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Call for papers

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New horizons for multidisciplinary research on value chains from a sustainable development perspective of countries in the Global South

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Value Chains (VCs) can be described as the sequences of productive actors that contribute directly to supply a specific good to domestic and/or export market. VCs are major channels for agricultural development mobilising resources from various economic sectors, creating economic value and generating employment (Fabre et al., 2021). They are also essential to understand the sources of organizations' competitive advantage related to coordination among various stages (Porter, 1985).

Usual debates on VCs focus on how they improve incomes and contribute to economic growth, through upgrading and integrating small-size actors into global VCs (Lee and Gereffi, 2015), and/or by developing cross-sectoral linkages in national economy (Knez et al., 2021); and on how to get a more equitable share of the value created along the chain by including the most vulnerable or marginalized actors (Swinnen and Kuijpers, 2020; German et al., 2020). Therefore, VC is used as an instrument to analyze the processes of transformation of productive systems between the local and the global and to identify levers of transformation through the formulation of strategies that support actors (Reardon and Minten, 2021). More recently, new challenges have emerged in terms of restructuring VCs in times of crises (e.g. COVID) to cope with the impacts of such sudden chocks (Palpacuer and Smith, 2021).

After being a theoretical concept, VCs has also become a privileged target and entry point for intervention and policy formulation in order to reduce poverty in rural areas (Ouma et al., 2013). They offer an operational framework for engaging with farmers, businesses and policy makers to improve income generation in an inclusive and sustainable way. However, whereas VCs development may have negative consequences on social and environmental dimensions, research on VCs' development seldom paid enough attention to the related environmental and social impacts until around ten years ago. Yet, decision makers must weight how VCs activities take place in, impact and influence, a social and environmental context.

To respond to these new injunctions, the current challenges of VC analysis are diversifying and add social and environmental purposes to the single economic logic: How can working conditions be improved at the different stages of the VCs and in particular for women and youth? Can natural resources be better managed (in particular forests) and the damage of VCs activities on human health be reduced? Is access to land and water equitable according to the size of the actors throughout the VC? What is the impact of the VCs development on climate

change and ecosystems and actors' adaptation to climate change? Do VCs contribute to upgrading and securing the food and nutrition conditions? Are there threats to biodiversity? Do the VC activities contribute to improve living conditions of the households involved? What are the challenges faced by fair and ethical trade and other social and environmental voluntary standards initiatives? Which factors enable inclusive and sustainable transformation of VCs?

To promote the transition towards sustainable VCs models, the assessment of the VCs performances from a multidisciplinary point of view is crucial and fosters renewal of analytical framework. Multidisciplinary methods and frameworks have evolved along different ways: combination of tools, multi-criteria approach, integrated indicators, etc. Interdisciplinary research is indeed a challenge. Evaluating the contribution of agricultural VCs to sustainable development is more complex than analyzing economic performances alone because of the need for considering biological, economic and social processes at work and covering all spatiotemporal scales (Lairez et al., 2016). Several institutions have made consistent methodological advances such as the European Commission with Value Chain Analysis for Development (VCA4D) (Fabre et al., 2021), the FAO with the Sustainable Food Value Chain (SFVC) approach (Neven, 2014), or the GIZ with its manual on Sustainable Value Chain Development Value Links (Springer-Heinze, 2018). Many of them insist on the strategic use of data and quantification to draw public and policy makers' attention and highlight the pivotal role of the State and political instruments in the reconfiguration of VCs in view of the new challenges.

The objective of this call is to look closely at contributions that show how the application of these renewed multidisciplinary analytical framework to real cases bring new knowledge on value chains and improve/support decision making to respond to sustainability challenges.

Topics of interest include, but are not limited to:

- What are the impacts of VCs on the different dimensions of sustainability and what is the added value of interdisciplinarity for making such assessment?
- What is the specificity of the governance of the most sustainable VCs?
- What are the levers for favouring the emergence and maturity of these sustainable VCs? What is the impact of public policies? What are the possible valorisations of these VCs by the consumers (e.g. fair trade)?

Manuscripts should not exceed 10,000 words including references. Further instructions for submissions are available on the *Review of Agricultural, food and Environmental Studies* website. Papers should be submitted in English. All papers will be subject to a double-blind evaluation. The review anticipates publishing these papers in the 3rd issue of 2025.

Manuscripts can be submitted via the RAFE website until the **February 1, 2024**.

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