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Power Dynamics between Farmers and Market Masters: A Case of Tomato Value Chain in Kilolo District and Dodoma Municipality, Tanzania

Nyamba¹, S.Y., R. Martin¹, V.J. Kalungwizi¹, I.M. Busindeli¹, F.T.M. Kilima¹, C.P. Msuya-Bengesi¹, B.B. Chija¹, Z.S.K. Mvena¹, M.R.S. Mlozi¹, S.M. Gjotterud² and E. Kiranga³

¹Sokoine University of Agriculture, P.O Box 3002, Morogoro, Tanzania

²Norwegian University of Life Sciences (UMB), Ås, Norway

³Uyole Agricultural Research Centre, Mbeya, Tanzania

ABSTRACT

Like in many places in rural Tanzania, tomato production has become an important economic horticultural activity. The main reasons for the sudden upsurge of tomato production over the past few years include its better market prospect compared to other traditional crops although this prospect vary across seasons and locations. Of late however, tomato farmers have faced a number of challenges in the production and marketing of tomatoes. The main challenges include high cost of production and perishable nature of the crop that induce significant variation in farmers' earnings. Another challenge facing tomato producers is the long chain of actors between production and consumption leading to information gaps between farmers and consumers in terms of optimal price for the product. This paper examines the status of tomato marketing with respect to information sharing and power relations between farmers and market masters in the tomato value chain. The paper concludes by giving possible avenues for resolving the communication problems through project interventions.

Keywords: *tomato value chain, actors, pathways, communication, power dynamics*

I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In rural Tanzania, tomato production has become an important economic activity. Farmers have been attracted to this economic activity mainly due to monetary gains in a relatively shorter period. Depending on the timing of the harvesting, a farmer is likely to earn more per unit area compared to crops such as maize or even cash crops such as coffee leading some switching from low to high value crops [1] [2]. Tomatoes are increasingly being regarded as high value products and are dubbed as "red gold" by processors in some areas. The leading tomato producing areas in Tanzania are Iringa with a total size of 4,248 ha, Tanga (1,289 ha), Kilimanjaro (900 ha), Mbeya (380 ha), and Dar es Salaam (Temeke district) (353 ha) [3], [4]. Other regions with significant tomato production include Morogoro, Arusha, Mwanza and Dodoma [5]. However, this promising situation may not reflect the actual situation at a local level in relation to such high demand and therefore high profits for tomato producers. Theoretically, when the demand for tomatoes is high as given above, prices are supposed to go up. In many areas, however, seasonal variation in production coupled with disconnected markets for such products leads to low profitability of the product. Three main factors come into play, one being the

perishability nature of the produce with unreliable markets hence pushing the price down. Two, oversupply during the peak season (between March and May in Ilula township in Kilolo District and Dodoma Municipality) also pushes the prices down. Three, the long chain of actors also widens the price difference between producers and the ultimate consumers. The price difference can be due to the differential access to information. The focus of this paper is to assess the power dynamics related to access to tomato market information between farmers and market masters in tomato value chain and its impact on the chain. To achieve this objective, we analysed the characteristics, roles and positions of these key actors in the chain to establish their influence on access to market information.

The concept of power and power dynamics

Power can be defined as the degree of control over material, human, intellectual and financial resources exercised by different sections of society [6]. According to [] power is conceived as the structural capacity of a social actor to impose its will over other social actor(s). However, he recognizes the formation of counter-power, which is the capacity of a social actor to resist, and challenge power relations that are institutionalized [8]. Power is dynamic and relational



rather than absolute – it is exercised in the social, economic, and political relations between individuals and groups. It is also unequally distributed, some individuals and groups having greater control over the sources of power and others having little or no control. The extent of power of an individual or group is correlated to how many different kinds of resources they can access and control [9]. Power has different dimensions, visible and invisible. While visible power involves formal and public arenas of decision making, invisible power goes a step further by taking on board the ways in which awareness of one's rights and interests are hidden through the adoption of dominating ideologies, values and forms of behaviour by relatively powerless groups themselves [10]. However, many advocacy strategies focus on a single dimension of power (usually the most visible), and pay little attention to the invisible one. It is critical when analysing a problem, planning an intervention, and/or evaluating impact to take on board all types of power.

II. METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Kilolo and Dodoma Municipality in Iringa and Dodoma Regions, respectively. The main economic activity in the two districts is agriculture. It is estimated that more than 80% of its population depends on agriculture [11]. Crops grown in the area comprised of onions, tomatoes, fruits and cabbage. Kilolo District was selected for the study due to its potential for tomato production. Tomato is an important cash-earning commodity for Iringa region. According to regional agricultural statistics, Kilolo District for example, accounted for 51% of the 107 000 MT of tomatoes produced in the 2007/08 season while for Dodoma accounted for 44%

The study adopted a cross sectional research design whereby both primary and secondary data were collected. The study was purely qualitative; methods used to collect data included focus group discussions (FGDs), dialogue conferences and key informant interviews (KIIs). Two FGDs, one for tomato farmers and other for market masters were conducted in each district (Kilolo and Dodoma Municipality). Members of the FGDs ranged from 6-12 and constituted both men and women. However, it is very important to note that FGDs for market masters constituted of only men the reason being no any woman was found to be engaged in this activity. Each focus group lasted for about one and half hours. After conducting separate FGDs members were invited to present their results during plenary session in the dialogue conference.

Key informants interviewed include representatives from NGOs, market masters, transporters, processors, traders, and Local government authority officers (village, ward and district extension officers). Conversations were videotaped and transcribed. Secondary data were collected by reading various reports and other works (both published and unpublished). Data analysis was done using content analysis where collected data were categorized into themes and themes of similar nature were merged for description.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Roles of different stakeholders in Tomato value chain

The study revealed a complex web of actors with complex relationships whereby each actor had a different function. The main actors in the chain are farmers, businesspersons, transporters and consumers. For instance, at the production level, there are different actors who have different roles in the production process. Farmers constitute the main players but are supported by other actors such as input suppliers whose role is to supply agro-inputs including tomato seeds, fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides along with spraying gears. Farmers are also supported by agricultural extension officers who provide advice on various aspects of tomato production as well as marketing. Certain aspects of agricultural advice are also provided by non-governmental organizations (e.g. Muunganiko - Ujasiriamali Vijijini (MUVI) and faith-based organizations (e.g. the Anglican Church in Dodoma), radio stations which broadcast agricultural related information such as Country FM in Iringa and Uzima FM in Dodoma.

At the marketing level, there are also a number of actors who play different roles including the market masters who are also known as market brokers, there are crate makers, transporters who transport tomatoes from the farm to the local market and from the local market to distant markets such as Dar es Salaam, Morogoro, Nairobi or Mombasa. There are individuals who provide these transportation facilities (containers) on rent or sell them to others. There are also many other actors who provide other services. These include the coolies, food vendors and retailers. After the marketing level, actors will include transporters, processors, and consumers. Our interest in this paper is limited to the interaction between farmers and market masters. Table 2 shows the tomato value chain actors and their functions.

**Table 1: Roles of different Actors in Tomato Value Chain**

Farm Level Actors	Market Level Actors	Transporters	Processors	Retailers	Consumers
Farmers: Production, Packaging and Transportation Extension staff: Advisory services Market search NGOs/Government departments e.g. MUVI Advisory services Market search Input suppliers: Sell inputs Provide advisory services	Brokers/traders: Information search Linking sellers to buyers Transport arrangements Other logistics Basket makers: Basket "tenga" making Wooden box/crate maker: /suppliers of raw materials To make boxes/crates Basket/crate renters To rent out baskets/crates Coolies: To load and offload tomatoes Food sellers Retailers	Head loaders: Transporting tomatoes from the farms to the market Bicycle transporters: Transporting tomatoes from the farms to the market Cart (donkey or oxen pulled): Transporting tomatoes from the farms to the market Lorry /Fuso transporters -Long distance transportation	Retail level: Processing tomatoes into tomato paste primarily for home use and neighbours Industrial level (Dabaga) Processing tomatoes into: tomato sauce, paste, chilli sauce, tomato juice, jam, marmalade and pickles	Shops/grocery Stores/vendors	Indirect consumers: Hotels or restaurants Institutions (e.g. hospitals) Direct consumers: Households

Source: Survey data



General characteristics of a market master

It is important to briefly discuss the characteristics of market masters against tomato farmers to pinpoint their power relations. The study established that market masters are middle aged between the ages of 30 and 50 and were all men. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with market masters revealed that, less than thirty years of age makes the individual less experienced in the tactful dealing with not only the sellers (farmers) but also the buyers (who buy in bulk for sale in distant markets). They must have sufficient negotiating skills in order to stay in business. For those above 50 years, a discussion revealed that, it may be a bit difficult for them to remain in business due to the rigorous engagements requiring plenty of stamina in haggling with other aggressive businessmen and women. For example one has to remain standing for much of the day during business interactions.

The market master must also have some education. From discussions with them, secondary school education appears to be the primary requirement. Again, lower educational level may deter a market master from effective participation at the market place while higher educational level is, according to some of the key informants, superfluous. As one market master at the "TASAF" market in Ilula stated,

".... we do not need degrees holders here as such a person will find it difficult to remain standing throughout the day interacting with labourers and eating at lousy food vending outlets instead of working in an air conditioned office doing paperwork..." Market master, Ilula Township.

In spite of their average education, market masters attach cardinal importance to appearance, especially with respect to dressing and smartness, which, they claim, makes a fundamental difference between selling a product or not. How you appear to the seller or buyer is a preoccupation to many market masters. They thus invest a lot more on impression management as discussed by interactionists such as Erving Goffman [12], his contemporaries and advocates of modern business appeal [13]. These scholars look at how an individual presents himself to others, the masks he/she wears, and the self he/she projects. The main focus is on man's attempt to give off the best impressions of himself, how the social

character of man is revealed in face-to-face interaction. They generally see social life as a form of theatre, in which people "stage manage" their lives and the impressions they create on others to their own advantage.

Market masters are fully aware of the need to stage manage as there are potential dividends for doing so. Market masters are by design smartly dressed and where possible clad in white shoes and neckties. Such a unique attire makes them fairly conspicuous to either sellers or buyers. Smart appearance serves as a "uniform" for this particular class of people for other to notice them and they use this quality to their advantage.

Market masters are extroverts, assertive, aggressive and shrewd. For one to be a market master, he must be able to talk to people from all walks of life. The art of talking is an asset in this business. The talking goes beyond the face-to-face interaction; they must be in touch with different types of people for the smooth running of the business. For this reason, the ownership of a cell phone is mandatory. It is against these circumstances that all market masters met had at least two phones, one Simcard for each phone company such as Vodacom or Airtel in order to take advantage of the cheaper rates for intra-company calls.

The Role of Market Masters and Farmers in Tomato Value Chain

Due to the characteristics discussed above, market masters are dynamic enough to take up leadership roles as well as perform a number of tasks. During focus group discussions and key informant interviews, it became evident that for one to be a leader at both the "TASAF" and Majengo markets, in Kilolo District and Dodoma Municipality, respectively, one must be a market master. Thus, both the market chairpersons and secretaries in both markets were market masters in the first place. While performing their leadership roles, they also performed the marketing tasks including buying tomatoes from the farmers, selling tomatoes to wholesale buyers, they supplied inputs to farmers, sometimes on loan under contractual arrangements as discussed earlier, they arranged for transportation and controlled market information e.g. on prices. This situation makes market masters to have a firm grip of the market versus other stakeholders.



Control of marketing information

For one to become a market master, being shrewd is a necessary trait. This shrewdness translates into the ability to manipulate information to their advantage. There are different ways of achieving this. One way is to keep the seller (who is usually the farmer in the context of this paper) and the other buyer separate. Individual market masters do impose a social distance between the farmer and the buyer other than himself by meeting the farmer before reaching the market place. Under such circumstances, the farmer is likely to be unaware of the prevailing prices and loses the bargaining versus several buyers who may offer better prices for the farmers' product and hence he/she may sell tomatoes at a much lower price. This situation makes farmers become losers at the market place for lack of timely and accurate information on prices.

Farmers are also disadvantaged in the sense that they cannot be part of the market management but market masters can be farmers. Thus, market masters knew the dynamics of tomato production while on the contrary; farmers have limited knowledge of the market dynamics. This situation works in favour of the market masters who take advantage of this knowledge gap.

The linkage between farmer and market masters

Tomatoes in both study sites are first sold in the local market and later transported to distant markets. In Ilula Township, much of the produce is sold at the TASAF market and, in the case of Dodoma Municipality, Majengo market is the main destination for tomatoes from producers from within and outside the municipality. Tomatoes find their way to the market through two major ways, first, farmers themselves taking the produce to the market by head loading, using bicycles, and motorcycles such as the TOYO tricycle, carts and pick-ups. Second, the buyers travel to the tomato producing areas and purchase at farm gate prices and then transport to the markets by means just mentioned.

In addition, buyers do also hire individuals to carry the produce to the market. To maintain the link with the area where tomatoes are produced, buyers/traders usually tend to maintain permanent contract with part-time field staff who serve as link between the farmer and the trader who is usually a market broker or market master. The field staff furnishes information to the

market master as to when the tomatoes are ready for picking, but also they arrange logistics for transporting and in certain cases facilitate contract arrangements between the producer and the buyer.

Tomato market dynamics

Tomato is naturally a perishable crop. The time element is critical when it comes to marketing of the tomatoes. For this reason, farmers and traders involved in selling and buying tomatoes usually talk of the "morning" and "afternoon" price implying that while the day is long a seller can maintain a high price but as the day wears on, one will be forced to lower the price before the produce deteriorates. Our findings revealed that market masters have plenty of experience in this eventuality and they are always cognisant of how to avoid such an eventuality, a characteristic feature absent in tomato farmers. The material conditions [13] under which they work moulds them into special people with unique characteristics that make them well acquainted to the market dynamics.

Power imbalance was also manifested in the marketing contract between farmers and market masters. The contract involves provision of agro-inputs on credit which virtually translates into becoming contract farmers by locking the produce to the lender—the input provider. Often market masters enter into unwritten inputs supply contracts with farmers. Then provide credit to farmers and recover whatever they incurred when selling the tomatoes at harvest time. It was reported by key informant (village leader) that, contracts are sometimes crafted to benefit the market master more than the farmer. This was affirmed by one of the farmers during FGD that:

".....The informal—unwritten input supply credit agreements, that farmers enter with market masters have had no benefits to small scale producers. When the prices of the tomatoes are high, these agreements become detrimental. Farmers always become losers in the whole process....." Farmer in Ikokoto village, Kilolo district.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There are two major challenges that farmers faced in the project sites including, inadequate access to information on issues related to marketing of tomatoes



and lack of collective effort to address the challenges they face at the market place. Against these two major challenges, we conclude that, in order to resolve the observed challenges project interventions aiming at improving communication pathways is vital. However, efforts to organize farmers so that they can solve their problem jointly cannot be underestimated.

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