



Institutional constraints: the forgotten impediment to agricultural development in Africa

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Presentation outline

Institutions – the “rules of the game” that shape economic interaction – are of vital importance both for long-run macroeconomic growth in general and for agricultural development in particular. Missing, non-performing or bad institutions harm agricultural development. Different institutions vary widely in how quickly they evolve or they can be changed. Each individual institution’s performance needs to be considered within the overall framework. Identifying and addressing key institutional bottlenecks to agricultural development is a crucial exercise that is both difficult and heavily context-dependent.

We present the two-step methodology used to analyse institutional bottlenecks in Cameroon in the framework of the Support for African Agriculture Project. The building blocks of this analysis are: identifying problems and their institutional roots with stakeholders, and analysing institutional performance based on tests of compliance, performance and final outcomes. The example of Public Private Dialogue in Cameroon shows that, despite undeniable political will and a legal framework that allows for structured private sector organisations, current norms and practice lead to a fragmented and unstructured dialogue that is not evidence-based and does not fulfil its major role of informing policy.

Institutional change presents multifaceted challenges for both African countries and their developing partners due to the length of the time frame involved, the need for careful reform sequencing and the importance of understanding and accommodating the political economy of reform. The challenges ahead are to get a deeper understanding of how institutions shape African agricultural development, to address identified institutional bottlenecks and to seriously undertake political economy analysis of agricultural policy formulation and implementation.

Documentation

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