

Opportunities and Constraints in the Ethiopian Bamboo Sector

An institutional analysis of bamboo-based value web



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1. Problem Statement

Many Ethiopian rural households use forest produces, such as bamboo for their livelihoods. The country is the largest producer of bamboo in Africa. However, the existing utilization of bamboo in Ethiopia remains under-developed with little value addition. Ethiopian communities involved in bamboo cultivation and processing continue to suffer from food insecurity and seasonal vulnerabilities. The main objective of the proposed research 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.

2.1 Research Objectives

- Map relevant stakeholders and analyze the value web of different product lines of bamboo
- Explore the major challenges that bamboo farmers and craftsmen encounter in Ethiopia
- Assess the policy environment and institutional landscape in regards to the bamboo sector

2.2 Research Questions

The study seeks to address the following research questions:

- How is bamboos cultivated, traded, and processed in Ethiopia?
- What are the governmental and institutional challenges in the bamboo value web?
- What are the challenges and bottlenecks that has kept bamboo as an under-utilized resource in Ethiopia?

3. Methods

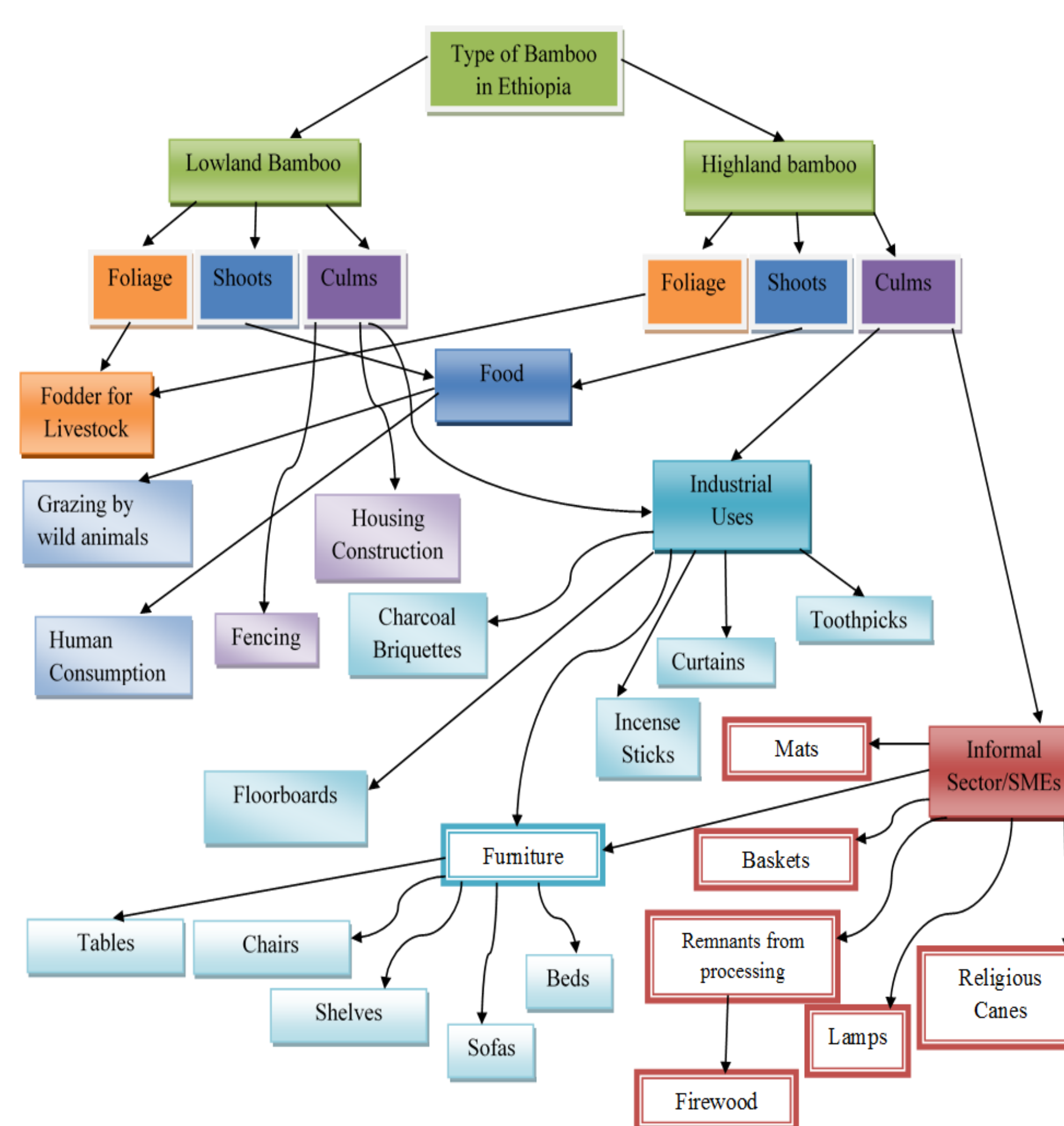
- Participatory Net-Map with key actors
- Semi-structured interviews with key institutional informants in the bamboo sector
- Semi-structured interviews and informal group discussions with farmers, craftsmen, and retailers



Photo: Jessie Lin conducting a Net-Map interview, 2016

4. Results

4.1 Bamboo Value Web Flow Chart



4.3 Main Challenges

- Lack of awareness about proper management of bamboo at farm level
- No real transportation means for smallholders other than through the middlemen
- Lack of product diversification in concentrated areas
- Bamboo products seen as inferior
- Seasonal variabilities
- Minimal demand for products with high value addition



5. Conclusions

- Low priority and attention given to bamboo by the policy makers
- Inconsistent policies by the regional governments
- Overreliance on foreign investors and researchers
- Ineffective value addition training
- Price volatility during raining season
- No established means of bamboo marketing

6. Policy Recommendations

- Need for training focused on cultivation and harvesting
- Skill trainings that don't require expensive machinery
- Solutions to give smallholders access to a better market
- Remove barriers for smallholders to sell in the city and markets
- Focus on developing the domestic market prior to exporting

4.2 Institutional Net map

