

The Context of Smallholder Farming in South Africa: Towards a Livelihood Asset Building Framework

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ABSTRACT The need to support smallholder farmers by governments in developing countries has taken centre stage globally. In this regard, the South African Government's New Growth Plan puts agriculture, particularly the development and support of new smallholder farmers as an important area for development that could impact positively on poverty alleviation and household food security. In this paper, the researchers critically analyse the context of smallholder farming in South Africa, dynamics of market access and challenges facing smallholder farmers' agency. Analysis denotes how institutional dynamics related to socio-economic conditions of the farmers; the policy landscape and agro-climatic zones where farmers are located in South Africa are not well-g geared towards positioning smallholder farmers for meaningful participation in the market. Furthermore, the historical marginalization of smallholder farming is explored to illicit challenges of the duality of farming in South Africa which is characterised by a well-developed commercial farming sector and a poorly developed smallholder sector. The paper proposes an asset-building approach linked to social-protection and institutional readiness as a basis for enhancing market access and farmer agency in order to address poverty and inequality in South Africa.

INTRODUCTION

South African agriculture can be best described as a dual system where the well developed and capital intensive commercial agriculture contributes significantly to national food security. The second type of agriculture is the less developed and less resourced agriculture occupied by smallholder farmers and subsistence farmers. Despite the decline in agricultural activities by most rural people in South Africa brought on by urbanization, a large number of rural households in South Africa are still engaging in agricultural activities (Statistics South Africa 2012). A multiple-year data from Statistics South Africa (2012) indicate the sheer number of people participating in smallholder farming as well as how these are among the poorest population in South Africa, characterized by weak livelihood assets and vulnerability to household food insecurity. Despite this fact, the smallholder (which include subsistence) farmers who are largely located in former homelands have not experienced effective support from policy makers (Jacobs 2008). The researchers argue that,

based on the Statistics South Africa (2012) that indicate the sheer number of people who are involved in smallholder farming, such a group of farmers cannot be ignored. Indeed, this sector needs to be supported because of its potential to reduce household vulnerability and poverty. The high number of people participating in smallholder farming activities warrants attention in understanding their farming contexts, and this might inform the appropriate strategies required to support the smallholder farmers' livelihoods more effectively and sustainably.

The role of the smallholder farmer in contributing to food security and world food supply is fast gaining centre stage in key world bodies such as the United Nations Commission on Development (Piebalgs 2012). Global evidence derived on empirical studies is beginning to advocate for support in the smallholder farming sector. For instance, Wiggins and Keats (2013) indicate that smallholder farmers have an important role in improving household food security especially in improving nutrition. The smallholder farming is well positioned to play an important role in the future world food security. However,

not much has been written on the context and conditions of the people involved within the smallholder farming, and how these contexts impact their agency in sustained participation and market access. In South Africa, this is so despite the large financial resources directed towards smallholder farming in recent years. For example, the Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (CASP) allocation was R1 Billion for the period 2011/12, yet the impact of this on smallholder farmers remains unclear. Furthermore, the recapitalisation of underperforming land reform projects has yet the potential to increase spending in smallholder and new entrant farmers. In this paper, the researchers argue that smallholder farmers require the land reform programmes and initiatives that are largely responsive to and enhancing of the assets and capabilities of the local people.

In an attempt to address this paucity of knowledge, this paper discusses the condition of smallholder farming, its participants and the challenges related to market access and farmer agency in South Africa. In this regard, the researchers address the socio-economic dynamics of smallholder farming in South Africa (including the policy environment within which they function and the agro-climatic zones where the farmers are located). The paper further explores how an asset-building approach linked to social protection and institutional readiness could be useful in enhancing market access and farmer agency in order to address poverty and inequality in South Africa. The paper argues that this has a greater potential to sustainably eradicate household insecurity as it foregrounds the centrality of farmers' agency and market access against the backdrop of their positioning in the subservient positioning, namely the second economy duality of the South African farming system.

THE CONTEXT OF SMALLHOLDER FARMING IN SOUTH AFRICA

Socio-economically, most smallholder farmers in South Africa are poor, less educated and reside in rural communities with less developed infrastructure which locates them in the so called second economy (Jacobs 2008). Many of these communities are usually governed by male traditional chiefs, while up to 80% of the active producers are females (FAO 2002). In South Af-

rican rural areas almost all the land is communally owned and administered by a Traditional Authority (TA), and it is mainly for subsistence purposes. The communal ownership of land in these areas tends to diminish its commercial value, especially within a neo-liberal orientation that underlies commercial farming in South Africa, which promotes competition and individuality. In rural provinces like Limpopo and Eastern Cape almost 60% and 52% respectively is occupied by the poorest household in South Africa (Statistics South Africa 2012; van Schalkwyk et al. 2012), compared to the Western Cape and Gauteng provinces where the wealthiest households are located. Most households in South Africa especially those in rural areas employ a mix of livelihoods strategies including salaries and wages contributing to household income followed by social grants, income from business and pension remittances (Statistics South Africa 2012). Despite these livelihood strategies, agricultural activities continue to play an important role in providing much needed subsistence especially in the form of food.

Furthermore, according to Statistics South Africa's Labour Force Survey (2000-2007), over six million households engage in smallholder agricultural activities. Over two million of these are females and state that the main reason for their participation in this form of agriculture is for obtaining extra food (Aliber and Hart 2009). Women are responsible for almost all the productive activities in farming and in the household (Thamaga-Chitja 2012), and the lack of attention to their empowerment results in serious time poverty among women. Women in poor farming communities experience vulnerability from a time, economic and cultural point of view. It is a well-established fact (FAO 2002) that women do the majority of the productive work of subsistence and smallholder farming due to traditional and cultural roles of women's work. The feminisation of smallholder and subsistence farming is also closely linked to the domestic chores that culturally women are supposed to do, especially in the rural areas. As stated above, the duality of farming in South Africa relegates the smallholder farming to subservience (van Schalkwyk et al. 2012), a cultural social status that is often associated with women and femaleness. These factors place constraints on women smallholder farmers to extend their farming activities beyond the household, which include limited access to

information and other assets for them to utilise farming for enhanced livelihoods.

The traditionally defined roles of women's in agriculture have adverse impact on food security due to limited market participation by women. Smallholder women farmers' agency is negatively impacted by the subservient status to which their roles in society are relegated, which sometimes lead to poor familial and social support. Market access activities for smallholder women farmers often involve travelling to distant places for selling the produce mainly using public transport, which implies temporarily leaving the household. The cultural expectations for women to perform domestic chores stand at odds with this requirement, and thus impede the meaningful participation of women in taking their farming activities beyond mere subsistence. The resultant tension of this role, competing with the expectation for them to perform homebound domestic chores is a huge socio-cultural barrier facing smallholder women farmers.

This paradoxical dialectic functions like a double-edged sword that cuts down the possibilities for women to advance their economic opportunities through smallholder farming. Women continue to attempt to balance reproductive and productive roles in an effort to be food secure. This is due to entrenched socio-cultural roles which continue to inequitably constrain women's meaningful and economically gainful participation in smallholder farming, despite many social protection programmes aimed at improving women's lives. According to Action Aid (2000), the smallholder farmers, especially women experience a higher time burden compared to anyone else in the world. This double-edged sword burden that women continue to experience in an attempt to ensure food security for their households is a serious threat to sustainable rural livelihoods (FAO 2002).

Other social ills such as lack of security which make women vulnerable to rape and HIV and AIDS may make it difficult for women to freely venture in the fields. This might limit their mobility and render their agricultural activities to be homebound, which negatively constraint their capacity to expand their production to become economically beneficial. Increasingly, eminent danger linked to rape of even older women may impact negatively women's efforts and agency to venture into new farming fields. Thamaga-Chitja et al. (2010) indicated that women's ac-

cess to land is precarious and insecure for smallholder farming, as it often involves poor women whose rights to land are insecure, even when these are provided for in government policies and programmes. In practice, women's rights to land can only be acquired if they are linked to a man through marriage or familial linkages. As shown in Holmes and Jones (2010) study, additional initiatives linked to social protection programmes seem to improve vulnerable women's latent assets which they can exploit towards their own empowerment. The United Nation's (2011a) meeting of experts on enabling women's rural economic empowerment emphasised that the need for transformed and engendered institutions to overcome gendered skewed rural poverty is a great one.

The South African smallholder farmer challenge of access to markets is exacerbated by the country's economical status. As indicated above, South Africa is characterised by a dual economy also referred to as the first and the second economy. The economy has two dimensions that negatively impact the shape of the agricultural market (Obi et al. 2012; Ortmann and King 2007). The first economy dimension is dominated by developed commercial farmers (conventional) and the industrialised sector which mainly contributes to the formal and established markets. The dominant and well capitalised commercial farming sector found in the so called first economy, lands itself more successfully in less complex challenges compared to their counterparts in less developed smallholder farming (Aliber et al. 2006). The second dimension of the economy is characterised by the less developed and less industrialised smallholder producers including subsistence farmers, which have limited resources, and thus operating in the periphery of the farming sector (Aliber et al. 2006). Smallholder farmers' lack of access to information and established commercial markets has the potential to constrain their entrepreneurial abilities. As a result, smallholder farmers might be deprived of the opportunity to scale up their operation to the level of formal commercial markets, thereby perpetuating the cycle of poverty in this farming sector.

Current policy interventions and fiscal spending in South Africa with regards to smallholder farming are considerably geared towards supporting the so-called emerging farmers; smallholder and subsistence farmers who are new

black entrants to farming. The Marketing Act (1996) set out how smallholder farmers operate with agricultural markets. This act provides a premise for key policies such as the Strategic Plan for Agriculture of 2001, the Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment in Agriculture (Agri-BBBEE), land reform programmes and the Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (CASP). Furthermore, more specific support for smallholder farmers is included in the strategic plan of the national department of agriculture and the agricultural research council (NDAFF 2012).

The CASP one of the new policies largely linked to the formal land reform processes. Its role in effectively supporting the broader agricultural development strategy for smallholder farmers is also publically known. The CASP has experienced challenges which are related to delays in procurement, difficulties in retaining technical staff, poor planning and lack of skills among staff. Despite the large financial budget of CASP, the impact of CASP in supporting smallholder farmer is not clear due to limited data. One of the reasons is that this policy does not improve farmer agency may be due to the lack of coordination in its implementation. For example, the CASP funds reside with the provincial departments of agriculture once received from the National coffers, while land reform, a national competence, is administered by a different provincial department which contributes to out-of-sync planning and execution of projects.

The current Agri-BEE policy of 2003 is aimed at the emerging sector where procurement preference is given to those who meet the scorecard points. One of its objectives is to promote economic transformation in order to enable meaningful participation of black people in the economy (NDAFF 2012). Furthermore new codes of good practice stipulate how agriculture should have a role in social economic development (NDAFF 2011). This policy requires smallholder (often untrained and poorly-resourced) farmers to walk a new, unfamiliar and treacherous route of forming partnerships with well-resourced and established commercial farmers. If successful, the kind of partnerships that emerge from this may have poor regard to the socio-cultural dynamics facing the smallholder farmers thereby compromising their sustainability. The need for smallholder farmer-based and driven forms of partnerships is hereby advocated. This would

help adapt the well-articulated government policies and codes of practice in ways that favourably use agriculture to play a role in bridging the deep inequalities between the first and second economy. Currently, often apparent silo mentality of government departments and stakeholders limits effective change as this is not responsive to solving complex South African farming problems.

Departments that are concerned include agriculture, social development, economic development and education among others. Campaigns such as 'one-home' one garden are well known in KwaZulu-Natal although the impact and success of these interventions has not been notable. Recently, the National Department of Agriculture's Forestry and Fisheries established a Zero Programme based Campaign (NDAFF 2011). Research aimed at its adaptation to South Africa through the appointment of several universities to conduct research in the poorest provinces in South Africa is now underway. However, the researchers believe that the effectiveness and sustainability of the Zero-Hunger Strategy would depend on the extent to which it espouses the principle of building smallholder farmers' agency and enhancing institutional readiness to support farmers' efforts to access established formal markets.

Agro-climatically, most smallholder farmers reside in areas with inferior agricultural potential (Obi et al. 2012; Mabaya et al. 2011; Aliber et al. 2006). Many of these areas have poor rainfall and less fertile soils. Many smallholder farmers practice rain-fed agriculture, with poor formal education, and this fact plus the inherent low resource base relegates smallholder farmers to less productivity (Dorward et al. 2003). The majority of smallholder farmers had had recourse to engage in subsistence farming, which involves merely selling of surplus produce as an additional survival strategy to meet their daily basic needs. Research has found that smallholder farmers engage in subsistence agriculture to obtain extra food (Aliber and Hart 2009). Due to the historical design, most areas where smallholders and subsistence farmers farm are less productive than other parts of the country particularly due to insufficient resources because of erratic and unreliable rainfall in these areas. Additional challenges such as lack of skills and empowerment in managing surface runoff, deep drainage and evaporation coupled with poor

technological skills in relatively simple skills such as water harvesting techniques among the farmers further limit water availability.

Furthermore, poor crop yields and soil degradation are characteristic of South African smallholder farms. Soil degradation including soil fertility has been described as one of the key constraints that contribute to poor productivity especially in communal areas of South Africa based on ill-conceived policies such as the 'betterment planning' which led to crowding and thus adversely affecting food security.

MARKETING ACCESS FOR SMALLHOLDER FARMERS IN SOUTH AFRICA

It is the belief of the researchers that most smallholder farmers aim to reap economic benefits and alongside the fulfilment of subsistence goals. However for smallholder farmers, the environment for economic growth is constrained by challenges of production, infrastructural and lack of access to the markets. The need to tackle these constraints stems from the fact that despite the advent of the democratic dispensation, poverty remains deep rooted and smallholder farmers bear the brunt of this as they remain restrained from market access. Although markets access and its constraints for small producers in the world over is not a new phenomenon, the deep poverty and inequality in South Africa makes this an urgent issue matter that requires immediate attention.

The following points attempt to isolate key market access issues of a non-market nature yet have serious contribution to the market access blockages. They include constraints of a technical, institutional and socio-cultural nature which affect the communal way of life where most rural smallholder farmers in South Africa reside. Van Scalkwyk et al. (2012) have noted constraints relating to poor infrastructure, high transaction costs, price uncertainty, high risk in agricultural production wherein new products and risk are associated with new methods of production, such as certified organic production. Institutional constraints are also very problematic in smallholder farming disabling the impact groups of farmers could have in the market place.

The communal way of life in many rural set-up creeps into business organisations formed

by farmers and often clash with profitability objectives of such organisations. Gadzikwa et al. (2006) have researched the crippling problems of working as a group in primary production where the 'free-rider' is rife. Poor management and technical capacity of co-operatives has been found to be problematic for smallholder farmers' institutions and thus hindering market access (Thamaga -Chitja et al. 2011). The researchers argue that it is the poor understanding of rural people's way of communal life that also tends to influence 'group' projects that may need to be unpacked and well understood in order for business oriented interventions and investment in smallholder agriculture to be successful. The fact of communal 'sharing and working' clashes or mismatches the profit oriented way of business and this in turn adversely affects market access for smallholder farmers. Yet, the researchers also believe that the communal spirit can be harnessed to strengthen volumes and yield targets for market access, as long as this is accompanied by extensive capacity building programmes that are sensitive to the smallholder farmers' needs.

Furthermore, access to institutions that provide relevant information is important for market access. Lack of specific market information and knowledge on how the market functions is a critical matter for smallholder farmers and could improve livelihoods. Once again, the social way of sharing information in these rural setups can be harnessed to share and spread, technical and non-technical information through building strong community networks. This paper argues that information sharing is an integral part of rural life and that existing ways such as 'stockvels' (local money raising schemes), churches and community gatherings where mostly women meet for a specific purpose, such as saving, can be harnessed for spreading and sharing information. The researchers argue that it is when we understand the 'way of life' in rural South Africa that interventions can be tailor-made towards improved success. The following sections suggest a livelihood asset-building framework through which the constraints facing smallholder farmers in South Africa can be resolved. This framework places at the fore building capacity of the local smallholder farmers as a critical aspect for market access and improvement of sustainable livelihoods.

A Livelihood Asset-Building Framework: Asset-building

In order to have insights in how smallholder farmers could be supported, we need to understand the historical reasons that created subsistence farming in South Africa (Aliber and Hart 2009), which resulted in a dualistic farming system, as discussed earlier. It could be argued that as the smallholder farming sector is trying to operate in a paucity of physical and material resources, the solution to their plight lies in building up these resources in this sector. However, at the heart of the Asset building Approach is the belief to invest equally in building capacities of human resources in tandem with the physical and material resources (Christy 2012). As some policy scholars (for instance, Ball 1998) have claim, development initiatives that are not driven by the active participation of the local people will at least run the risk of not being sustainable. In South Africa, huge sums of money have been invested in smallholder farming, yet without the express recognition and political will to foreground the building of human resources in local communities as primary drivers of farming for sustainable livelihood and food security, the impact of these have only been limited. In this paper, we propose the need for initiatives that support smallholder farming to go beyond identification of physical and natural asserts. Support for smallholder farmers should also include capacitation of the human, cultural and social assets as these are critical aspects in the improvement of sustainable livelihoods and food security.

Luthans et al. (2004) argued that beyond physical and natural asserts to include social and human, which vest resources in individuals could be a useful strategy to improve smallholder farming. Investing in human asserts does not only increase the chances of buy-in of initiatives aimed at improving smallholder farming, but it also increases local individuals' agency, as it imbues positive attributes which might contribute to effectiveness, confidence, hope and resilience. This article argues that success in market participation of farmers should be related to farmers' ability to make choices, observe quality standards and levels of market knowledge.

Clearly, all these factors point to the centrality of human or individuals' agency and capaci-

ty to make things happen - which is what we are proposing for initiatives to improve smallholder farming in South Africa to pay attention to. The context within which farming takes place in Africa and South Africa is an important factor to consider if appropriate solutions are to be contextually relevant and effective. As Piebalgs (2012) noted, the United Nations Commissioner on Development declared that:

"We should not say that the EU Agricultural pattern will be replicated in Africa or the Caribbean and Pacific. We should not think that it will be just a couple of farmers, hundreds of hectares of land and huge productivity. It should be looked on with respect that they will use a model which suits their needs, and that they will not necessarily repeat our pattern."

These sentiments could also be juxtaposed against the approaches required to improve smallholder farming in South Africa.

A Livelihood Asset-Building Framework: Social Protection

There is evidence that effective social transfers – a form of social protection programme in South Africa, contribute to economic development and social stability (Madonsela 2010). In South Africa, the social protection programmes have heavily invested in the implementation of the cash transfer Pillar (1) that goes beyond targeted cash transfers to the vulnerable by including free housing and special free quotas of electricity and water. The social transfer programmes target, children, the old-aged, war veterans (World War II/Korean), foster care, care dependency (under threat) and those under undue temporary distress. The youth, including young men of job seeking age are not catered for in these targeted programmes.

The largest targeted programme is the child support grant reaching over 10 million recipients out of a total of over 14 million social grant recipients. Indeed the positive impact of the childcare grant on women's lives and to improve rural livelihoods has been noted. In this regard, Unicef (2012) found the following:

- ♦ Female children recipients who received the grant early in childhood worked less outside the home thus reducing vulnerability.
- ♦ Family teenage girls who were recipients demonstrated less risky behavior (teenage pregnancy, multiple partners).

This indicates that in rural areas where child grants are received, household vulnerability and poverty is likely to decrease. Such support is crucial also to empower young mothers by improving access to assets that can be traded for a livelihood generation. A well supported and established smallholder farming stands to play a key role in supplementing these social protec-

tion grants by providing new and sustainable forms of livelihoods (Slater et al. 2007).

A Livelihood Asset-Building Framework: Gender Dimension

Female headed households in South Africa form the norm (Statistics South Africa 2012).

Table 1: Suggested framework of a context specific asset building livelihoods approach

	<i>Manifestation</i>	<i>Impact on livelihood</i>	<i>Possible role of social protection in asset building</i>
<i>Socio-economic</i>	Poor, less educated and reside in rural communities with less developed infrastructure	Unsustainable livelihood options limited by poor skills resulting in poor wellbeing and a less productive community and its individuals	Well-conceived Social Protection (SP) can provide services and cash transfers to support basic needs including sanitation, roads, housing and water. SP services can further strengthen some assets including access to quality education and healthcare. In such communities, people would be capacitated to exercise agency in pursuing long-term goals related in agriculture such as accessing markets
<i>Policy</i>	-Key policy such as CASP does not support all categories of entrant farmers but focuses on land reform and the lack of framing to the low asset base of most smallholder farmers. Further, poor co-ordination leading to out-of sync. -Agri-BEE needs partnerships that are out of reach for poorly educated small farmers to meet the prescribed scorecard	-Those who need assistance most especially at a subsistence level are not allocated for by CASP. The uncoordinated support impact negatively on funded farmers and on the state's finances. The poor co-ordination leads even the funded farmers to not realise sustainable livelihoods and market participation.	-Extension services should be viewed as a social protect instrumentation t to dealing with lack of information and knowledge in smallholder farming -Extension services could also play a key role in facilitating and establishing relationship between established farmers and developing smallholders to enhance BEE for mutual beneficiation.-Centralised service delivery related to CASP should be considered strongly for better return for the state and the farmers.
<i>Agro-climate</i>	Inferior agro-potential leading poor yield and remoteness.	Poor yields leading to poor incomes including limited food incurred for the concerned.	Improved extension services on appropriate technologies suited to the agro-climates may lead to improved yields and incomes
<i>Market Access</i>	Poorly developed roads, remoteness, costs of finding and bargaining with buyers	The cost of market transactions limits income generation.	Public works programmes should be deliberately linked to smallholderfarming areas and IDP should also incorporated smallholder farming infrastructure
<i>Gender</i>	Women's time poverty resulting from multiple roles, stereotypes of gender-based work, verbalised rules on how to be have forbidding access to resources	Overstretched time allocations results in task not well performed thus impacting the households and out of household key roles such as childcare and marketing of produce-loss of opportunity, access and food insecurity	Change of gender based roles through engaging concerned institutions to foster new perspectives on work.

Among the vulnerable groups in society, women and children form the majority, and this places the need to prioritise women empowerment as a critical variable in supporting smallholder farming. In cases where women are household heads they may experience further vulnerability of lack of access to work opportunities and productive assets such as land due to entrenched cultural practices and gender skewed property inheritance laws. In South Africa, women continue to experience a burden of an ever increasing work load where they work more hours in a day compared to men (Holmes and Jones 2010). The time poverty results in certain household roles not being met and often women are vulnerable to experience their husband's wrath which takes various forms of physical and emotional abuse (Morojele 2012).

In South Africa, women's comprehensive rights are enshrined in the constitution but not much has been done to ensure that rural women do not continue to experience cultural vulnerabilities which negatively affect their access to land. Also very little has changed traditional unequal power relations which continue to downgrade rural women to subservient positions – either constrained familial inequitable husband-wife relationships or traditional authorities headed by mostly patriarchal chiefs. These factors increase the likelihood for rural women to bear the brunt of livelihood challenges – chiefly so as they are traditionally responsible for providing primary care for their families. The irony is that the patriarchal nature of rural discourse regards women as minors under the authority of men as heads of household, which denies women to have direct access to agriculturally productive resources (AFRA 2011). The researchers argue that social protection programmes such as free housing in South Africa should be preferentially geared to empower vulnerable women as a means to mitigate their predicament. This should involve culturally sensitive ways to negotiate traditional male chieftainship to be responsive to the current capitalistic demands that require women to play more active and assertive roles in order to determine their lives (Morojele 2011).

The framework begins to show clearly that for livelihoods to improve through smallholder farmer development, a sustained link with the “external” environment through markets access is important. It is crucial for an exchange of

good and goods to occur in order for an economy to be created. The framework also denotes that institutions that are responsible for improving the dire socio-economic conditions, policy and gender are critical for improved smallholder farmers' livelihoods.

CONCLUSION

Regardless of scale or sophistication of the operation, agriculture provides additional food for poor rural households and livelihoods for many rural women. The lack of institutional and pro-poor policies that are sensitive to women's circumstances undermine the impact that many South Africa policies have on the local, particularly the poor. Smallholder farmers who are mainly women who reside in rural communities would benefit from engendered institutions that support rural women's grassroots efforts and voices to build and strengthen assets and agency for trading in markets for a better livelihood. In this regards, it is essential that men are part of all deliberations and programmes in order to raise awareness and buy-in to the vision of growing sustainable livelihoods. This could help avert the antagonism that often arises between men and women in empowerment programmes including social transfers that are targeted at women. The social protection programmes can play an important role in counteracting the smallholder farmers' instability caused by vulnerability to food insecurity. Women smallholder farmers need to be freed up women to be productive higher up in the value chain in order to sustain household livelihoods. Ways in which smallholder farmers can be supported through enhancement of social assets include well-coordinated social protection programmes and agency enhancing strategies. Tapping into creative ways in which smallholder farmers are already navigating their challenges has a potential to affirm the farmers' agency, in addition to increasing the likelihood that solutions provided are relevant and responsive to the local demands.

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