



Prepared by Liz Cooper on 7th October 2015

Summary of findings and recommendations from MSc student fieldwork in Malawi on fair trade pigeon peas

Description of the paper

This paper provides a short summary of findings and recommendations regarding livelihoods impacts and value chain analysis of fair trade pigeon peas in Malawi. Research was carried out in summer 2015 by MSc students Lauren Opstad and Javier Ureña Palencia, from the School of Geosciences and Business School respectively.

Background

In summer 2015, through a collaboration between the University's Department for Social Responsibility and Sustainability, the Business School, and the School of Geosciences, two MSc students undertook placements looking at a fair trade lentils/pigeon pea supply chain in Malawi. The students worked with Just Trading Scotland, and completed a period of fieldwork in Malawi with NASFAM (National Smallholder Farmers Association of Malawi). The University of Edinburgh buys fair trade rice from Just Trading Scotland, and has previously bought the lentils/pigeon peas too. The students carried out research to determine the livelihood benefits of the fair trade approach taken by NASFAM and Just Trading Scotland, and carried out a value chain analysis.

A blog post by the students can be found here: <http://www.sustainability.ed.ac.uk/blog/2015/msc-student-placements-fair-trade-research-in-malawi/>

Longer summaries of the two dissertations are also available.

Brief summary of findings

- Pigeon peas are a drought resistant, nutritious crop which also benefits soil fertility thus improving maize produce when intercropped, which is the staple in south Malawi
- Membership of NASFAM was found to be linked with higher income for farmers, with increased number of years of membership linked with further increases in income
- Part of this increase in income is linked to tailored training offered by NASFAM on agricultural techniques, which is linked to increased yields
- Pigeon peas receive the highest market price compared to the other food crops grown in the area, and so provide an opportunity for increasing income
- Seed loans offered to farmers by NASFAM are helping increase productivity, and helping farmers diversify away from maize, which has a low nutritional value and low market price

- Access to inputs and training has been more readily available to women, who typically have less access in other cases
- However, very few farmers were found to be selling their pigeon peas to NASFAM. Reasons offered for this include: farmers not knowing about NASFAM's prices and mobile markets (e.g. through not having access to radios), low prices and/or their buying prices were not widely known, or NASFAM's mobile markets were not available on the days the farmers wanted to sell

Summary of recommendations

1. The University's catering procurement should re-engage in a pigeon pea business relationship with Just Trading Scotland

The University's Catering department stopped buying pigeon peas in 2012, given at that time JTS had not enough stock to meet UoE catering demand. However, they have solved their shipping issues and now are able to stock sufficient quantities. The University may wish to consider paying a higher premium or purchasing a guaranteed minimum, to contribute to a system in which NASFAM has the ability to pay farmers a higher price for pigeon peas, and thus more farmers choose to sell to them.

2. Just Trading Scotland should change its import activities from RAB to Export Trading Group

University Catering is currently buying rice from JTS, as NASFAM is the one producing, cleaning and packing, and therefore there is a direct relationship with NASFAM rice farmers and social impact. Regarding pigeon peas in South Malawi, however, NASFAM has no mill. Instead, they sell pigeon pea produce to Export Trading Company (ETC). JTS, nonetheless, buys pigeon peas from a different processing company, RAB Processors. Here, the recommendation would be to instill JTS to buy from ETC in order to enjoy a direct impact on NASFAM Zomba and its pigeon pea farmers. This initiative would also help to expand University Fairtrade scope to other fairly trading initiatives.

Further information

For further information and for copies of the longer reports produced by the students, contact liz.cooper@ed.ac.uk