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# Planning the unplannable: designing value chain interventions for impact @ scale

Value chain development approaches seldom deliver large scale impact. Based on the examination of five cases where impact at scale was realised, recommendations are offered to increase the chances of value chain interventions contributing to impact at scale. It is recommended to make quick pre-intervention choices that delimit an intervention area with proven economic development potential, before conducting an in-depth opportunity analysis within these boundaries. The cases demonstrate that a mix of activities involving agricultural services, chain relations and institutional change is required for impact at scale. In addition, a balance between higher risk 'experimentation' activities and lower risk 'bringing into routine use' activities is recommended. In experimentation, over-protection should be avoided to allow room for failure. 'Bringing into routine use' aims to replicate proven success with new practices on a wider scale, by building on experiences from earlier experimentation. It is worth investing in building broad coalitions of actors to collaborate in 'experimentation' and to coordinate 'bringing into routine use'. Most important, however, is to assure that implementers get and take the necessary room to react to emerging opportunities and experiences.

# Introduction

The ultimate aim of agricultural development interventions is to improve the livelihood of agricultural producers, employees and traders as a result of increased profitability of their economic activities. An additional objective is to contribute to improved food and nutrition security of urban and rural populations.

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Over the last decade, value chain approaches have become mainstream practice as a response to solely productivity-focused agricultural interventions, which have not always delivered the desired economic benefits. The focus in value chain approaches is not just on the efficiency of production, but also on those forces determining the successful participation of farmers in final markets (Kaplinsky and Morris, 2001; Ruben et al., 2006). Large numbers of published success cases attest to the popularity of value chain approaches, in which groups of producers get linked, often through contracting arrangements, to processing, exporting and retailing companies. Much less numerous, however, are the examples of such initiatives reaching vast numbers of beneficiaries (SoC 2012), or, in other words, realising impact at scale. We define impact at scale as 'a positive effect on the livelihood of a large number of poor people'.

SNV and KIT documented 5 cases in which large scale impact was emerging as a result of a combination of value chain interventions and autonomous changes: Cocoa – Ghana, Sesame – Burkina Faso, Rice – Laos, Bananas – Zimbabwe and Oilseeds – Uganda. The cases were purposely selected from the portfolio of work of SNV and KIT. The most important criterion for selection was that major changes in the specific sub-sector had already led to impact at scale. The main features of the five cases can be found in the text boxes in this paper. The cases were described and analysed in more detail in a separate paper<sup>1</sup>. This paper translates the insights from the cases described in the first paper into practical recommendations for intervention design and implementation. It is not meant to present a blueprint but, as an aid in decision making in value chain interventions, to contribute to development at scale.

# Designing and implementing value chain development projects for impact at scale

The objective of the study was not to quantify the changes that had taken place, but rather to investigate the process of change. Box 2 summarises the main conclusions of the five cases. This paper discusses what these findings mean for the design and implementation of deliberate interventions aimed at sub-sector development for impact at scale.

Whatever the actual scale of an intervention itself, almost invariably the ambition is to contribute to impact at scale. Having impact at scale in mind from the first project design is crucial. To analyse how to contribute to impact at scale we distinguish three steps in the process of a deliberate intervention:

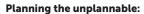
Step 1: Making pre-intervention choices

Step 2: Intervention designStep 3: Implementation

We provide practical recommendations and discuss common pitfalls for these three basic steps.

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# Box 1

## **Case descriptions**

- ▶ Cocoa in Ghana: coordinated action for improved service delivery. Multinationals and the Ghanaian government recognised supply risk as a result of ageing plantations. Simultaneously there is a growing demand for certified sustainable cocoa. This triggered action to improve service -provision to cocoa farmers and partly liberalise the cocoa collection system, which has resulted in modest country-wide yield increases, higher incomes from cocoa and a reputation for Ghana as a source of certified cocoa.
- ▶ Bananas in Zimbabwe: from piloting supply contracts to changing the banana sector. Banana trading companies needed to replace the dwindling supply from large estates. Smallholders were growing bananas for home consumption and the informal market, but could not meet commercial quality requirements. Smallholder supply to commercial traders was facilitated by farmer training, supply contract establishment and irrigated orchard establishment. Currently all banana trading companies are competing for the available smallholder supply.
- ▶ Oilseeds in Uganda: lead firm triggering change in the oilseed sector. World palm oil prices rose steeply, which motivated the leading importer in Uganda to venture into local oil -processing, mainly from sunflower. In Northern Uganda, peace after 20 years of strife created opportunities for commercial farming. With support of development organisations farmers were trained in sunflower seed production for the oilseed industry. Sector innovation was stimulated through stakeholder platforms for pre-competitive collaboration. Currently there is a flowering domestic oilseed industry

- in Uganda, with different processors competing for the farmers' production.
- ▶ Sesame in Burkina Faso: emergence of a new cash crop. Sesame used to be a crop of negligible economic importance in Burkina Faso. NGOs supported producers to enter organic and fair trade niche markets, which created the first interest in Burkina Faso as a source of sesame. Over the last decade sesame demand from Africa has soared. Farmers in Burkina Faso have responded to this strong demand and gradual increase in prices by increasing both the area of production and the productivity of sesame. In 2012, sesame was the second most important export crop, covering more than 3% of the cultivated land, with a farm-gate value estimated at more than 60 million Euro. Producer training in production techniques and a liberal market, which allows buyers paying producers on the spot to compete for the produce, are important elements that contributed to this
- ▶ Rice in Laos: responding to regional demand. A decade ago, rice producers in Laos were largely producing for their own subsistence, while their modest surplus was processed by local millers for domestic demand. Since then, the growing demand for glutinous rice in Thailand and Vietnam, to substitute for their reduced domestic production, provided an opportunity for commercialisation. Interventions to organise and professionalize Laos rice millers, the introduction and promotion of improved varieties, and the improved organisation and advisory services offered to rice farmers enabled Laos rice producers to market their surpluses on the regional market.

sub-sector development.



#### **Step 1: Pre-intervention choices**

Pre-intervention choices are necessary to allow for a narrowing down of options to consider. Many pre-intervention choices are made implicitly. Typical pre-intervention choices are the intervention country or area, the chosen sector, sub-sector or crop, the target group and the broad objectives of the intervention. Many of these decisions are made by the funder of an initiative.

The five cases show that value chain interventions must be realistic and modest about their ability to instigate major changes. Only where there already exists a positive momentum resulting from what are called 'autonomous processes', mainly related to markets, are such interventions likely to achieve impact at scale. Interventions are, by definition, time-bound and resource constrained, and therefore need to seek for the best 'development' return on investment in a relatively short time. As such, the most important task during the pre-intervention choices is to identify a broad opportunity based on an existing momentum for economic development.

More often than not, pre-intervention choices leave too little room for manoeuvre in intervention design. Overly detailed pre-intervention choices risk missing good opportunities for development at scale, if such opportunities fall outside the chosen mandate of the intervention.

# Box 2

# Summary of insights from the five case studies

- 1 Autonomous developments are generally the main driver of change. Deliberate interventions can add extra momentum or direction.
- **2** Motivation for change among farmers and agri-business, resulting from a sense of urgency or strong economic incentives, is a requirement for effective intervention.
- **3** Any deliberate intervention has to acknowledge the factors behind possible exclusion and consider which mitigating measures can be taken to facilitate broad-based impact.
- 4 Public-private efforts to pilot and experiment with new ways of doing things can be an important trigger for change, and merit public or donor funding.
- 5 The most important role of agri-business is to take market risks, and to buy and trade agricultural produce. The ability of private agri-business to invest in smallholder farmer capacity building is limited.
- 6 The combined strengths and resources of public, NGO,

- agri-business and producer organisations need to be mobilised to strive for large scale impact.
- 7 A combination of deliberate actions at farm level and value chain level is invariably required for sub-sector development. Furthermore, change at institutional level may also be required, even though this is harder to achieve and steer in the desired direction.
- **8** Coordination and initiation of sub-sector development is a fitting task for NGOs, as they are considered relatively impartial.
- **9** What works at a pilot scale may not work for large scale intervention. Pilot success may change the reality, necessitating an adaptation of the approach. In addition, for large scale impact more focus is required on systemic change.
- **10** Impact at scale has to be an objective from the start. Pilots should take place under realistic circumstances such that they are scalable.

Source: Peter Gildemacher, Mirjam Schoonhoven, Anna Laven, Wouter Kleijn, Marije Boomsma, Ellen Mangnus, Kati Oudendijk, Jacqueline Sluijs, 2015. Value Chain Development @ Scale: experiences from Ghana, Laos, Uganda, Zimbabwe and Burkina Faso. Research report. KIT, Amsterdam, SNV, The Hague, 35 pp.



Table 1: Pre-intervention choices made in the Zimbabwe banana, Uganda oilseeds and Laos rice cases

Case	Pre-intervention choices
Zimbabwe banana	<ul> <li>Commercial smallholder banana production and -marketing as opportunity</li> <li>Honde valley as intervention area</li> <li>Mainly pilot scale interventions</li> <li>Income generation as focus</li> </ul>
Uganda oilseeds	<ul> <li>Oilseeds for the domestic market as opportunity</li> <li>Combination of piloting and large scale intervention</li> <li>Income generation as focus</li> </ul>
Laos rice	<ul> <li>Surplus rice quality and marketing -improvement as opportunity</li> <li>Central plains as intervention area</li> <li>Combination of piloting and large scale intervention</li> <li>Medium scale farmer as target</li> <li>Income generation as focus</li> </ul>

Whereas Röling et al. (2004) insist on an extensive diagnostic study to substantiate 'pre-analytical' choices for research projects undertaking value chain development interventions, we advocate making explicit pre-intervention choices relatively quickly, based on expert knowledge. Once the first broad intervention boundaries are set, further detailed study of opportunities can follow much more effectively. Pre-intervention choices that can be made relatively quickly are:

- The intervention commodity.
- Broad geographical areas.
- Broad target group (small or medium scale producers or traders).
- Broad focus on domestic, regional and/or export markets.
- Focus on food security, income or both.
- Focus on piloting new ideas, bringing tested and tried opportunities in routine use, or both.

#### Recommendations

- Be opportunistic and choose intervention areas with proven economic development potential.
- Make choices, but keep options open.
- Make pre-intervention choices explicit.
- Make pre-intervention choices quickly.
- Make pre-intervention choices by consulting a small number of well-informed stakeholders, rather than through elaborate participatory processes.

# Common pitfalls

- Long studies and reports by external consultants to substantiate pre-intervention choices.
- Making too detailed choices, making it difficult to seize newly emerging opportunities.
- Decision making based on compromises between stakeholders rather than using a 'best opportunity' approach.
- Not making choices at all, resulting in too many opportunities to analyse, leading to a lack of detail and failure to effectively guide the design step.
- Decision making based on wishful thinking rather than objective opportunity analysis.
- Overestimating the power of interventions to create opportunity, rather than adding momentum to autonomous developments.



#### Step 2: Intervention design

#### Opportunity analysis

Once the pre-intervention choices have determined the broad boundaries of the intervention, a more detailed process of decision making on intervention design can be set into motion about what to do, and possibly more important, what not to do.

To be able to do this, opportunity analysis is needed. To allow for a good quality opportunity analysis it is essential to gather and confront the different points of view of sub-sector stakeholders. Whatever methodology is used to gather these viewpoints, it is important to keep the focus on identifying promising opportunities for change, instead of ending up with a long list of problems faced by sub-sector actors. Opportunity identification is done at the start of an intervention, but not exclusively so. Throughout any intervention, room should be created for continuous opportunity identification.

Table 2: Summary of mix of activities in the Ghana cocoa, Zimbabwe banana and Laos rice cases

Case	Agricultural Services	Chain relations	Institutional
Ghana cocoa	<ul> <li>Development of pluralistic advisory service system</li> <li>Improved access to planting material and inputs</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Improved organisation of producers</li> <li>Increased competition between buyers</li> <li>Development of certified sustainable cocoa</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Partial liberalisation of cocoa collection system</li> <li>Stimulate cocoa sector coordination</li> </ul>
Zimbabwe banana	<ul> <li>Advisory service to smallholder farmers and secondary schools</li> <li>Improve access to planting material and inputs</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Develop contract farming relations</li> <li>Organise producer groups to bulk produce</li> <li>Access to credit for smallholders to establish plantations</li> </ul>	Lobby to stimulate sourcing from small- holders
Laos rice	<ul> <li>Promotion of the use of new rice varieties</li> <li>Improve quality seed supply and access to inputs</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Organisation of both producers and millers</li> <li>Linking farmers to millers and millers to buyers</li> </ul>	<ul><li>Improve rice export options</li><li>Stimulate rice sector coordination</li></ul>

#### Menu of options

The five cases did demonstrate that to successfully contribute to sub-sector development, a combination of interventions is usually required, with elements that improve **chain relations**, **agricultural services** and the **institutional environment**. Table 2 summarises the combination of actions in three of the cases.

The main challenge will be to pick only those elements that provide the best return on investment of development resources and effort, rather than aiming for an 'include all' intervention. We propose to use the 'Menu of Options' (see below) for value chain development at scale as an aid to facilitate the decision making process, with participants to come to a functional mix of actions. When trying to come to a functional mix of actions, complementarity to existing interventions needs to be considered. The actual implementation of the mix of actions will need to be coordinated between service providers.





# Value chain relations

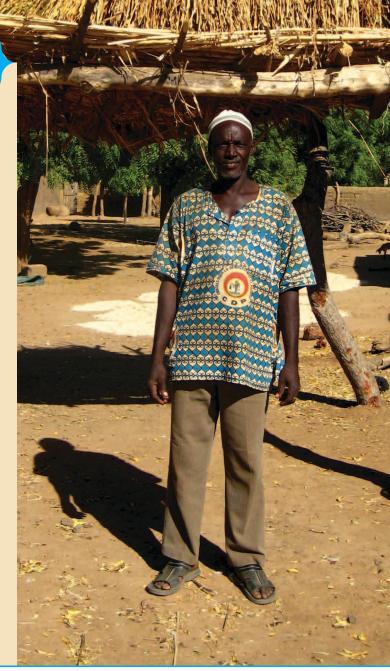
- 1 Support development of chain relations
- 2 Organise producers
- **3** Organise traders and processors
- 4 Support product bulking, grading and quality control
- **5** Development of new products for market differentiation (R&D)
- 6 Agri-business development support
- 7 Support the marketing and promotion of (new) products
- 8 Improve transport and storage facilities

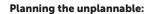
#### ► Agricultural services

- **9** Develop farming practice advisory services
- **10** Develop business advisory services
- **11** Improve availability of quality seeds, fertiliser and pesticides
- 12 Develop quality control and certification services
- 13 Support applied agricultural research
- **14** Develop market information systems
- 15 Facilitate access to applied credit and saving services

# ► Institutional environment

- 16 Advocacy for gender equity and inclusion
- 17 Quality standards
- 18 Develop stakeholder interaction and coordination
- 19 Establish public-private partnerships
- 20 Advocacy for policy change and implementation





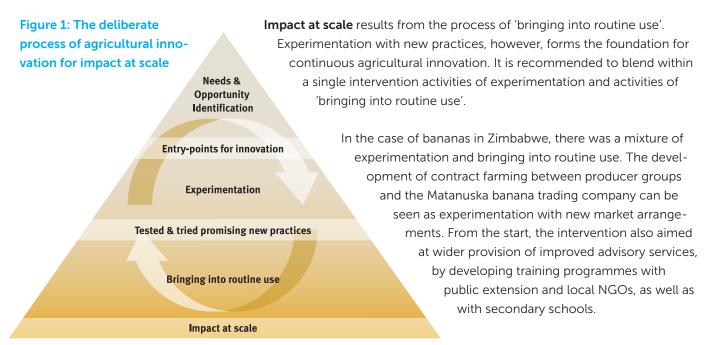


#### Impact at scale and systemic change

When looking for the right mix of activities from the menu of options, it has to be realised that some activities yield direct result on income and food security, while other activities aim at systemic change. For example, training cocoa producers in Ghana aims at direct impact on farmers' income by increasing their cocoa productivity and quality. Improving the collaboration between advisory service providers in the cocoa sector has no direct effect on productivity, but will in the longer run have an effect on a large number of cocoa producers, as a result of better coordinated, higher quality and more accessible advisory services. In interventions, we advise seeking a balance between activities with direct impact, and activities with more systemic, longer term effects.

#### Experimentation and bringing into routine use

Besides choosing a mixture of different types of activities, it has to be considered whether interventions focus on more 'experimental' or 'bringing into routine use' activities (see Figure 1). Experimentation is characterised by room for failure and taking risks. 'Bringing into routine use' is characterised by wider promotion and replication of successfully tested and tried new practices.



Source: Gildemacher and Mur, 2013

Figure 1 looks deceptively simple, logical and chronological. In reality, the distinction between experimentation and bringing into routine use is not clear-cut. New opportunities may emerge at any time and require more experimentation. Also, adapting tested and tried promising new practices to new circumstances may require more experimentation. Most importantly, the exact timing of the process cannot be planned, as the outcomes of experimentation are by definition uncertain. A very common inclination is to divide interventions into a pilot experimental phase of learning, followed by a scaling-up phase. Here, we advocate against this chronological division between experimentation and bringing into routine use, and insist on doing both types of activities at the same time. This means that interventions partly build on promising new practices that have been tested and tried by others. To maximise the chances of impact at scale of interventions, it is recommended to mix relatively high risk smaller scale experimentation and lower risk 'bringing into routine use' of tested and tried new practices.





#### Recommendations in intervention design

- Combine actions aimed at systemic change with actions that have direct effect on income and food security.
- Combine different actions aiming at several value chain levels: support services, relations within the chain, and institutional level.
- Combine experimentation with entry-points for innovation and 'bringing into routine use' of tested and tried, promising new practices.
- Be opportunistic; go where impact at scale can be achieved. This is largely related to existing economic opportunities.
- Avoid too much interdependence between activities; the success of one should not depend on the success of the other.

#### Common pitfalls in intervention design

- Focusing on only one source in opportunity identification, instead of multiple sources (e.g. only farmers; private sector; research).
- Focusing on problems instead of opportunities. Some problems may be highly relevant, but not easy to solve.
- Studying the context for too long before daring to take decisions.
- Overdesigning, making the design too detailed and inflexible.
- Not tailoring the intervention design to the actual target audience.
- Designing an intervention with chronological steps, in which one component's success depends on finishing another.
- Focusing on what intervening organisations can offer, instead of what is demanded.



#### Step 3: Implementation

Flexibility in implementation

In implementation, the first important element is to be open to be surprised by reality. Even though the intervention design is well thought through and stakeholders are thoroughly consulted, more often than not the reality is different from what was expected. For a successful intervention, adaptation on-the-go is inevitable. In a sense, the design process is continuous and does not stop until the end of the intervention. In the Laos rice project, the initial idea was to link rice producers to the beer industry. Although this was successful, it turned out that the export market for glutinous rice was an even bigger opportunity, and the intervention adapted its activities to capitalise on this. Those involved in the pilot phase of the banana case in Zimbabwe explained part of its success by it not being a fully formal project. This provided the flexibility to experiment, adapt and change along the way.

The need for adaptation and flexibility is universally recognised by both intervention implementers and funders. In the reality of development project implementation, however, there often appears to be a strong resistance to changing of plans along the way. This could possibly be overcome by building flexibility and continuous reflection and adaptation into the intervention design. Through such an in-built process, a funder can be informed routinely concerning the rationale for change. Creating time and resources for regular reflection is difficult during project implementation. It is often the thing that does not get done, as implementation itself takes natural priority. In addition, self-assessment and monitoring of processes in which you are directly involved is difficult. One might consider, especially in large interventions, to allocate the specific responsibility for organising the internal process of reflection and adaptation to an organisation less involved in the dayto-day implementation. In the case of the oilseed sub-sector in Uganda, one of the roles of the oilseed platform is to organise continuous debate on the needs of the sector, providing feedback to guide sub-sector interventions.







#### Implementation of experimentation

Experimentation should not be understood as a scientific process, but as the process of trying out new practices under realistic circumstances. Scientists may have a role to play in supporting the process of experimentation, but this is not a prerequisite. When considering 'new practices' to experiment with, do not think about agricultural technology alone, but consider practices in the widest possible sense. In the banana, oilseed and rice cases, experimentation with new chain relations formed the basis of intervention. In the cocoa case, the basis of change was intervention in the delivery of improved agricultural services. In addition, certified sustainable cocoa was developed as a new product.

In experimentation, there needs to be room for failure. There should be the opportunity to conclude that it was tried under realistic circumstances, and was not promising enough. In the case of sesame in Burkina Faso, for example, contract farming arrangements were tried, but ultimately failed. There needs to be room to conclude and communicate that this does not work in a market context of fiercely competing buyers.

Experimentation can only contribute to development at scale if the circumstances and processes that underlie the success are documented well. This forms the basis for identifying the strategy for 'bringing into routine use'. An important element of documenting the process of experimentation is open dialogue with and feedback from the participating stakeholders. This requires creating awareness among participating farmers and agri-business of the experimental objective, and creating an atmosphere of trust and exchange. In the case of bananas in Zimbabwe, the deliberate communication of project lessons contributed to later, similar interventions by a wider group of actors.

When experimenting with new market relations, it is advisable to try to involve more than a single agri-business. The value of the experimentation for impact at scale is not establishing a single new market relation, but to develop experience with new market relations of value to a wider group of agri-businesses. In the case of oilseed in Uganda, experimentation was initiated by the largest oil trader, who invested and rallied public and NGO support, which successfully contributed to sub-sector development. The experiences gained with new varieties were relevant for the entire sector. The company, however, tried to seek and strengthen a monopoly position, which is understandable from their point of view, but not in the interests of the entire sector. For the sake of independence, public and civil society organisations need to be wary of the risk of promoting unfair competition. Where possible, it is best to explicitly invite several agri-businesses, and clarify the public mandate of development organisations. For example, in the case of bananas in Zimbabwe, several traders were approached to gauge their interest in participating in the pilot. Even though only a single company ultimately participated, the fact that multiple traders were invited to participate avoided later accusations of triggering market disturbance.

Generally, in experimentation it is advisable to involve a wide array of partners. A broad partnership of different public, private, non-governmental and farmer organisations may make experimentation more difficult for reasons of coordination. It is, however, an investment needed for achieving scale, as through their involvement in experimentation with new practices, different organisations will gain the experience required for 'bringing into routine use'. In the Laos rice case this is a current worry. The central government has realised the regional success and is aiming for nationwide 'rollout'. It has, however, not participated in experimentation and risks attempting to copy local success without sufficiently understanding the processes and circumstances that underpinned the success.



Continuous experimentation with new practices in a sub-sector contributes to its capacity to respond to new opportunities and emerging constraints. In the Uganda oilseed case and the Ghana cocoa case, and to a lesser extent in the other cases, stakeholder interaction mechanisms were built and were of importance for sub-sector development. Stakeholder platforms with a permanent mandate can stimulate pre-competitive collaboration between private businesses, producers and public, private and NGO service providers. Functioning stakeholder platforms make it easier to identify new opportunities and experiment with new practices.

#### Recommendations for experimentation:

- Do not equate 'experimentation' with 'scientific research' alone.
- Experimentation must be under 'realistic circumstances' to put a new practice to the test of reality.
- Invite several rather than one agri-business to participate in experimentation.
- Involve a wide array of partners who join together in learning and can play a role in 'bringing into routine use'.
- Document the process of experimentation.

#### Common pitfalls in experimentation:

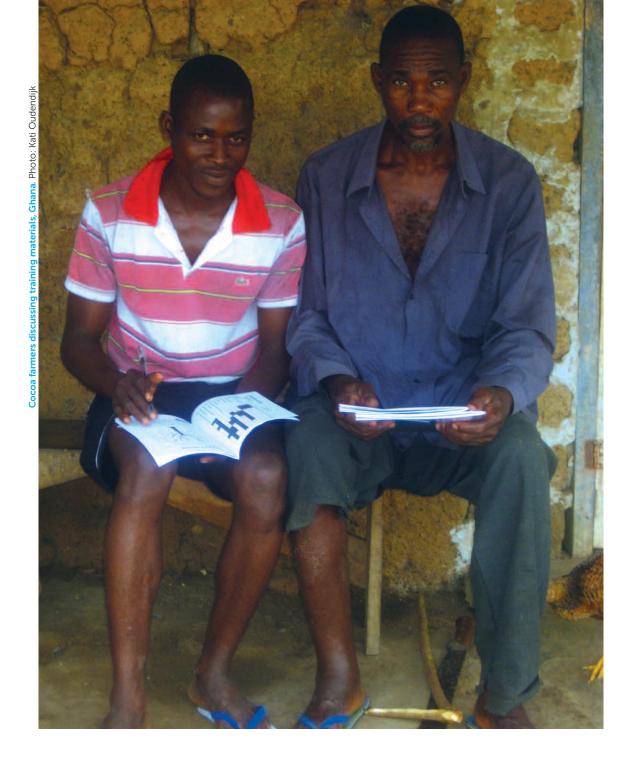
- Over-protection of the experimentation process, which leads to an artificial, non-scalable success.
- Working only with the most organised and trained producers, rather than more 'average' producers.
- Forgetting that the objective of the experimentation goes beyond the direct interests of the participating farmers and traders.
- Over-expectation regarding the willingness of the private sector to invest in experimentation.

#### Implementation 'bringing into routine use'

Where we use the term 'bringing into routine use' others use 'scaling-up and scaling out'. Here, we mean roughly the same. The objective of bringing into routine use is to realise impact at scale from promising new practices which have proven potential. The process of bringing into routine use should by no means be considered as void of risks and failure, but risks are supposed to be lower than in experimentation, allowing for the safer investment of larger efforts and resources. The fact that risks are lower also means that more can be expected of agri-business enterprises in terms of investment

To assure impact at scale, it becomes all the more important to build functional coalitions of different organisations and actors that together have the critical mass required for wider impact. Building these functional coalitions is at times hindered by competition. Competition does not only exist between agri-businesses, but also in civil society (NGOs, farmer organisations) and even in the public (universities, ministries) domain. Nevertheless, the key to impact at scale lies in sharing success, putting different experiences together and coordinating interventions. The challenge is to cherish competition in providing pressure to deliver and increase efficiency, but at the same time communicate and coordinate to avoid duplication of efforts. For example, in the case of bananas in Zimbabwe, SNV has made efforts to communicate and share the results of its experimentation with linking smallholder banana producers to the market. This has helped to interest other interveners in taking it to scale. On the one hand SNV is proud of the new initiatives it has triggered in the banana sector, but at the same time regrets not being at the forefront of these larger activities. Also in the case of cocoa in Ghana, partnerships between public, NGO and producer organisations and national and international agri-business formed the basis for large scale change of service delivery and market systems. Similarly in Uganda, the pre-competitive collaboration in the oilseed platform contributed to the bringing into routine use of experiences emerging from experimentation.





When talking about 'bringing into routine use', the aim is to replicate proven successes with new practices on a wider scale. Replicating success should, however, not be understood as synonymous with exact repetition of processes. A specific strategy for bringing into routine use has to be developed, which builds on the experiences of experimentation. The process of experimentation provides insights into how the new practice can best be popularised. It would not be intelligent to simply repeat the same experimental process many times over, as in hindsight, part of the experimental process might not have been needed. Some elements of experimentation may, however, be essential for local adaptation and adoption. It is thus important to evaluate experimentation practices well, and to clarify those elements that were crucial for the success of the experimental intervention. Also, circumstances change over time and space. What worked during experimentation may not work elsewhere or later in time. Even the experimentation itself may have changed the circumstances.



In the case of bananas in Zimbabwe, supply contract-based credit worked. However, as a result of the pilot, more buyers came into the market. In the new situation, supply contracts became a poor basis for credit provision, with farmers increasingly likely to renege on their contracts once there are competing buyers. Similarly with sesame in Burkina Faso, at the onset of sub-sector development, organisation of farmers to bulk for the market was essential to attract buyers to new areas, formerly not known as sesame production zones. Currently, however, such bulking is an option for farmers wanting to improve their bargaining position, but is no longer essential in order to market their sesame.

# Recommendations for bringing into routine use

- Develop a specific strategy for bringing into routine use, based on experiences from experimentation.
- Include a strong communication component in 'the bringing into routine use' process.
- Avoid working with a single private enterprise; involve several.
- Avoid partnering with a single farmer organisation; involve several.
- Involve public sector structures, as they have a wider reach than civil society organisations, and a longer lasting mandate, in spite of their often bureaucratic nature.
- Share success with 'competing' development organisations. The key to impact at scale is taking others along in the same effort.
- · Continue to reflect on the strategy during implementation, and adapt where needed.
- Measure simple indicators of success to support your publicity efforts, to enable sharing of success and to maintain momentum.
- Be open to feedback that provides new entry points for innovation.

#### Common pitfalls in bringing into routine use

- Continuing with experimentation with the same partners, rather than taking steps to reach scale.
- Assuming that new practices will spread by themselves, without local adaptation and a deliberate process of promotion.
- Hesitance to involve competing and different types of organisations.
- Collaborating with a single private enterprise or farmer organisation rather than making specific efforts to involve many.
- Assuming that the (market) context is static, rather than dynamic and influenced by interventions.
- Assuming that smallholder producers and private enterprises honour agreements when there is an economic disincentive to do so.



#### **Conclusions**

The results of value chain interventions are difficult to predict. As such, planning for scale is, by definition, not possible. What is possible, however, is to increase the likelihood of contributing to development at scale. Care has to be taken not to overestimate the power of deliberate value chain intervention. Processes beyond the control of development interventions are stronger and of a different magnitude. In this light, it is justified to make opportunistic choices and make use of these developments. In conclusion, a number of principles can be derived which assist in increasing the likelihood of contributing to impact at scale:

- 1 Focus on contributing to impact at scale throughout.
- 2 Choose to intervene where a positive (economic) momentum already exists.
- 3 Make explicit, quick pre-intervention choices to delimit the boundaries of your intervention.
- **4** Do a thorough opportunity analysis to support the intervention design.
- **5** Complement on-going interventions and build on existing experiences.
- 6 Remain flexible in implementation, and adapt to increase your chances of success.
- **7** Have a mix of activities which improve value chain relations, agricultural services and the institutional environment.
- 8 Implement activities which do not depend on each other for success, to reduce risk of failure.
- 9 Combine 'experimenting' with and 'bringing into routine use' of new practices.
- **10** Build broad coalitions or platforms for change, to collaborate in 'experimentation' and coordinate 'bringing into routine use'.

The above generic and earlier more detailed recommendations for realising impact at scale in value chain interventions are by no means meant to provide a blueprint for intervention design and implementation. Rather, they are intended to support decision makers and implementers in the challenging task of deciding which course of action to take. The most important factor, however, is for those implementing value chain interventions to have the common sense to listen closely, observe well and have the courage to react, in the interest of impact at scale. Room for manoeuvre and responding to emerging developments and experiences are essential. Implementers do not only require the freedom and confidence to initiate new actions where opportunities emerge, but also to stop activities which were started, but do not seem to be yielding the desired effect.



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# SNV-KIT partnership for SMART solutions in Agriculture

The SNV Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV) and the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT) aim to articulate, communicate and initiate smart solutions for agricultural development. Smart solutions are based on practical, global evidence and respond to local opportunities.

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