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Building Competitiveness in Africa's Agriculture: A Guide to Value Chain Concepts and Applications (Agriculture and Rural Development Series)

C. Martin Webber, Patrick Labaste

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Value chain–based approaches offer tremendous scope for market-based improvements in production, productivity, rural economy diversification, and household incomes, but are often covered by literature that is too conceptual or heavily focused on analysis. This has created a gap in the information available to planners, practitioners, and value chain participants. Furthermore, few references are available on how these approaches can be applied specifically to developing agriculture in Africa.

'Building Competitiveness in Africa’s Agriculture: A Guide to Value Chain Concepts and Applications' describes practical implementation approaches and illustrates them with scores of real African agribusiness case studies. Using these examples, the 'Guide' presents a range of concepts, analytical tools, and methodologies centered on the value chain that can be used to design, implement, and evaluate agricultural and agribusiness development initiatives. It stresses principles of market focus, collaboration, information sharing, and innovation.

The 'Guide' begins by examining core concepts and issues related to value chains. A brief literature review then focuses on five topics of particular relevance to African agricultural value chains. These topics address challenges faced by value chain participants and practitioners that resonate through the many cases described in the book.

The core of the book presents methodological tools and approaches that blend important value chain concepts with the topics and with sound business principles. The tools and case studies have been selected for their usefulness in supporting market-driven, private-sector initiatives to improve value chains. The 'Guide' offers 13 implementation approaches, presented within the implementation cycle of a value chain program, followed by descriptions of actual cases. Roughly 60 percent of the examples are from Africa, while the rest come from Europe, Latin America, and Asia.

The 'Guide' offers useful guidance to businesspeople, policy makers, representatives of farmer or trade organizations, and others who are engaged in agro-enterprise and agribusiness development. These readers will learn how to use value chain approaches in ways that can contribute to sound operational decisions, improved market linkage, and better results for enterprise and industry development.

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