

**Socio-behavioral factors influencing sustainability of collective marketing of rice among smallholder farmers in mid-western Uganda**

**ABSTRACT**

Whereas collective marketing has great potential to support smallholder rice farmers' access to markets, its sustainability is not yet understood. Extant research demonstrates that collective marketing increases the bargaining power of farmers, but limited attention has been paid to organizational attributes and members' socio-behavioral mechanisms that could affect farmers' decisions to market collectively. This study sought to establish how socio-behavioral factors influence the sustainability of collective marketing of rice among smallholder farmers in mid-western Uganda. It specifically 1) analyzed the sustainability of smallholder rice farmers' collective marketing arrangements; 2) described smallholder farmers' innovations and practices utilized to sustain collective marketing and; 3) determined the influence of socio-behavioral factors on smallholder rice farmers' collective marketing. Participants were rice farmers who market their rice through farmer groups and associations in two rural districts where rice was actively being produced. A sequential mixed methods approach involving in-depth exploratory and quantitative analyses was employed. The results showed that associations were more sustainable collective marketing arrangements than farmer groups. Most innovations by associations focused on improving the quality of produce, which still exposed associations to exploitation by buyers. Also, transaction costs for members to bring rice to bulking centres were high and inhibitive to collective marketing. In the end, the volume of rice sold collectively depended on the trust and commitment a farmer had with the collective marketing arrangements. Thus, this study points to the need for change agents and policy makers to support pre-bulking logistics that lower members' transaction costs and the ability of farmers' collective marketing arrangement to invest in market access innovations.