Director's letter

Dear Reader,

We are glad to be sharing with you the main updates on Value Chain Analysis for Development (VCA4D)!

Our project is at the forefront of producing evidence-based information in a format that is usable by all actors that are truly engaged in promoting sustainability and inclusiveness in value chains.

To share knowledge that we had gathered in over five years of activity, 2023 kicked off with our stocktaking Conference 'Value Chain Analysis for Development: providing evidence for better policies and operations in agricultural value chains'. This event confirmed the high interest and relevance of agri-based value chains as vectors for change. It also reiterated the advantages of having a standardised method of analysis to allow for lesson learning, critical thinking and knowledge building.

You can access all the documents on the Conference here: 14 papers that analysed transversally VCA4D studies, presentations, lively and interesting panels, and also a document summarising the main messages from the Conference. Nevertheless, what will not appear throughout the documents, but surely is a key to success, is the sense of community and engagement across all participants: experts, policy makers, farmers organisations, Academia, the growing part of the private sector that is sustainability driven, donors. This collective intelligence and growing engagement revive the belief that sustainability and inclusiveness are reachable targets if all actors strongly cooperate together.

We continue to work hard also on new Value Chain Analyses and in updating older ones. New and old questions continue to pop-up to respond to the complexity of today's challenges: food crisis, climate change, deforestation just to name some. Value chain analysis remains as one of the tools for a better understanding how food systems work, and how they shall be transformed.

As many Delegations are now formulating new programmes, including on Value Chains, we invite you to contact us to plan and discuss your needs in terms of knowledge and timing. Timely planning of activities it is in fact vital for us to ensure the best expertise and quality support; as well as to make sure that findings and information reach you when most needed.

On some news from our Project Management Unit, we have welcomed Frederic Lancon as our Scientific Director. I would like to thank him for his strong engagement since Day 1 and for his untiring passion and expertise about the subject. This is also for us the opportunity to thank Marie Hélène Dabat for her strong leadership and hard work in all previous years of VCA4D. You left us a great legacy that we are keen to continue to strengthen and your engagement in many of the ongoing VCA4D activities is a great asset.

We are also pleased to announce that we have recruited a new Training Officer, giving a boost to our capacity strengthening activities, within Europe and with all of the EU partners across the globe. The implementation of our training strategies will be materialised by the launching of our serious game on how to use the outcome of VCA4D studies for policy design and dialogue. Partnership with Agrinatura teaching institutions is also revitalised to disseminate VCA4D methodology within master programmes. Along the same lines a partnership is being developed with RUFORUM.

We wish you a pleasant reading of the VCA4D newsletter, hoping this will encourage you to discover the full reports, all available on Capacity4Dev (https://capacity4dev.europa. eu/projects/value-chain-analysis-for-development-vca4d/ info).

Please, do not hesitate to contact us for any exchange about VCA4D and value chains. We will be keen to respond to you!

Olimpia Orlandoni
VCA4D Project Director

VCA4D Conference - Providing Evidence for Better Policies and Operations in Agricultural Value Chains

On 18 and 19 January 2023 colleagues from across the science-policy community joined us in Brussels for the first VCA4D conference. The theme of the conference was to look at the role of value chains (VC) in supporting the policy dialogue for enhanced inclusive and sustainable development.

We were delighted to be joined by over 500 attendees including researchers from across the Agrinatura network, farmers' organisations, colleagues from the EC, FAO and the private sector.

The conference was able to draw upon results from over 45 studies performed across Africa, Latin America and Asia on a wide range of agricultural products. All studies conducted were based on the VCA4D methodology, a multi-disciplinary tool that was developed by DG INTPA in partnership with Agrinatura. Drawing on this wealth of knowledge, 14 papers were discussed having been prepared by Agrinatura researchers and partners in the run up to the Conference. Each of the papers analysed at least three VCA4D studies in order to provide cross-cutting analysis.

Discussion was based around thematic panels, the first being the merits of having a common method for value chain analysis for policy formulation. It was noted that often the challenge when working with VCs is to have the metrics needed to inform the policy dialogue, this is where VCA4D steps in to fill the gap. End users in the European Delegations in which VCA4D studies were carried out praised the standardisation of the methodology as it offered a common language with empirical arguments.

There was spirited discussion around the panel on mid-stream actors. It was acknowledged that these actors play a key role in value generation even though research tends to focus more on the primary production level, necessitating a deeper dive into the workings of this level of actor. Questions therefore centred around their capacity to effect change that would be inclusive, and that wouldn't hamper efforts to generate a more equitable share of the value added for smallholder farmers in particular.

When considering certain mechanisms to create long-term impact we must be cognisant of the power balance within the chain and ensure that we pursue mechanisms for impact that empower all actors, but especially vulnerable groups. It is therefore vital to consider ways that reduce power asymmetry by bolstering the capacities of vulnerable actors. If VCs are to be a tool to effectively improve living-conditions, then we must acknowledge women's precarious position in the chain both from a socio-economic standpoint and look to bolster strategies that create greater agency. Governance systems will be crucial in this regard to ensure that incentives and shared benefits reach all farmers and have the advantage to create long-term stability by leveraging effective collective action.

Questions were raised about whether going beyond the snapshot that the VCA4D studies provide could have merit, such as the integrating of complementary analytical frameworks, whilst although interesting would not be feasible to allow us to continue to respond to the needs of the EC in a timely manner, a critical factor for their policy formation agendas. Whilst the primary focus of VCA4D has always been the provision of knowledge it also has a role in uniting the various actors, allowing them the opportunity to validate findings and strengthening shared accountability for improvement. Some panellists reflected that being a knowledge producer is a privilege and we also share in the responsibility of communicating these findings and involving stakeholders such as farmers organisations even earlier in the process. Whilst this view goes beyond the mandate of the VCA4D project itself we do play a role in facilitation of knowledge that can empower our partners in close discussion and under the guidance of the EU delegations. This role will continue to be built upon in the following years as our capacity strengthening strategy continues to develop. Nevertheless, the core of the project will remain knowledge generation, in order to provide evidence-based information appreciated by policy makers.

Partnership was a key message of this conference; the EC launched an appeal to researchers from the Agrinatura network and beyond to continue to engage with the subject matter so as to maintain a continued long-term partnership to allow them the opportunity to see their findings mirrored in policy. That is why we must continue to traverse the course from research to policy together to strive for stronger economic inclusive growth.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who joined us in-person and online. You can access all the conference papers and presentations on our website along with videos of all the interventions - Capacity4Dev.

VCA4D stakeholders' workshops

Fisheries workshop in Tanzania

Held on 16 March 2023 at the Golden Tulip Hotel in Zanzibar, the stakeholders' workshop to present the findings of the VCA4D study on coastal fisheries value chain was organised by the VCA4D project in collaboration with the EU Delegation to the Republic of Mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar, the Ministry of Blue Economy and Fisheries in Zanzibar, the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries of Tanzania.

This workshop followed on from a reflection on the findings and recommendations of the VCA4D study started in November 2022, with the organization of two online meetings (on 30/11/2022 and 07/12/2022) addressed to governmental actors both in Zanzibar and Mainland, to share and validate the VCA4D analysis.

The March workshop was an occasion to take stock of this preliminary reflection and share with the broader value chain public and other donors the findings of the study but also insights for the way forward to support the sector.

The one-day workshop was attended by 55 persons from the Mainland and Zanzibar, with various representatives from the above-mentioned ministries, the Deep-see Fisheries Authorities, the national research centers on

fisheries and other academics, some NGOs, donors agencies (UN, Ireland, USA, Italy, Sweden) as well as by DG-INTPA (Mr. Fernando Trabada from Unit F3 delivered the closing speech). There was a high level of participation, with many questions raised after each set of presentations showing the interest of the audience in the VCA4D study.

The findings of the study were very much welcome by the two representatives of the ministries in charge of the sector and all actors recognized the important of the study for the amount of information and data provided.

The recommendations from the study raised several challenging issues and called for a need to improve collaboration between institutions, between MLT and ZNZ, and with other stakeholders, including among donors. Part of the audience also raised the question of how the work of the VCA4D could be further disseminated and lead to some capacity building, and knowledge transfer.

The EU Delegation welcomed the call for better coordination to diffuse the useful results and feed the policy dialogue on the sector , already ongoing in the framework of the Team Europe Initiative (TEI) and of the launch of the BEST action (Blue Economy for sustainable transformation programme).
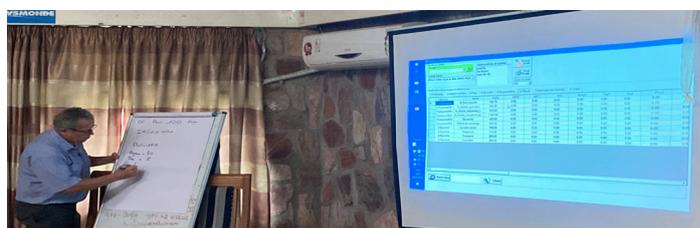
Workshop and training on the Burundi milk value chain

The Value Chain Analysis on milk in Burundi was presented to the local value chain actors and the EU Delegation in a workshop organised on 5th December 2022 in Bujumbura. The study on the milk value chain was carried out between March 2021 and May 2022 in a collaboration between "Value Chain Analysis for Development" (VCA4D) project and the "Assistance Technique Agrinatura au Burundi" (ATAB) and funded by the EU and implemented by Agrinatura. In line with the capacity strengthening strategy, the study was performed in a twining manner, by three experts from Agrinatura and three lecturer-researchers from the University of Burundi.

The workshop on the VCA4D milk study was attended by nearly 60 participants including Sanctus Niragira, the Minister of Environment, Agriculture and Livestock in Burundi, the delegation of EU in Burundi, researchers and experts from the University of Burundi and other institutions, value chain actors. The workshop produced fruitful discussions about the main findings and recommendations of the VCA4D milk study and helped the actors to exchange on the hot topics. In his closing remarks, Mr Niragira highlighted the importance of the VCA4D milk study for the usefulness of its robust analyses and recommendations on the milk sector and

emphasised the fact that the VCA4D study served a platform of agricultural North-South collaboration between different institutions of research-policy.

As part of capacity strengthening activity on VCA4D milk study, a training on economic software Agrifood Chain Analysis (AFA) was organised at the University of Burundi between 6th and 9th December 2022. The training was provided by the VCA4D scientific director Frederic Lancon, research officer Heval Yildirim, and by Nicodème Nimenya, the national economist twinning the international economist in the VCA4D study on Burundi milk. The training was attended by 14 participants from the Faculty of Economics and the Faculty of Agronomy and Bio-Engineering from the University of Burundi. This four-day-training reckoned at the same time fundamental economic concepts and computations used in value chain analyses and provided value chain examples to help the participants to get familiarised with the software.

Establishing partnership with RUFORUM

VCA4D was invited to the 19th Annual General Meeting of RUFORUM, The Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) a network of 163 universities in 40 African countries to strengthen African capacities to foster innovations responsive to demands of small-holder farmers.

The VCA4D PMU was part of the Agrinatura booth at the Conference exhibition, sharing information on its goals, method and achievements with delegates (professor, deans, farmer organization and agro-food industries managers).

The VCA4D scientific director gave the keynote address for th Parallel Session "Enhancing Value Chain Functionality «Enhancing Value Chain Functionality: Methods, Approaches And Inclusive Policy Design. The parallel session was chaired by Prof. Irene Susana Egyir, University of Ghana, Legon and attended by 20 to 30 participants. After recalling how sustainability issues became a matter for value chain analysis, the key note address compared a number of methods proposed by various institutions, including VCA4D and how and to what extent they contribute to development policy formulation. The address underlined the critical role expected from training in value chain analysis in order to ensure ownership on the process from expertise to decision making. The discussion focused on the categories of stakeholder to be included in the capacity building process beyond decision makers.

On the third day of the conference, a side event was organised "Integrating Value Chain for Development Approaches into Agricultural Higher Education in Africa" The

side event gathered 20 to 25 participants and was chaired by Stephen Onakuse, Agrinatura President who introduced the session objectives. The methodology was presented, including a video that summarized the VCA4D analytical process. This first contribution triggered discussion about the interdisciplinary approach, interactions between the implementation of the VCA4D studies and the decision-making process. It was followed by a presentation of the Cocoa and Coffee Interprofessional Body of Cameroon (CICC) who explained how a VCA4D study implemented in 2019 was used as a reference to formulate and implement CICC strategy. The discussion focused on the resources needed within RUFORUM member universities (access to software) to learn and apply elements of the methodology.

A specific meeting was held between RUFORUM and Agrinatura to sketch out follow-up steps to disseminate VCA4D methodology among RUFORUM member.

A note will have to be prepared by the PMU of VCA4D summarising the features of the methodology and how it could enhance the contribution of RUFORUM members in policy formulation for development. This note will be used by RUFORUM secretariat to confirm the interest of it's member sin establishing a process for teaching VCA4D methodology.

It is proposed to establish a task force gathering RUFORUM members (4 to 6) to develop a program to disseminate the methodology. For this task force we will welcome participation from Agrinatura members.

The VCA4D PMU – Get in touch!

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All of our VCA4D calls can be found on the Agrinatura website: https://agrinatura-eu.eu/

Follow us on: Linkedin

On our Capacity4Dev page you can find more information about the project, methodology and studies

You will also find a short video introduction to VCA4D on the Agrinatura Youtube channel as well as video explaining our methodology.

Call for papers

There is still time until 1st April to sumbit your manuscript for a speical issue of RAFE co-edited by VCA4D!

Don't miss the opportunity to join this exciting issue!

All the details here