

## Smallholders unpacked: farmer diversity and engagement in tree-crop value chains in Ghana

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### Problem definition

Literature on value chain collaborations (VCCs) calls for inclusiveness, so that VCC interventions meet smallholder farmers' realities and avoid exclusion and adverse inclusion. However, current approaches lack a holistic conceptualization of what inclusion is and view VCC inclusion through a lens of vertical value chain interactions only. Existing perspectives thus provide partial and fragmented answers to our understanding of smallholder farmers' inclusion in VCCs.

### Research Question

How do value chain contexts, smallholder farmers' profiles, agency and livelihood trajectories affect tree-crop farmers' engagement in VCCs and what are the implications for their household food sovereignty?

### Theoretical Framework

The study adopts a smallholder farmer perspective. It moves beyond the preconceived dichotomous notion of smallholder farmers' inclusion in VCCs as being wanted and good and exclusion as being unwanted and bad with assumedly uniform outcomes for farmers in either scenario. Instead, this study conceptualizes inclusion as a multi-dimensional process encompassing vertical value chain relations and horizontal interactions within the context in which the value chain is embedded. This conceptualization allows us to identify institutions and the heterogeneity

among farmers that determine how and why smallholders are included in VCCs. Thus, we explain farmers engagement in VCCs and food sovereignty outcomes from a deliberate livelihood perspective at the interface of institutional context and individual characteristics of smallholder farmers in terms of their agency and livelihood strategies.

### Methodology

Using a multi-case study approach, this research examines smallholders' inclusion in cocoa and oil palm VCCs in Ghana through a mixed methods design. Data collection methods include document analysis, surveys, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, life histories, and verification workshops with smallholder farmers and their households, stakeholders in the cocoa and oil palm value chains and community members.

### Expected Results

Outputs include a typology of VCCs in both sectors and associated institutions, smallholder household profiles, and insights into profile-specific livelihood trajectories and how VCC inclusion differs among these. The study also presents profile-specific implications of inclusion and exclusion on household food sovereignty.

### Expected Graduation

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