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## Cooperation and value-chain upgrade of NTFPs: Learning lessons for *Bactris guineensis* in Colombia

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### Abstract

There is a growing interest in including Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP) in bioeconomy strategies. The commercialisation of NTFPs has often been advocated as a strategy that can simultaneously support forest conservation and socio-economic development goals while facilitating livelihood diversification. The two primary strategies for bolstering rural communities' engagement in NTFP markets include the promotion of local-level value-added processing and setting partnerships among harvesters, civil society organizations, and private enterprises. However, despite the commercialization of NTFPs, the scope of value addition remains limited. This is the case of *Bactris guineensis*, considered the most important fruit-yielding native palm in the Caribbean region of Colombia. Although its multipurpose applications in diverse bioeconomy sectors have been identified, its potential remains underutilised. A key factor influencing NTFP processing and commercialisation is the level of cooperation and integration among direct and indirect value chain actors, which is heavily dependent on the governance arrangements and institutions that support them. Therefore, to determine which governance arrangements and institutions foster cooperation for greater value-added through processing and partnership development, the Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) framework was integrated with value chain analysis. Value chain analysis highlights that value addition depends on access to resources and markets but does not fully explain how policies and institutions influence behaviours toward specific outcomes. The IAD framework addresses this gap by examining the institutional structure at each value chain link and its influence on actors' decisions in collective-action situations. By applying this adapted framework to established NTFP value chains in tropical and subtropical regions with a high degree of commercialisation, we aim to identify and compare success and failure factors regarding institutional arrangements and their influence on value addition, providing a blueprint for upgrading *B. guineensis*. This research is expected to confirm that NTFP value chains are governed by a bricolage of institutional arrangements that must recognize the complex, adaptive, and multi-level interplay between ecological, social, economic, and technological aspects and best fit context-specific conditions. Therefore, this framework aims to support decision-makers by identifying value-addition factors from an institutional perspective and integrating socio-ecological aspects that influence NTFP value chains in socio-biodiverse bioeconomies.

**Keywords:** Bioeconomy, commercialisation, cooperation, governance