performances and opportunities and strategies for upgrading smallholders to better match the requirements for successfully participating in competitive agri-food chains. The value chain analysis within the integrated new institutional economics and social network frameworks, allow for a comprehensive analysis of the incentive structure embedded in the social, physical and institutional environment within which the farmers operate.

**Keywords:** African indigenous vegetables, food security, market participation, smallholders, value chains