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Feasibility Study to Establish a New Value Chain: Application of a Holistic Analytical Framework

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Abstract

Since the 90s value chain (VC) approaches have received considerable attention by governments and development agencies for poverty reduction and strengthening the private sector. VC analysis has been used for developing intervention strategies to upgrade existing or to establish new VCs. Despite a massive number of frameworks and guidelines for VC analysis for upgrading existing VCs, there is no single recommendation on conducting feasibility studies for developing new ones. Addressing this issue, we undertook a feasibility study for developing a cut foliage VC based on wild-harvesting of *Gleichenia* ferns in New Caledonia using a holistic framework combining relevant conceptual elements and various analytical tools in VC literature.

Results showed the importance of starting with understanding goals of establishing the VC. In this case goals were creating employment in remote areas and starting to valorize New Caledonian horticulture on international markets. Once goals were understood, four interrelated analyses were conducted continuously: enabling environment, productivity, structuration, and feasibility analysis. In the enabling environment, analysis of market, institution, and infrastructure highlighted high demands for the species *Sticherus flabellatus*, well-maintained roads, and legal voids concerning wild harvesting. The productivity analysis on resource availability and harvesting potential pointed out randomness of the resource and its quality, and the rarity of *Sticherus flabellatus* along with *Gleichenia*'s stringent conditioning needs. A VC structure was put forward based on potential actors' interests and existing resource-related constraints. Governing the VC is through coordinating harvester/tribes in the *Gleichenia* areas involving locally active associations, and sharing responsibility for value-creation and distribution activities. Finally, the feasibility analysis underlined the importance of reflecting on findings from the previous analyses with regards to set goals in order to identify (mis)matches between expected benefits from the established VC and goals as well as potential vulnerabilities. In this case, a wild-harvesting activity would not allow valorizing horticulture as conceived by local horticulturists since these give preference to controlled replication in delimited spaces and do not consider wild-harvesting as a horticultural activity. Hence, research on controlled replication of *Sticherus flabellatus* and capacity building of local associations/actors could be appropriate interventions before actual establishment of a *Gleichenia* VC.

Keywords: Enabling environment, environmental impact, *Gleichenia*, governance, New Caledonia, resource, value added