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“Solidarity in a competing world —
fair use of resources”

Exploring Potentials of the Bamboo Sector for Food Security and Sustainable Livelihoods in Ethiopia: An Institutional and Market Analysis of Bamboo-Based Value Web

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Abstract

Effective management of natural resources and forest produce is very important for enhancing the livelihoods of smallholders in resource rich but economically poor countries like Ethiopia. Bamboo is one of the more important natural resources in Ethiopia with potential usages in construction, furniture and handicrafts, floor boards, incense sticks, paper and energy supply (bamboo-based charcoal), among others. While the country is the largest producer of bamboo in Africa, the existing utilization of bamboo-sector in Ethiopia remains under-developed with little value addition. As a result, Ethiopian bamboo-growers continue to suffer from food insecurity and seasonal vulnerabilities. What are the governance and institutional challenges in the development and growth of bamboo sector in the country? How can Ethiopian bamboo growers as well as traders and processors benefit from the development of the sector? These are the main analytical questions addressed in this paper.

The main objective of this research entailed in the paper is to provide insights into the current status and future potentials of the bamboo sector in order to enhance sustainable livelihoods and to improve food security for smallholders in Ethiopia. Owing to the multiple usages of the same crop, which limits the adoption of value chain study, this research adopts the “value web” approach to assess the potentials of different product lines that create the bamboo value web. The study utilizes qualitative data collection methods, in particular in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and participatory net-mapping with important stakeholders, including government officials, policy makers, development organisations, processing companies, traders and sub-traders, and bamboo growers. The output from this demand driven research can be used as an input to update the future strategies to develop the sector; will bring together different stakeholders; and generate scientific work that has direct policy relevance for strengthening the potential of bamboo sector.

Keywords: Bamboo, Ethiopia, food security, natural resource base, sustainable livelihoods, value chains