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# Blind spots in value chain support: lessons from action research

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# Inclusive value chains





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## Inclusiveness: A Value chain central approach

- Economic inclusion
- Chain governance: strong interlinkages, transparency & traceability
- Effective market linkages: quality standards, volume and price; sustainable sourcing
- Transferable solutions, upscalable & replicable
- Benefits for the poor / producers: equitable access to services; business opportunities, increased productivity



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## Value chain collaboration

- *“Voluntary associations between different **actors in a chain**, including producers and buyers **and** often, but not necessarily, **other societal actors** such as non-governmental and (in the case of public-private partnerships) governmental organisations” (Ros-Tonen, Van Leynseele, Laven & Sunderland 2015)*

### *Strategies:*

- **‘Beyond the chain’**: Cash and food crop mixes for food security, livelihood security
- **Focus on entrepreneurial farmers**: selecting on farmers’ business attitudes, land size, capacity to invest, new roles for producers, agro-ecological potential of a productive area



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## Some blind spots

- Importance local intermediaries / non-chain actors (brokers and 'change makers')
- Outcome-based ('ticking boxes'): overlooking inclusiveness as process (e.g. self-exclusion: in and exclusion as continuum)
- Multiple markets and value chains; 'commodity-non commodity circuits' (van der Ploeg 2008)
- Inclusive innovation; demand-led very costly process, role scientists in agricultural innovation (AIS) not sustainable



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## Our approach: Inclusive VCC focuses on the poor as producers





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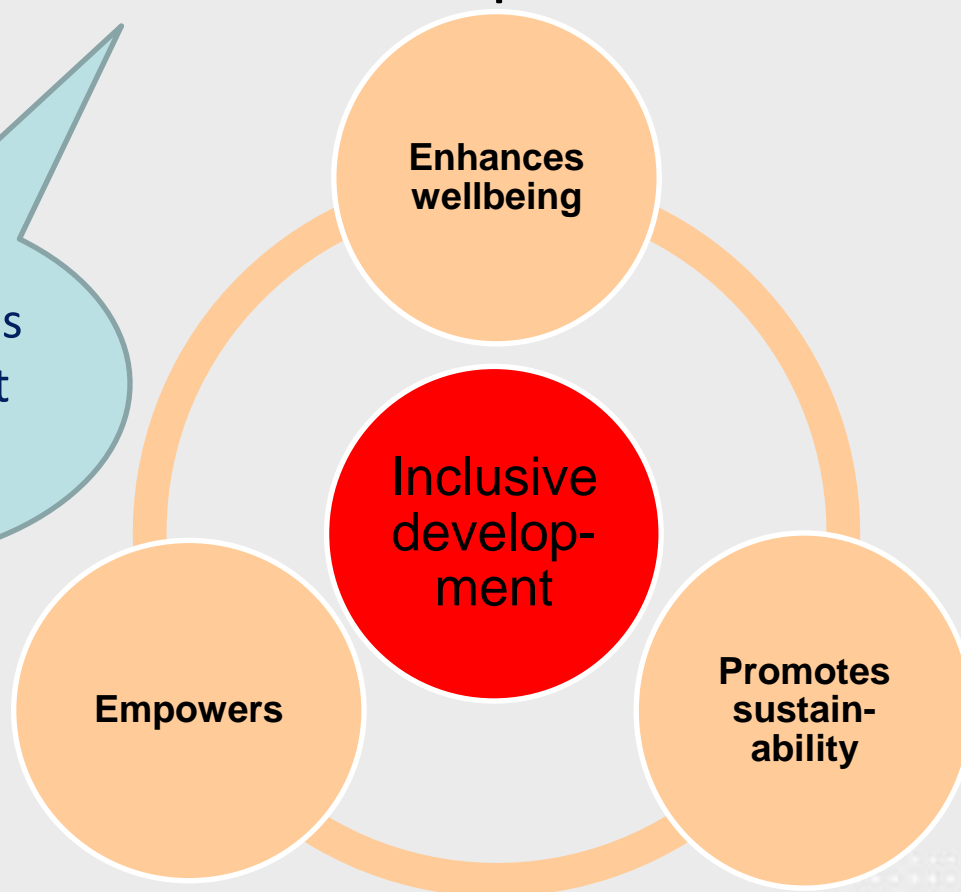


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## The basis: inclusive development

A normative approach: focus on the poorest and most vulnerable



Source: Gupta, Pouw & Ros-Tonen 2015



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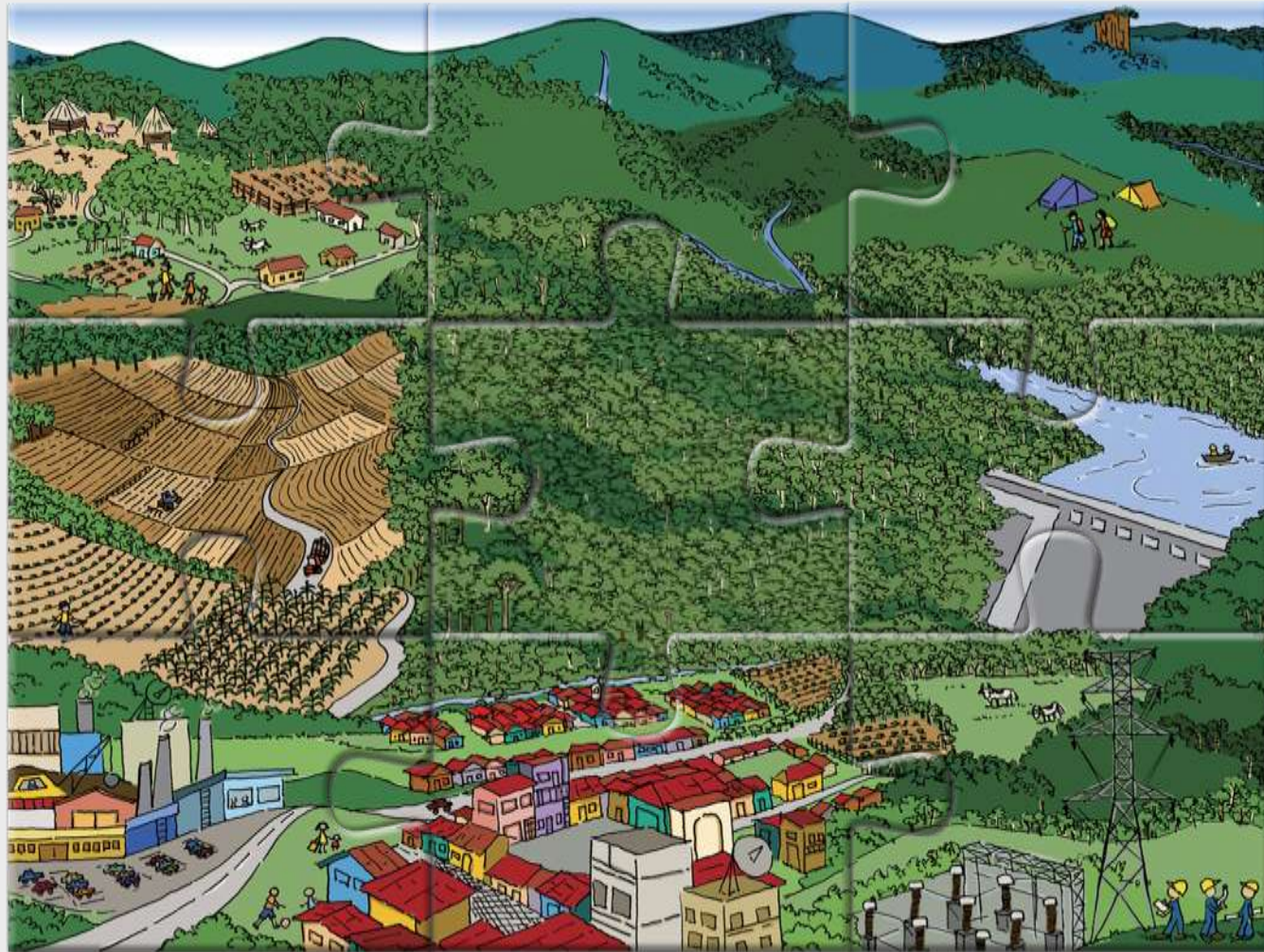
## Embeddedness in Value Chain Collaboration

1. Of value chains: embedded in certain institutional environments and scales; **terms of engagement** and **beneficiary selection**
2. Socially-embedded: VC relations also linked to local relations (ethnicity, informality, social security, gender, community)
3. Territorial: productive landscapes and trade-offs between crop combinations (e.g. sharing or sparing)





# Multifunctional landscape

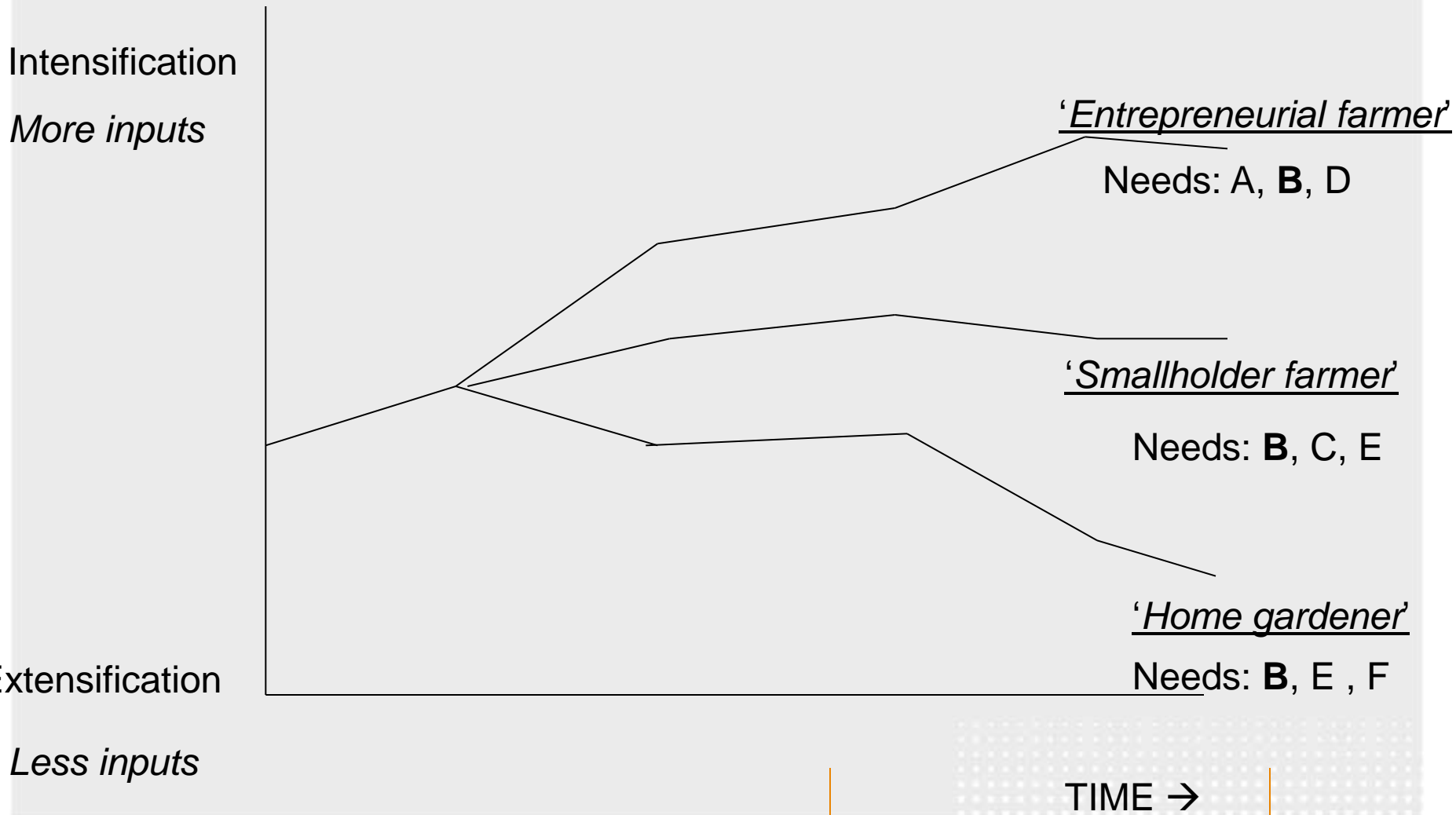


CATIE, 2011

*Courtesy Cora van Oosten*



# Heterogeneity and livelihood trajectories



# Ghana: cocoa and oil palm



## 'Caretaker farmers and sharecroppers'

- Accumulation by sharecropping
  - Farm maturing
  - Migrants
    - Male
  - Mix cash and food crops
- Use family / child labour on farm
- **Involuntary exclusion VCC**



## 'Entrepreneurial farmers'

- Accumulation by buying out (predatory)
- Landowners of mature farms
- Male / females
- Use their off-farm employment
- Extensive use wage labour
- Large farms (+ 2 hectares)
- **Target of VCC**



## 'Absentee farmers'

- Exit from farming
- Farms are 'old'
  - Elderly (60+)
- Residing outside community
  - Self-exclusion by absence
- High government dependency

**Target of VCC**





## Lead farmer project (SA)

- Targets black macadamia farmers
- Distinguishes 7 profiles
- Provides profile-specific training in leadership & business skills
- Embarks on farmer-to-farmer learning





# Learning platforms

- Spaces for knowledge exchange and shared learning
- Introducing innovative methodologies to get to know farmer profiles and aspirations
- Empowering: farmers hold institutions accountable





## Lessons learned

- Selectivity in VCC: Vulnerable and productive groups missed
- Lack of understanding of social-embeddedness → limited potential to have VCC embedded in **durable & equitable** collaborations with producers
- Action research model:
  - Diverging themes and actions per country (year 3)
  - Phasing out: need to align with existent VCC initiatives
- **Embrace complexity, flexibility and uncertainty – not a popular message....**

**Thank you!**