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Agroecological transitions in value chain: A multiple case analysis

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Abstract

Agroecology is increasingly recognised as a promising solution to address the multiple challenges confronting our current agricultural and food systems. While evidence underscores its potential to enhance the health and sustainability of food systems, there remains a critical knowledge gap regarding the successful scaling of agroecological practices particularly in the Global South. Within the CGIAR Initiative on Agroecology, we are aiming at understanding the mechanisms conducive to the adoption and expansion of agroecological principles across diverse countries, each marked by unique agroecological, cultural, and sociopolitical contexts. Termed Agroecological Living Landscapes, these efforts encompass the development of business models and commercial enterprises as essential components. To identify viable business models aligned with agroecological principles, we conducted rapid value chain assessments with an agroecological lens. Evaluating current agroecological practices vis-a-vis the 13 Agroecological Principles delineated by the HLPE, we assessed ten value chains across six countries (Burkina Faso, India, Kenya, Peru, Tunisia, and Zimbabwe). Our analysis allowed to better understand the value chain structures and flows, while highlighting relevant opportunities, challenges, and enabling factors for a broader adoption of agroecological principles in farms and commercial enterprises. Across the ten value chains, the principles integrated focused mostly on improving resource efficiency and strengthening resilience, with a notable dearth in activities promoting social equity—a less tangible, yet key aspect prioritised disparately among stakeholders. Major barriers stem from information and input scarcity and lack of consistency, absence of standardised products and processes, labour and land constraints, infrastructure inadequacies, and limited access to incentives and support services. These challenges, though pervasive in conventional food systems, are even more hindering for stakeholders interested in integrating agroecological practices. We anticipate that our findings will facilitate the replication of similar interventions in diverse regions, while also documenting diverse pathways to inform, caution, or inspire other stakeholders in advancing agroecology across varied landscapes.

Keywords: Agroecological living landscapes, agroecological transitions, case study, upscaling innovations, value chains