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How Do Women’s Lands Rights Affect Their Value Chain Participation? The Case of African Indigenous Vegetables (AIVs) Value Chains in Kenya

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Abstract

This paper investigates how gender asymmetries in access to and control over land affect women’s participation in the value chain of African indigenous vegetables (AIVs) in Kenya. Women significantly contribute to AIVs value chains; they are involved in production, post-harvest handling and processing of AIVs. However, women lack access to and control over land which has negative implications for their access to other productive resources. These constraints reduce women’s productivity in AIVs production on the one hand and their market participation on the other hand. The paper scrutinizes the complexity of land rights – weaknesses of governance systems, land tenure systems and customary laws – and probes the way how this impedes female small scale farmers from engaging extensively in both AIVs production and marketing. Further, challenges to market participation are aggravated by a lack of streamlined marketing systems which result in the exploitation of women by middlemen and market cartels which reduces their bargaining power and their benefits.

The paper presents preliminary results of the HORTINELA Subproject entitled “Gender Order: Embedding Gender in Horticultural Value Chains to Close or Reduce the Productivity Gap”. The results are based on field research conducted in the urban, peri-urban and rural areas of Kenya. Qualitative methods of data collection – semi-structured in-depth interviews and group discussions with female small scale farmers and female traders – were applied in order to examine the implications of women’s limited control over land on their AIVs value chain participation; particularly on their involvement in marketing. The method of qualitative content analysis (with MAXQDA) was applied for data analysis. The paper is structured as follows: Firstly, the paper discusses the current state of women’s land rights in Kenya by referring to primary and secondary sources. Secondly, after outlining the research methodology, it presents first results which show that existing gender norms regarding land rights impede women from their full participation in AIVs marketing. Finally, the paper draws conclusions in regard to inclusive value chain development, by arguing that both the realisation of women’s land rights and the creation of a support structure in marketing are pivotal for inclusive value chains.

Keywords: African indigenous vegetables (AIVs), gender perspective, inclusive value chains, land rights, land struggles, market access

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