



Photo: Sven Torfinn/Panos



Agricultural Policy Research in Africa

The Agricultural Policy Research in Africa (APRA) programme is a five-year research consortium that is working to **identify the most effective pathways to agricultural commercialisation** that empower women, reduce rural poverty, and improve food and nutrition security in sub-Saharan Africa.

APRA aims to:

- **Produce new evidence** to inform policies and investments in commercial agriculture to make them more effective and inclusive; and
- **Provide a better understanding** of the political economic processes behind the development of agricultural commercialisation policy processes in the region.

What is agricultural commercialisation?

We define commercialisation as a process occurring when farmers increasingly engage with the market, either to procure inputs and resources (such as fertiliser, seeds, hired labour, formal credit, rented land), or to process and sell their produce. Commercialisation may occur through either external investment or market specialisation and farm consolidation, or a combination of the two.

Commercialisation is successful if more people are *'stepping up'*, *'stepping out'* and *'stepping in'*, and fewer people are *'hanging in'* or *'dropping out'* of productive agriculture.

APRA's goals

- Generate high-quality evidence on pathways to agricultural commercialisation in Africa.
- Undertake policy research on agricultural commercialisation to fill key evidence gaps and define policy options.
- Ensure the sharing and uptake of research by a diverse range of stakeholders.
- Strengthen the capacity of the research team, and associated partner institutions, to deliver high-quality research and advice.

Analysing five livelihood trajectories through agricultural commercialisation

1. *'Stepping in'* – returning/moving into commercial agriculture from a non-farm base; rise of medium-scale farmers.
2. *'Stepping out'* – accumulating, diversifying and creating alternative, non-farm economic activities.
3. *'Stepping up'* – improving and investing in existing agricultural activities.
4. *'Hanging in'* – maintaining subsistence level.
5. *'Dropping out'* – moving away or slipping into destitution due to shocks and stresses.



What will APRA do?

APRA researchers are examining how African farmers engage with four different types of commercial agriculture and the effects this has on the livelihoods of rural people, particularly women and young people. The research will offer high-quality evidence, with the aim of helping to inform future policy and investment decisions to promote more inclusive forms of agricultural commercialisation in sub-Saharan Africa.



Where is APRA working?

APRA is working in eight countries to:

1. **Analyse** how farmer engagement with **different types of agricultural commercialisation** leads to differential impacts on poverty, employment, women's empowerment, and food and nutrition security.
2. **Explore the long-term dynamics of agrarian change** to examine how different pathways to agricultural commercialisation evolve over time and how these pathways influence people's livelihood trajectories in different contexts.
3. **Assess key policy issues** associated with changing patterns of agricultural commercialisation through six focused, multi-country studies on:
 - a. Business investment in agricultural commercialisation
 - b. Agricultural growth corridors and commercialisation
 - c. The rise of medium-scale farmers
 - d. Agricultural mechanisation and the new state-business nexus
 - e. Livestock commercialisation in pastoralist areas
 - f. Young people and agricultural commercialisation

Four key pathways to agricultural commercialisation

Estate/
plantation

Medium-scale
commercial
agriculture

Outgrower/
contract
farming

Smallholder
commercialisation

Funded by UK Aid from the UK government, APRA will run until 2021. The consortium – which draws on expertise in Sub-Saharan Africa, Sweden, the UK and USA – is based at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), UK, and has regional hubs at the Centre for African Bio-Entrepreneurship (CABE), Kenya, the Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS), South Africa, and the University of Ghana.

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APRA builds on more than a decade of research and policy engagement work by the Future Agricultures Consortium (www.future-agricultures.org).

