



20 years of sustainable value chain development: What have we learnt (or haven't)?

Dietmar Stoian

Keynote at Symposium

"The role of value chain development in agri-food systems transformation"

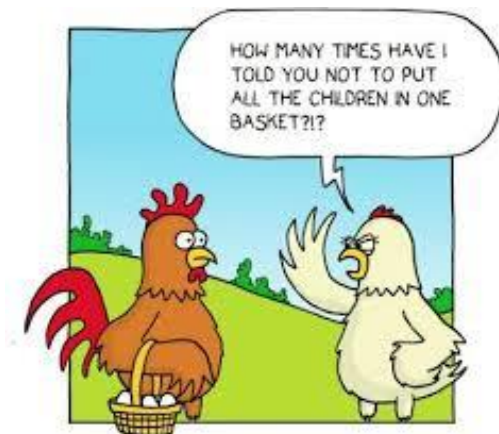
Humboldt University, Berlin, Germany

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Contents

- Point of departure
- Old, new, and (lack of) progress: **Issue-attention cycles** in VCR and VCD
- **Reductionist approaches:**
 - One tool fits it all
 - Go deep (but not broad)
- **Systemic approaches to food systems transformation and VCD:**
 - Segregation vs. integration
 - Embracing complexity
 - Finding a middle ground
- What have we learned and yet need to learn



Point of departure

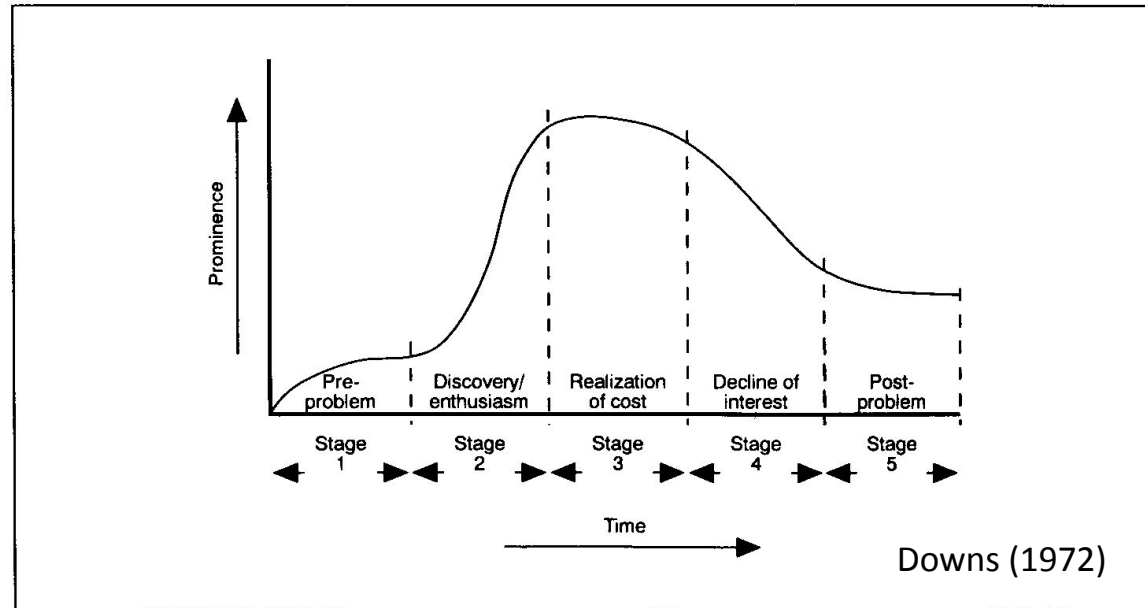
- **Multimillion investments** in value chain research and development since 2000s
- **Impact of VCD on livelihoods and landscapes** poorly understood
- Advance of concepts, methodologies and tools
 - ☐ but **limited reflection** on what works and what doesn't
- Growing importance of **linking VCD and food systems transformation**
 - ☐ increased **complexity**
 - ☐ **limited capacity** (on the ground) to **manage complex systems**
- Need for **taking stock**
 - ☐ what have we **learned**, how do we **translate this into practice**, and what is **yet to be learned?**



VCD design: Issue-attention cycles

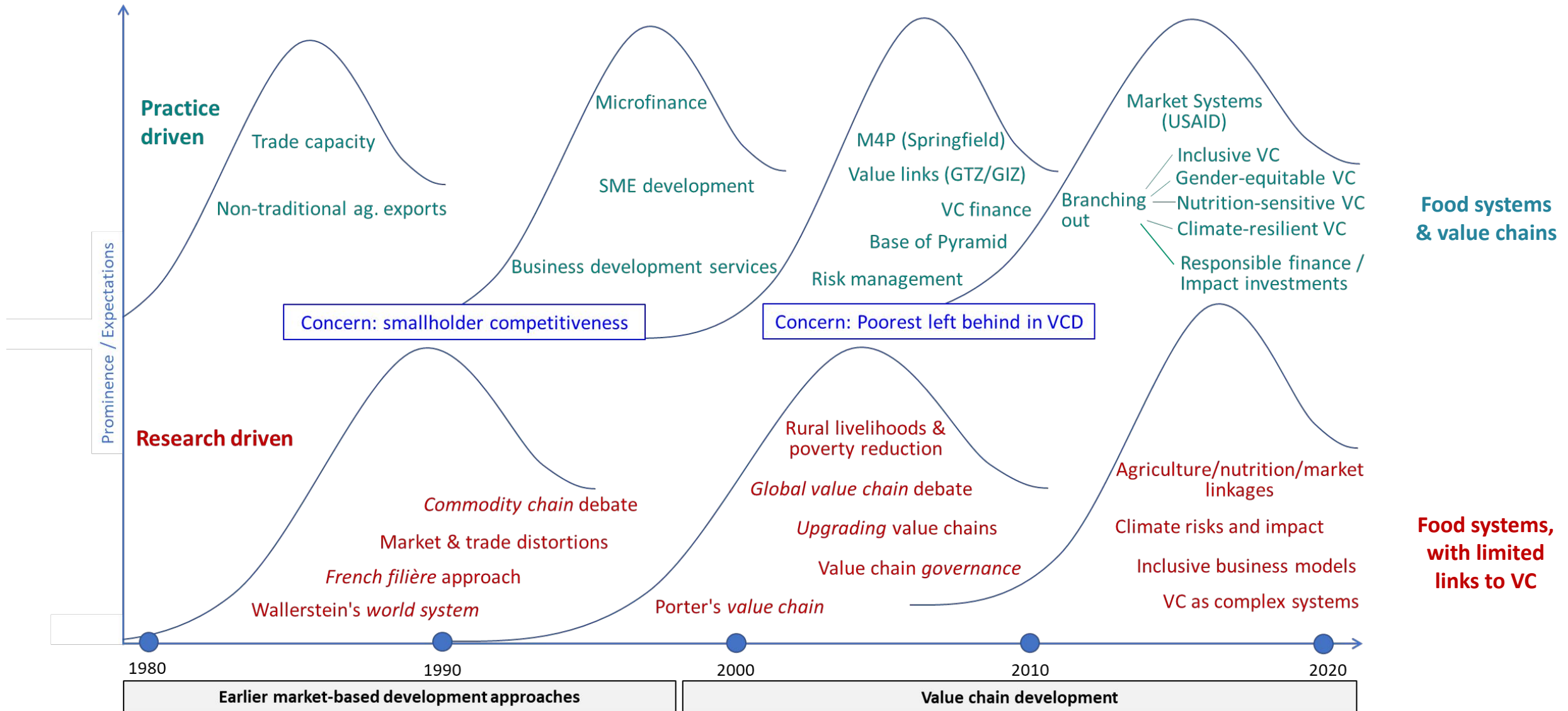
5 stages

- 1) Pre-proliferation
- 2) Proliferation
- 3) Levelling off
- 4) Gradual decline
- 5) Post-proliferation



- Cycles **positive**, if:
 - innovation is built on lessons from implementation
 - cross-fertilization between research and practice happens
- Cycles **negative**, if:
 - unsolved issues go unaddressed in new cycles
 - new approaches fail to address complexity of VCD
 - competition among practitioners impedes cross-fertilization

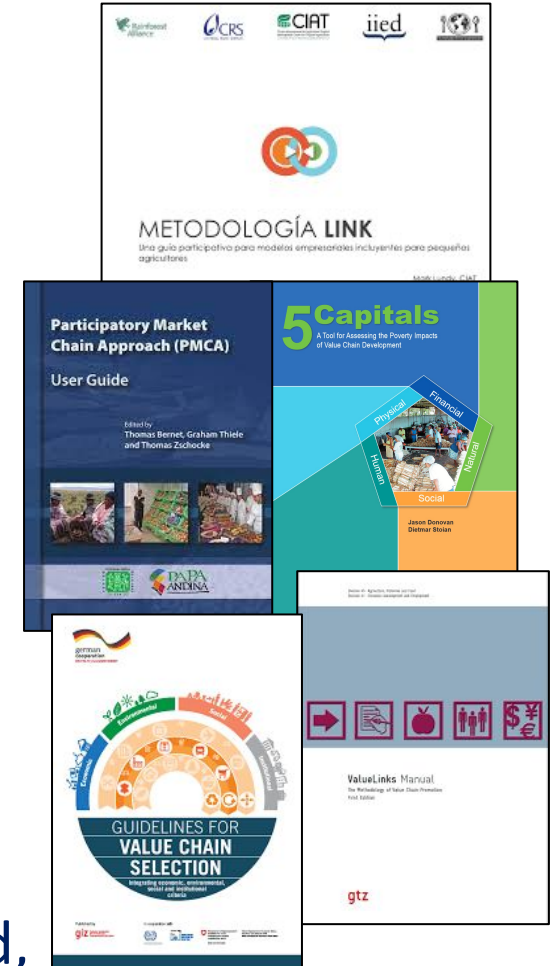
Issue-attention cycles: VC research and development



VCD implementation: One tool fits it all?

Problem addressed

- **Challenge to get design of VCD 'right'**: complex business environment, multiple stakeholders, resource constraints by smallholders and SMEs
- **Stakeholder needs likely to change** during VCD implementation in response to market conditions, buyer requirements, and livelihoods dynamics
- Considerable body of work by CGIAR, GTZ/GIZ, FAO, and others to **design VCD approaches and tools** (e.g. Value Links, LINK, PMCA, 5Capitals, VC Knowledge Clearinghouse)
- ... but **limited insights** into which approaches & tools are actually used, what impact has been achieved, and which needs are yet to be covered



VCD implementation: Insights from Nicaragua, Uganda, and Vietnam

Findings

Despite complexity of context, NGOs applied a formulaic approach to VCD design:

- reliance on a **single tool** for design and implementation
- expected outcomes based on **technical assistance and training**
- **local NGOs and coops with key roles** but limited oversight and CapDev
- **limited engagement** with other chain actors, service providers, and researchers

Implications

Broader approach to VCD needed, based on:

- **combination of tools**: multiple, context-specific & differentiated stakeholder needs
- deeper engagement with 'missing middle' and providers of **technical, business and financial services**
- evidence-based **reflection and learning**

Donovan et al. (2017)
Even & Donovan (2017)
Naziri et al. (2017)

Fit for purpose? – Tools for gender-equitable value chain development

Review of seven guides for gender-equitable value chain development (VCD)



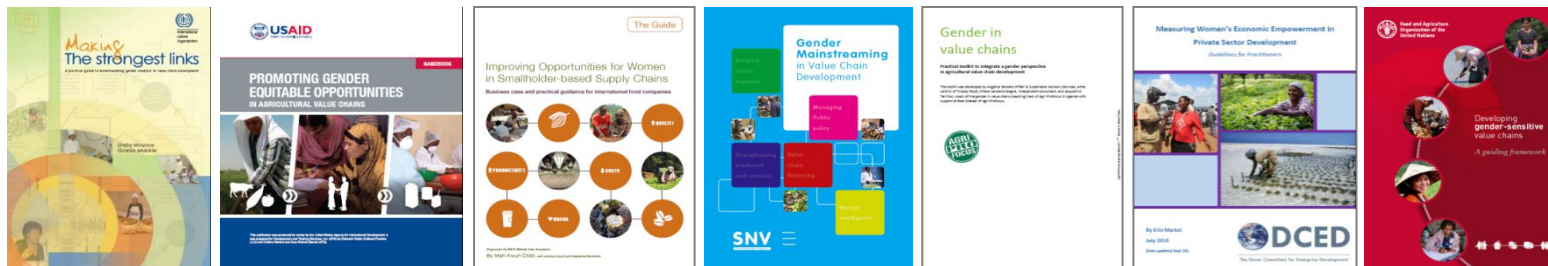
Findings

- Guides advocate persuasively the integration of gender into VCD programming
- They raise important issues for designing more inclusive interventions
- But important gaps persist in coverage of gender-based constraints:
 - Women and men in collective enterprises (coops, SMEs)
 - Influence of norms on gender relations
 - Processes to transform inequitable relations through VCD
 - Guidance for field implementation and links to complementary VC tools

Fit for purpose? – Tools for gender-equitable value chain development

Implications

- Need for **conceptual and methodological innovation** to address the varying roles, needs, and aspirations of women and men in VCD:
 - **new tools** covering to a fuller extent the capacity of households, and of women and men therein, to deepen their engagement in value chains
 - More **detailed guidance** for planning gender-equitable VCD: skills needed, time required, and additional costs incurred
 - **Structured process** of monitoring, evaluation, and learning
 - **Deeper collaboration among practitioners and researchers** □ joint learning with value chain stakeholders to better address the "how" and "what now" questions



Stoian et al. (2018)

Food systems and value chains: Integration or Segregation?

Studies on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on

Food Systems



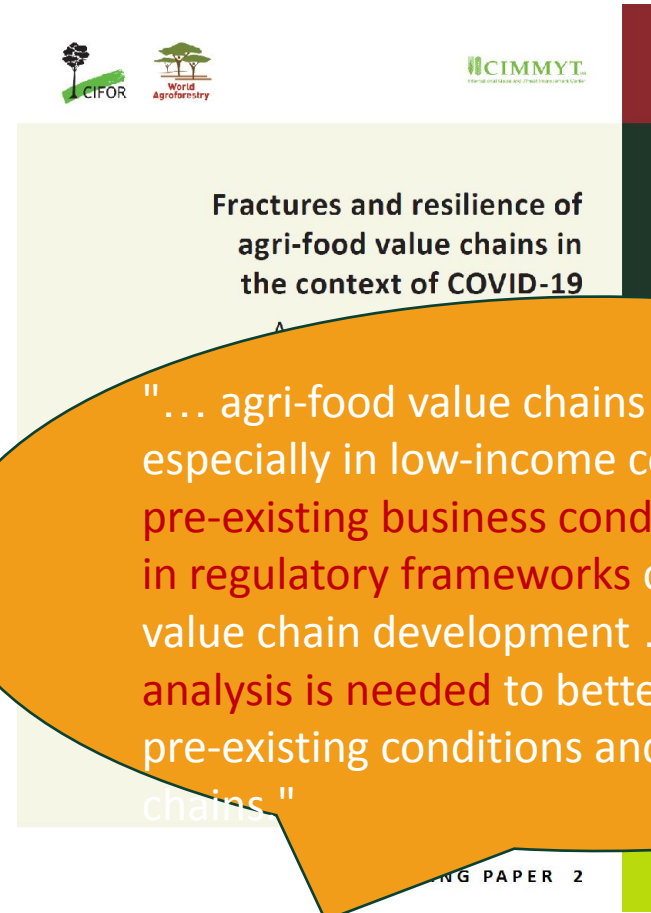
238 references

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"... this literature [on supply chain resilience] remains **very academic and detached from the reality** of the small- or medium-scale actors who operate on the margin of the formal food system in LMICs."

Béné et al. (2021)

Value Chains

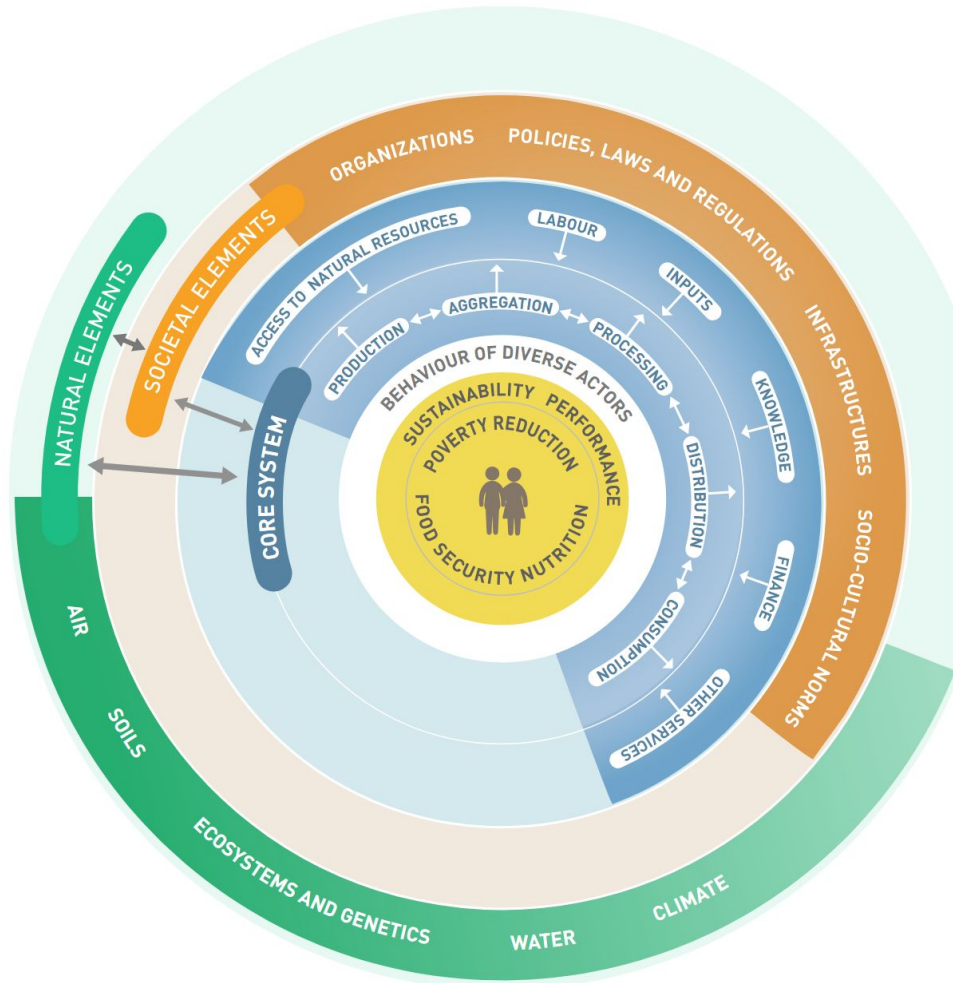


"... agri-food value chains remain vulnerable, especially in low-income countries and where **pre-existing business conditions and shortcomings in regulatory frameworks** continue to hamper value chain development ... more **in-depth analysis is needed** to better understand pre-existing conditions and their bearing on value chains."

Stoian et al. (2021)

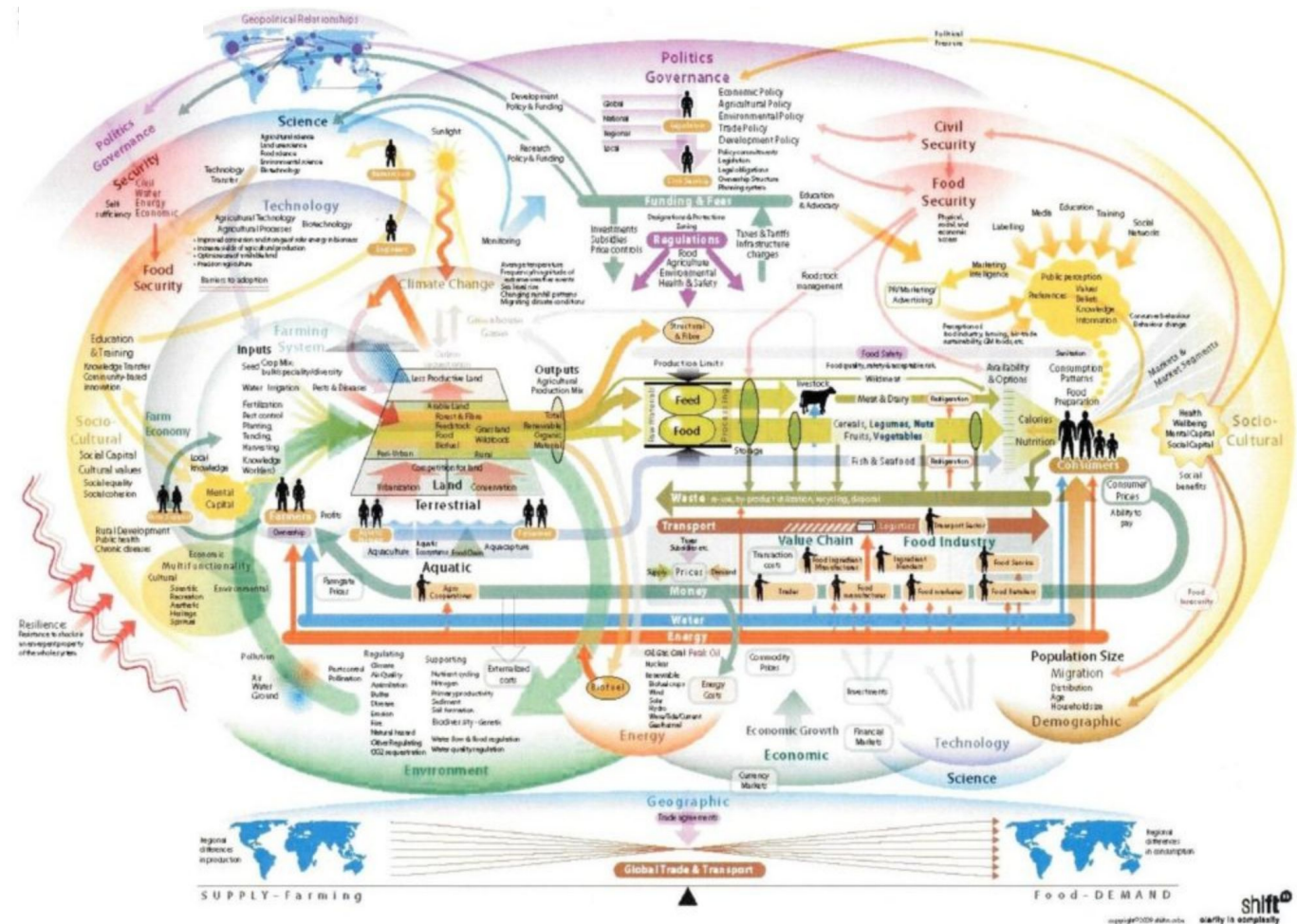
Embracing complexity (1)

Food System Wheel



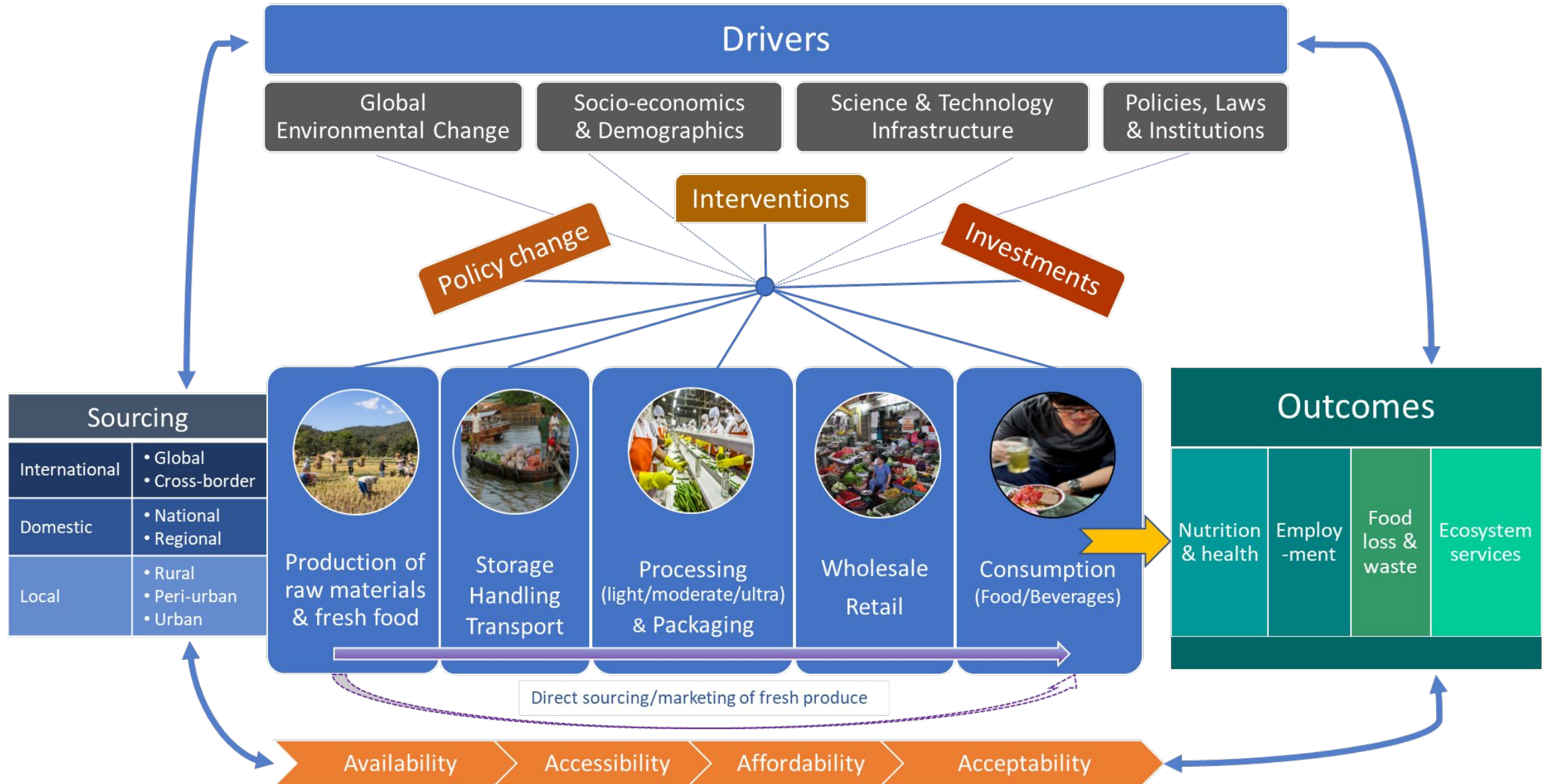
FAO (2018)

Global Food System

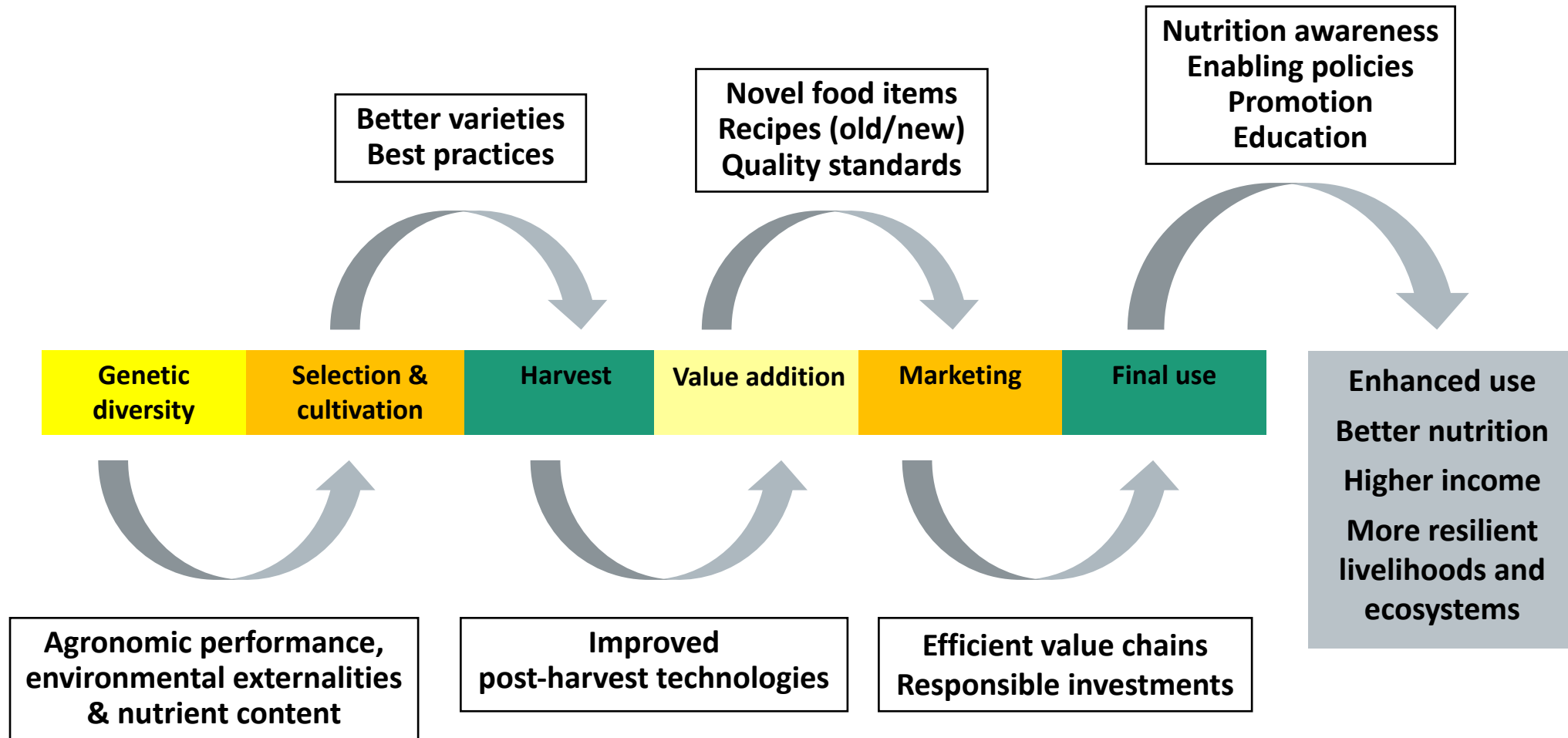


Heilbronn (2021)

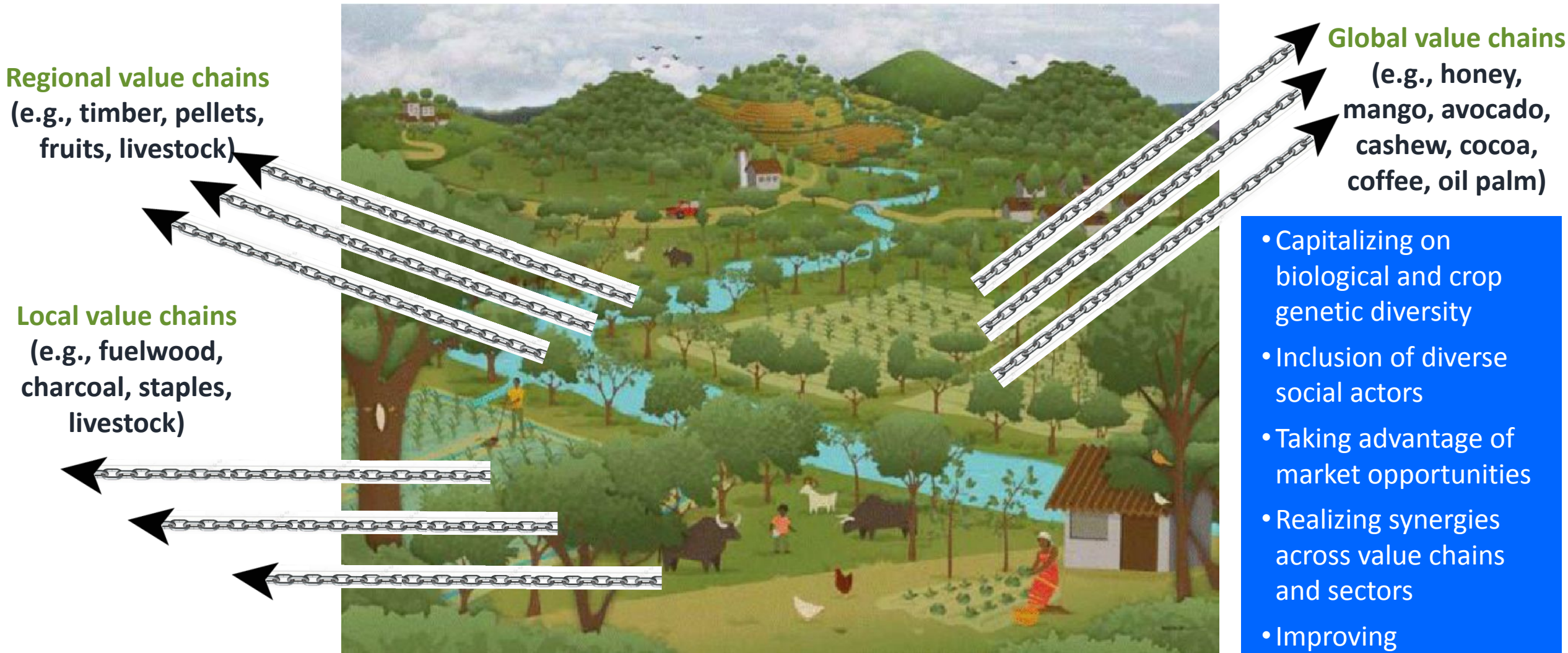
Embracing complexity (2)



Finding the middle ground



Systemic approach to food systems transformation: Developing a portfolio of agri-food value chains



- Capitalizing on biological and crop genetic diversity
- Inclusion of diverse social actors
- Taking advantage of market opportunities
- Realizing synergies across value chains and sectors
- Improving environmental and social footprints

Source: Stoian (2019)

Image credit: Landscapes for People, Food and Nature

Learning to date and ahead

What have we learned	What we yet need to learn
Systemic perspectives matter	How to translate complexity into practical yet impactful approaches
Smallholder and SME integration in VC drives sustainability	Focused engagement with midstream VC actors (buyers, processors, traders) and providers of technical, business and financial services
Mainstreaming VCD into rural development	Better interactions between researchers and practitioners to advance VCD and its impact
Smallholders require organization into businesses for successful positioning in VC	Strengthening governance and value adding capacity of cooperatives and other SMEs
Inclusion requires intentional design	Effective involvement of women and youth in VCD
Overly complex or simplistic VCD approaches don't work	'Middle ground' approaches and meaningful combination of tools
Single VC approaches are limited and risky	Multi-chain approaches at landscape level
Measuring impact of VCD with simple indicators	In-depth and in-breadth impact assessments, linked with reflexive learning

Conclusions

- Proliferation of VCR & VCD approaches over 20+ years: mainstreamed as key element of sustainable development, with diversification in terms of focus and use
- Limited interactions between practitioners and researchers: restraining innovation, integration, and impact
- Reductionist approaches: 'one tool fits it all' / 'go deep (not broad)'
- Knowledge gaps:
 - Impact on poverty, food and nutrition security, gender equity, and the environment
 - 'Missing middle': buyers, processors and traders in midstream segments
 - Practical 'middle ground' approaches and tools
 - Effective value adding & more equitable benefit capturing by smallholders & coops
 - How to ensure good farm gate price *and* affordable food products
- Reflexive learning: design of solid and inclusive ME&L approaches

Smallholder value chains as complex adaptive systems: a conceptual framework

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Abstract

Purpose – Smallholder value chains are dynamic, changing over time in sudden, unpredictable ways as they adapt to shocks. Understanding these dynamics and adaptation is essential for these chains to remain competitive in turbulent markets. Many guides to value chain development, though they focus welcome attention on snapshots of current structure and performance, pay limited attention to the dynamic forces affecting these chains or to adaptation. The paper aims to discuss these issues.

Design/methodology/approach – The paper develops an analytical framework to understand value chain per common proper shocks, sudden findings – To case studies in capacity for all Research lin chain dynamics Originality/value Keywords De Paper to pe B

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Value chain research and development: The quest for impact

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Funding Information: CIP For Cereals, Legumes, and Markets (ICGAM)

Summary

Motivation: For decades, governments, donors, and practitioners have promoted market-based development approaches (MBDA), most recently in the form of value chain development (VCD), to spur economic growth and reduce poverty. Changes in approaches have been shaped by funders, practitioners and researchers in ways that are incompletely appreciated.

Purpose: We address the following questions: (1) how have researchers and practitioners shaped discourses on MBDA? and (2) how has research stimulated change in practice?

Methods and approach: We review research and discourse on VCD and MBDA, following a pattern of analysis followed by discourse and resources required to implement VCD. We see how far this framework has come.

Findings: We identify evidence over the past decade on the shaping and sequencing of VCD and MBDA, on workable improvements, critical reflection on VCD, and on the environment that shapes VCD. Policy implications: From the evidence, we argue that attention to new cases in previous cycles should extend for the future.

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Connecting practice and research

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Special issue

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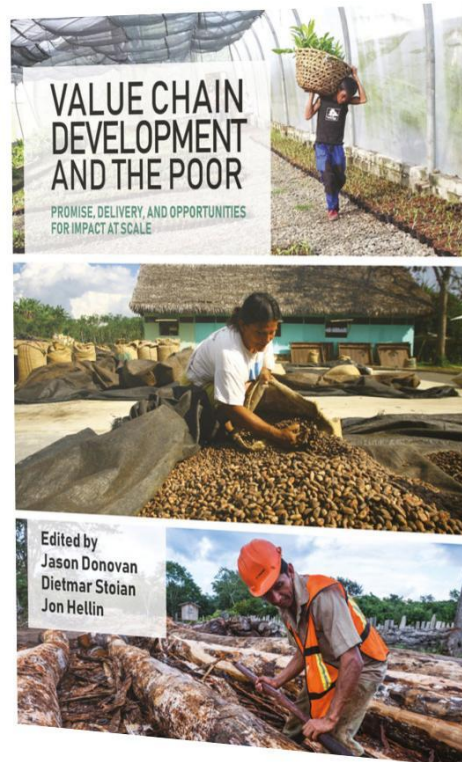
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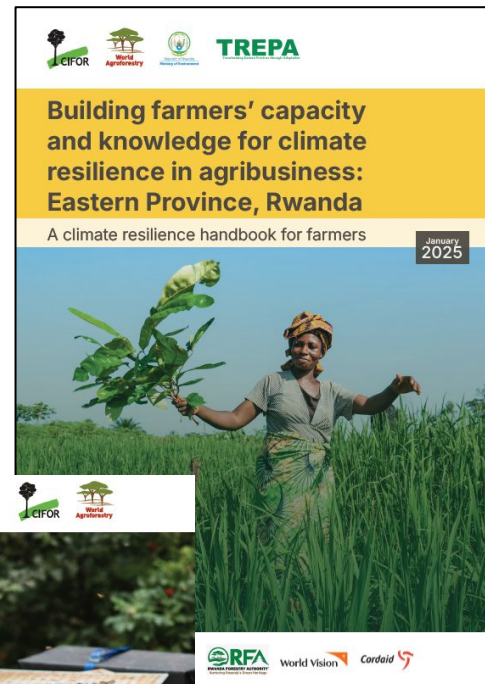
Thank you

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