

**IMPROVED
AGRICULTURAL VALUE
CHAINS FOR ECONOMIC
GROWTH :
THE AGRICULTURAL VALUE
CHAIN DEVELOPMENT PROJECT
(PD-CVA) IN CAMEROON**

by Nchinda Pechue Melie

Economic Research Intern

Edited by

Nsaikila Melaine

Senior Economic Policy Analyst

Nkafu Policy Institute

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Agriculture in the past years has increasingly been a major part of economies in most African countries, Cameroon inclusive. There has been an increasing trend towards secondary and tertiary agriculture, focusing more on transformation of raw materials. This sector has enormous potentials for employment and income generation; Cameroon's agricultural sector holds great potential for the widespread distribution of growth dividends, since 60% of the population earns its income from this sector. There is therefore the need to ensure a continuous growth of this sector hence guaranteeing economic growth. The government of Cameroon has been taking major steps to improve this sector through a number of projects amongst which is the Agricultural Value Chain Development Project (PD-CVA), launched in Yaoundé, on April 24th, 2017.

Covering the Centre, South, East, Littoral and South West regions, project targets young graduates and cooperatives in Cameroon. The five-year project is estimated at FCFA 75,488 Billion, of which 77.6% comes from the African Development Bank (AfDB), 21.5% from the government and 0.9% of beneficiaries. with the aim of scaling up agricultural productivity in Cameroon by directly creating 6,000 jobs for youths and over 24000 indirect jobs thereby improving living conditions and ensuring food security.

The components and expected outcomes of the project includes; Rural infrastructural development

(1,000 km of rural roads, 30 warehouses, 15 rural markets, 30 km of electricity networks, 30 drinking water supply systems, a quality control laboratory for agricultural products). Crop sector development (support for the establishment of processing units, institution building for farmer organizations, technical guidance, facilitation of the interface with service providers, training, research support for the production of quality seeds and seedlings, establishment of a crop sector development fund to finance value chains). Development of youth agricultural entrepreneurship (close to 600 businesses created in the agro-business sector for approximately 1,500 young graduates of which 40% should be women, ensuring access to credit) and project coordination and management.

In the same light, the project is expected to generate an estimated annual income increase of 818,000 FRS per household and an estimated annual income gain of over 6,000,000 FRS for young entrepreneurs. Surplus production in a year of full operation is estimated at 216,000 tons of fresh palm fruit bunches, 240,000 tons of plantain, 10,000 tons of pineapple and 17,500 tons of palm oil.

Equally, to facilitate this project, the government seeks to intervene at the various links of the three agricultural value chains through the development of 1000 km of rural roads, 30 shops, 15 rural markets and 1 laboratory for quality control of agricultural products.

Given the objectives and deliverables on this project, it has opted for various technical solutions and action plans. Regarding the opening-up of farming areas, the project will rehabilitate rural roads. The works will entail grading and treatment of critical areas: spot gravelling, construction of permanent civil engineering structures and drainage of the road. The works will be contracted out to specialized national small and medium-sized enterprises in order to generate more

jobs. Regarding the creation of jobs for the youths, the project will adopt the Agripreneur model developed by the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) in several countries. This model targets young higher education graduates who will receive training in agro-business for a period of 18 months in incubation platforms. The last months of the training will focus on the preparation of business plans for the youths. At the end of the incubation period, the young people, individually or as a group, will emerge with a project and a financing request to any credit institution of their choice.

Critical view

A detailed look at the project specifications reveals that it touches some major issues in the agricultural sector (quality food production, infrastructural development) and with reference to the entire economy (reduce youth unemployment). The project target, expectations, work plan and deliverables have been well defined and elaborated given that there is a clear-cut path regarding implementation and deadlines for deliverable. Clearly stated results based logical framework and the key stakeholders. Finally, the project aims at increasing utilization of the country's farm and non-farm labor, which is laudable.

Notwithstanding, a number of drawbacks can be observed from this project in that:

- This project has as objective to benefit 242,000 youths in Cameroon. Implying it targets only approximately 1% of the total population of Cameroon, which is **24,602,266**, going by the latest United Nations estimates. This means that given the unemployment rate of 4.3% in Cameroon less than half of the population will be impacted by this project thereby minimizing its effects throughout the country. It should have had more impact if the number of beneficiaries or scope of the project were larger than what is at present

- Secondly, the project does not specify the criteria for selecting youths to train for this project and also, it shows no clear action plan through which the trained youths will be integrated into the agribusiness. This could open room for corruption and disorganization. It is important for the project to specify the criteria for youth selection and a tool for follow-up as well as a way forward on how to integrate youths to work after training

- Equally, there are little or no predictions of price changes in the market for the proposed products and plans of adjustments to such changes

Finally, the time lag from loan approval to project implementation comes across as too long, hence a potential of tapering the extent to which intended outcomes could be realized. This therefore needs a review.



Nchinda Pechue Melie

*Economic Research Intern
at Nkafu Policy Institute*

Denis & Lenora Foretia Foundation

Email: info@foretiafoundation.org

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Twitter: [@NkafuPolicyInst](https://twitter.com/NkafuPolicyInst)

Email: Info@foretiafoundation.org

Tél: (+237) 653 78 25 81 / 698 64 55 24

Website: www.foretiafoundation.org