

Keywords:

Investment, markets, livelihoods, small-scale farming, smallholder farmers

OVERVIEW

Sustainable Markets Group and Natural Resources Group

Project name:

Tipping the Balance: Policies to shape agricultural investments and markets in favour of small-scale farmers

Project leader:

Bill Vorley

Time frame:

April 2012 – present

Objective:

Tipping the Balance analysed policy on agriculture and market governance, identifying levers that can tip commercial investment towards models that empower smallholder farmers, especially women.

PROJECT SUMMARY

While public investment in agriculture has increased, both IIED and Oxfam Great Britain are concerned about a predominant focus on fostering enabling environments for private investment in agriculture. Drawing on our mutual strengths, we addressed policy gaps and identified levers that can tip commercial investment towards truly inclusive models that empower smallholders, particularly women. The report, which is supported by case studies in four countries, has attracted the interest of both policymakers and governments.

CHANGE IN ACTION

This project has gathered evidence in four countries – Guatemala, Nigeria, Tanzania and the Philippines – on how agricultural policy is failing to regulate private investment and markets to improve the lives of smallholders, including women. Building on existing relationships with key donors and governments, IIED and Oxfam GB are presenting the findings to receptive audiences. The development arms of the UK and Italy have both expressed interest in promoting transparency and accountability mechanisms. The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) committed to re-evaluate its portfolio of

Tipping the Balance finds gaps in agriculture policy

Advocacy tool aims to shift public investment back to smallholder farmers, especially women

Around the world, 500 million small-scale farms support nearly two billion people – almost one third of the global population. Apart from enhancing food security, their work is expected to reduce rural poverty, protect natural resources and strengthen communities' resilience to climate change. To meet these high expectations, and in light of volatile food prices, governments have increased public investment in the sector. This has, however, largely facilitated private investment in agriculture, and the benefits have not trickled down to smallholder farmers.

In December 2012, Oxfam Great Britain and IIED published *Tipping the Balance: Policies to shape agricultural investments and markets in favour of small-scale farmers*, a report by Bill Vorley, Lorenzo Cotula and Man-Kwun Chan. Drawing on evidence from Guatemala, Nigeria, Tanzania and the Philippines, the report identifies policy levers that can tip commercial investments towards small-scale farmers. These levers range from issues such as gender laws and inclusive participation to policies affecting agricultural investment and market governance.

Throughout 2013, key policymakers and governments responded favourably to the report's recommendations, raising expectations of a shift towards smallholders and women at policy and programme levels. The partners have taken every opportunity and 'hook' to promote elements of the report to different audiences, including within their own organisations.

Slow wave of change

The positive reception to the report is based on many factors.

The collaboration enabled both IIED and Oxfam GB to maximise their strengths and minimise their perceived weaknesses. Known for its rigorous, evidence-based research, IIED benefited from Oxfam's extensive development experience in the field, and vice versa. Oxfam GB was able to identify ways to deliver better results for small-scale farmers through policy, programmes and its GROW advocacy campaign. IIED built on two different policy strands: research on agricultural investment models and governance of agricultural markets.

The partners chose a path of quiet diplomacy to promote their findings. They met with policymakers and donors throughout 2013, followed by ongoing policy work at the national level in developing countries. This approach has extended the life of the report, which is critical since influencing policy is a long-term process.

The UK's Department for International Development (DFID) was a natural audience for the report. Before the partners had a chance to contact DFID's private sector team, however, the livelihoods team asked for a presentation to all country advisors and senior staff. It was particularly keen to expand its own knowledge of transparency and accountability mechanisms, to ensure investments in agriculture were delivering expected results.

public-private sector partnerships, and to consider working with Oxfam to promote the report's recommendations among developing country governments. Advocates in the four participating countries have begun using the report, and individual case studies, to promote change in their national governments.

KEY LESSONS LEARNT & INNOVATIONS

- Changing policy is a long-term process, and advocates need to be part of ongoing discussions. If advocates can provide solid evidence that meets the needs of policymakers, change is possible.
- A quiet, behind-the-scenes approach to advocacy that targets key audiences has more staying power than the short-lived splash of a media campaign.

PARTNERS' VIEW

Thank you for presenting such a strong evidence-based framework on agriculture and investment, which allowed us to reflect our own internal tensions, whilst offering a set of ways to navigate these tensions.

Kevin Cleaver
Associate vice president, IFAD



Daniilo Pinzon / World Bank

IIED and Oxfam GB have identified levers that can tip commercial investment towards truly inclusive models that empower smallholders, particularly women

IIED's presentation at the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) stressed the need to recognise the distinct needs of women and of different 'rural worlds', and the fact that modern agribusiness will not link with the majority of smallholders. Since FAO was in the process of revising its strategy, its warm response to *Tipping the Balance* bodes well for a change in policy.

An Oxfam GB presentation on *Tipping the Balance* struck a strong chord with senior managers and ten country directors of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) on both policy and programme levels. Since IFAD had been contemplating playing a greater role in influencing the policy of developing-country governments, the report was considered timely and useful. IFAD announced it would review its implementation of public-private sector partnerships due to questions raised by the report. The door was left open to adopting *Tipping the Balance*, and working with Oxfam either directly or indirectly to influence policy.

In collaboration with its counterpart in Italy, Oxfam GB introduced the report's findings to the Italian development ministry. The ministry focused on how donors could promote transparency to ensure greater accountability for their investments in agriculture. The minister, who took part in the meeting, insisted that the emerging global roundtable for vulnerable development would need to support high standards for accountability and transparency. IIED and Oxfam GB plan to target other strategic players of the Global Roundtable.

Walking the talk

Apart from influencing donors and governments, the project has generated internal reflection within the two organisations. Some 55 Oxfam specialists

from 20 countries, for example, debated the report with the authors. Oxfam GB also held webinars for programme and policy staff in country offices on the report. The discussions from three regions (Asia, Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa) generated rich insights.

New communications technologies have helped promote the report, both internally and externally. Building on the two case studies published to date, country staff in Nigeria and Guatemala wrote blog posts on agricultural investment. Similar strategies will take place once the Philippines and Tanzania case studies are published. Other blog posts coinciding with World Food Day and the G8 2013 Summit harnessed *Tipping the Balance* to critique policies espoused by the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition. Many blog posts from IIED and Oxfam GB were cross-posted for greater reach. Finally, Oxfam GB produced an e-book version of the report for mobile devices.

Looking ahead, *Tipping the Balance* will be used to influence national policy of developing country governments. A policy forum planned for early 2014 in Guatemala, for example, is expected to attract policymakers, academics and smallholders. Ultimately, it will lead to a proposal to promote public investment in local food systems.



Knowledge Products

The International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) promotes sustainable development, linking local priorities to global challenges. We support some of the world's most vulnerable people to strengthen their voice in decision making.



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