



Report No 41

Gender issues in agricultural liberalisation

Topic paper prepared for Directorate General for Development (DGVIII) of the European Commission

by Sally Baden

**January 1998
(revised)**

The authors gratefully acknowledge support for the preparation of this report from the Directorate General for Development (DGVIII) of the European Commission. However, the views expressed and any errors or omissions are those of the authors and not of DGVIII.

BRIDGE (development - gender)
Institute of Development Studies
University of Sussex
Brighton BN1 9RE, UK
Tel: +44 (0) 1273 606261
Fax: +44 (0) 1273 621202/691647
Email: bridge@ids.ac.uk
Website: <http://www.ids.ac.uk/bridge>

ISBN: 1 85864 176 4
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background, approach and main findings

Until recently, economic analysis of agricultural markets and marketing paid limited attention to gender issues, focusing mainly on price analysis and market integration. Current concern with the institutional infrastructure to support market reform and development is creating greater awareness of and interest in the social and political factors underlying marketing organisation, including gender relations. Gender-aware economic analysis, at macro-, meso- and micro-levels, is a valuable tool to identify ways in which women and men are differentially affected by processes of economic change and also ways in which gender biases in institutions, including agricultural marketing systems, affect the implementation and outcomes of reform policies.

The ‘gendered’ nature of marketing systems is pervasive although it is manifested in different ways according to the specific agro-ecological, historical, social and political context. Women and men are differently located in marketing systems by commodity, by point in the marketing chain and organisational form, by motivation, as well as by spatial mobility and season. In West Africa (Ghana, Guinea), women dominate private food trading and are a tiny although highly visible minority of wholesalers. Similarly, in Tanzania, women are found in low profit, small-scale food marketing, processing and selling their own produce to local markets, while men tend to buy up processed food in urban markets for sale elsewhere, often with large margins. In Zimbabwe, women dominate retail marketing of fresh produce bought from male wholesalers in central urban markets, to high density residential areas.

Agricultural market liberalisation policies have focused on increasing incentives to agricultural producers, reforming price regimes, increasing competition and improving the regulatory environment for agricultural trade, restructuring and privatisation of parastatal and government marketing boards, and to a lesser extent, pro-active measures to support market development. The impact of these policies has been varied. In general, supply response to changing agricultural price incentives has not been as great as anticipated. Response in the food sector has been better in many cases than in the export sector, with possible benefits to women producers and traders, who are more likely to be involved in this activity and to control the proceeds from sales of food crops, than from, non-food cash crop production. While the role of the private sector in agricultural markets has increased, this has not always led to increased efficiency, or competition, even where markets have become integrated. The overall efficiency of marketing systems is hindered by gender biases which favour accumulation and sometimes

excessive profits by male-controlled large trading concerns or support services higher up the marketing chain, while women, although often the majority of traders, tend to be trapped in a vicious cycle of petty trading lower down the marketing chain. Lack of economies of scale and poor integration in agricultural markets is linked to these gender biases.

The distribution of benefits from agricultural market liberalisation has mainly favoured medium and large-scale commercial producers and large-scale private traders, or providers of support services to marketing (e.g. transporters). Women, whose scale of operations is on average smaller than men's, are less likely to have benefited from liberalisation policies. Areas where women have potentially made relative gains are: in the expansion of local food production and trading, particularly where there is increasing demand for cheap import substitutes such as cassava, traditionally women's crops; the minority of independent women traders and urban wholesalers who have access to capital, means of transport etc.; and in processing, where increased competition has potentially reduces women's workload, and/or enabled them to secure a higher price for their products. Under agricultural liberalisation, women have entered food trading in large numbers, both absolutely and relatively in some instances. However, there are also signs that women's trading enterprises suffer a high rate of attrition under the extremely competitive conditions in small-scale trading and that women are increasingly working as agents for larger-scale traders.

Research agenda

Based on the evidence reviewed in this report, research is needed to investigate:

- Whether women are more likely than men to enter private trading under agricultural market liberalisation and the different motivations, life-span and trajectory of men's and women's trading operations under liberalisation.
- The changing relative proportions of women and men at different points in the marketing chain (wholesale, intermediary, retail etc.) under liberalisation.
- Whether liberalisation is reducing the degree of segmentation by gender in agricultural markets, e.g. through mapping of trade flows by gender.
- The extent to which women have been able to expand their production and marketing of non-refined food staples to urban and other local consumers, as a result of substitution in consumption with changing food prices and incomes.

- How the expansion of small-scale milling and other local processing enterprises has affected the women's home based processing activities, or increased their scope for marketing their own produce more widely and whether new processing technologies encompass the crops mainly traded by women.
- Whether rising transportation costs under adjustment made small-scale (women's) trading uneconomic or forced women and children to increase their work in head loading to get goods to market.
- Household level determinants of women's ability to control the proceeds from the sale of crops and the mechanisms by which men secure control over agricultural resources within the household.
- Methods to estimate economic losses associated with gender biases in marketing systems and empirical application of these would be valuable in assessing the potential benefits of interventions to reduce these biases.
- The reasons for the success of the minority of women who become large-scale commercial traders, intermediaries or wholesalers.

Policy agenda

Greater emphasis is now needed on defining a positive role for government (and donor agencies) in assisting market development. However, unless gender biases are tackled, there is a danger that the promotion of private sector agricultural marketing will lead to accumulation and business development by male traders, while female traders who lack access to finance and are constrained by gender divisions of labour and responsibility as well as social norms of appropriate behaviour, will become incorporated as agents in men's operations, or be unable to compete and cease trading.

Market information systems

The collection and dissemination of market prices for different products and locations is potentially a valuable service both to farmers and smaller-scale traders. In devising such systems, the gendered nature of agricultural production and trading would require consideration, in terms of the range of products covered, the markets where data is collected and the means by which price data is publicised and disseminated.

Consultation with associations of women producers and traders would be important in the pre-design stage, and use of such networks to gather and promote price information.

Finance for traders

Biases against lending to traders are particularly acute for women traders, including those operating in urban wholesale markets. Financial sector reform does not assure the provision of financial services to women entrepreneurs, or even the trading sector in general. Project support could be given for the development of private sector institutions specialising in lending for agricultural marketing building on the success of existing non-bank institutions, which have specialised in providing services to women traders.

Storage development

Inefficiency and waste in marketing systems and poor prices obtained by farmers are in part caused by lack of appropriate storage facilities. There is also a need for secure storage facilities for traders, in market places. The development of storage facilities under agricultural market reform raises questions about which (or whose) crops are prioritised for storage development, about control of inventory and about decisions on appropriate timing of sales. Investment in storage facilities may, in itself, be gender biased, in that 'women's crops' are often perishable in nature so that storage development favours male produced crops. An increase in farm-level storage may increase the work required in post-harvest processing (drying, treating etc.), which is traditionally performed mainly by women. Issues of post-harvest losses and wastage are thus closely bound up with gender divisions of labour and implicit assumptions about whom will perform the necessary work should be questioned.

Processing

The development of processing facilities at different levels of the marketing chain is crucial to raising incomes in the agricultural sector, by increasing value-added. Subsidies of various kinds to parastatals and pan-territorial pricing have tended to support the centralisation of processing facilities, as, for example, in Tanzania and Zimbabwe, leading to monopsony pricing. Liberalisation appears to have increased competition in this area, particularly with regard to food crops. The development of small-scale milling in rural areas has been observed in several countries, sometimes with donor assistance, i.e. through subsidies to or special licenses for mill importation. From a gender perspective the impact of this is not clear and relates to women's major role in post-harvest and household based processing, both for sale and home based consumption. The increasing popularity of cheaper, less refined staple food products from small mills may increase women's (unpaid) labour input in the household in food preparation. On the other hand, the availability of processing facilities within relatively close proximity may have reduced women's labour in post-harvest processing and enabled farmers and smaller traders, as well as millers themselves, to gain the benefits of value added lower down the marketing chain. Further investigation is required here. There is a need to

promote the development of processing controlled by, or accessible to, women, with a view to increasing value added under current market conditions and to enabling women to secure at least some of the benefits of this. This would include consideration of a broad range of processing technologies, not just milling.

Transportation

Given gender differences in trading activities and patterns already highlighted, and in access to capital for purchase of means of transport, it is clear that women face gender-specific disadvantages in accessing transport to move their produce to markets, or to conduct trading activities. In the absence of other means of transport which they control, many women (and children) headload produce to local markets, a very time- and energy-consuming activity and there is some evidence that this may have increased under liberalisation. Where mechanised or motorised means of transport are available they tend to be monopolised by men. Mapping of gender differences in patterns and flows of marketing activity would assist in identifying where the main transport blockages are for women, as well as men. Encouragement of group hire of vehicles (through financing based on social collateral) might be a way for women to move produce to markets, which they would otherwise have to sell at lower prices at the farm gate.

Market facilities

A further possible area of proactive intervention to assist in market development is in provision of facilities in market places, such as roofed stalls (to protect from the sun); secure and dry storage space; amenities such as toilets. However, the provision of market facilities should not necessarily be conceived of solely as centralised, stationary facilities, if they are to cater to the needs of mobile women vendors. The first step in design of such facilities would be to make a needs assessment based on surveys of, or participatory research with women traders.

Institutional infrastructure

The development of institutional infrastructure to support market development is equally if not more important as physical infrastructure. In the past, women traders have been particularly vulnerable to harassment by police and government officials, being concentrated among highly visible and often unlicensed street vendors. The onset of liberalisation has meant a reduction in harassment of traders generally, as the environment has become more tolerant of private sector commercial activity. But women traders, who are often unlicensed, are still particularly vulnerable to moving on, confiscation of goods, and other informal forms of taxation by police or local government officials. Given the small-scale, informal and low profit nature of much of women's agricultural trading, the tightening up of quality and measurement standards

and in general the formalisation of informal trading, may hit women particularly hard. Efforts should be made to ensure that women are not singled out as scapegoats in the imposition of new standards, that they are fully informed of changes in the regulatory system and are given support to make any required changes. Streamlined systems to grant licenses to small-scale women traders, with no or low fees for those trading below a certain volume, would reduce women's vulnerability to harassment and arbitrary taxation. Changes to legal systems which strengthen women's independent property rights and rights to engage in economic activity are desirable and must be complemented by other measures which improve women's access to legal systems and their effective implementation.

Associations of women traders are important in forming a lobby to influence policy, particularly pricing regimes and regulatory frameworks, in gathering and disseminating market information, and in providing a potential channel for training and for group guarantees for borrowing. It is important to support the development of existing associations of traders, at different levels of the marketing chain (i.e. not just powerful associations of wholesalers), while ensuring that this does not foster restrictive practices. In particular, it is important that women traders' groups are consulted in relating to major policy changes.

ABBREVIATIONS

COCOBOD	Cocoa Marketing Board (Ghana)
DGVIII	Directorate General for Development (VIII) of the EC
EC	European Commission
GFDC	Ghana Food Distribution Company
SAL	Structural Adjustment Loan
SECAL	Sectoral Adjustment Loan
WB	World Bank
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
SCP	Structure-Conduct-Performance (see glossary)
ESAP	Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (Zimbabwe)

GLOSSARY

arbitrage	buying at low price and selling at higher price: process of closing of gap between prices in temporally and spatially separated markets
<i>cedi</i>	unit of currency in Ghana
commodity filières	approach to analysis of agricultural marketing systems, developed in French literature in 1950s/1960s
economies of scale	due to indivisibilities, fixed costs, or a range of other factors related to production processes, falling long-run average costs in production, which may create a tendency towards monopoly
externalities	costs or benefits incurred to individuals or firms by other individuals or firms in the process of consumption or production, and which are not reflected in the market prices
inventory	stock of agricultural produce
macro	relating to overall economic aggregates, in particular the total output and income of a national economy
market integration	closing of gap between prices in temporally and spatially separated markets
market interlinkages	where the terms of a transaction in one market is linked to a transaction in another market, e.g. where traders provide credit to producers and then purchase produce from farmers at a fixed price
marketing margins	difference between purchase price and sale price, made up of transport and other transactions costs, as well as traders' profit.
meso	relating to intermediary institutions in the economy, which effect allocation of resources, such as government departments, factor and product markets
micro	relating to individual firms, enterprises or households within the economy

new institutional economics	branch of economics which views the development of a diverse institutional arrangements as a rational response to situations of absent markets, high transactions costs and risk in the developing country context
pareto optimal	a Pareto optimal – or economically efficient – allocative of resources occurs in a competitive market, under certain restrictive assumptions, in a competitive market, when no increase in welfare of one individual can be made without another person being made worse off.
<i>pito</i>	type of grain used for beer brewing in Northern Ghana
public good	goods which cannot be provided to individuals or groups of individuals without others benefiting and so which will not be provided by market forces, but only by government through taxation
real markets	approach to analysis of markets rooted in political economy, which stresses the specificity of market institutions in a given setting and the importance of understanding social, political and historical as well as economic aspects of market development
supply response	changes in output as a result of price changes, determined by price elasticity
transactions costs	costs incurred in identifying, negotiating, monitoring and enforcing a contract

1 INTRODUCTION¹

1.1 Background and objectives of paper

This topic paper presents a gender-aware economic analysis of processes of agricultural market liberalisation, in the context of wider structural adjustment and economic reform programmes. The aim of the paper is to highlight ways in which gender analysis can illuminate constraints to processes of agricultural market liberalisation and to contribute to the design of more equitable and effective policies in future interventions. In the first instance, the paper is intended for use in policy dialogue between women (or gender) in development experts and advisers on economic reform and related issues, within the European Commission. More broadly, it is hoped that the paper will contribute towards the design of more gender-aware adjustment policies.

1.2 Gender-aware economic analysis and agricultural market liberalisation

In recent years, ‘gender-aware economics’ (e.g. Elson, 1993; Çagatay *et al.*, 1995) has challenged conventional categories of economic analysis and at the same time offered the potential to analyse and interpret processes of economic change in areas where conventional analysis has limited explanatory power. There are three main foci of gender-aware economic analysis:

At **macro level**, the need to incorporate women’s unpaid (or reproductive) labour into models of the economy, to reflect the total contribution of women to economic output and human development and to enable estimation of the opportunity cost (in both economic and human terms) of resource transfers between sectors;

At **meso level**, (i.e. government department or other intermediary institutions, product and factor markets), recognition that processes of resource allocation are not gender neutral and that markets, as well as other institutions, carry gender biases;

¹ This paper was commissioned by the Gender in Development Desk of the Human and Social Development Department of DGVIII (Directorate General for Development) of the European Commission. The paper was drafted by Sally Baden, BRIDGE Manager, with advice from Bob Baulch, Stephen Devereux and Sarah Cook (IDS Fellows). Zoë Oxaal and Lisa Gold provided research assistance. This draft will be reviewed by an external adviser in due course, and revisions made to reflect this input.

At **micro level**, gender inequalities in divisions of labour, responsibility, and decision making within the household which limit women's access to and control resources, the extent and terms of their market engagement and the returns to their labour.

In the context of agricultural market liberalisation, a number of key questions can be identified at these different levels, which will be addressed in this topic paper, i.e.:

- how do changes in the pricing structure and regime (i.e. changing relative prices and a move to market determined prices) affect incentives and how do these interact with existing gender divisions in agricultural production and marketing?
- how do changes in the regulatory environment associated with agricultural marketing affect the relative participation of men and women in trading and associated activities and also their returns of these activities?
- how do changes in the nature and structure of agricultural marketing institutions and the marketing infrastructure impact differently on women and men?
- does the 'gendered' nature of marketing have an impact on the efficiency and performance of liberalised agricultural markets?
- how do changes in marketing activity interact with intra-household relations, e.g. is women's trading activity limited because of demands on their labour within the household, or because they must seek permission for outside economic activity, or because of prevailing gender ideologies which confine the proper activities of women to a narrow range?
- what is the potential for interventions to support women involved in marketing under agricultural market liberalisation, in the context of packages to promote private sector development?

Broadly, it is argued that agricultural markets are themselves 'gendered' structures and therefore that policies to liberalise these markets will have different implications for men and women who engage with these markets. At the same time, the gendered nature of agricultural markets has implications for the implementation and outcome of agricultural market liberalisation, specifically, in terms of the supply response to changing prices incentives, the degree of integration and efficiency of marketing systems and the distribution of benefits from increased commercialisation of agriculture. The paper mainly focuses on the experience of sub-Saharan African countries, with evidence from a range of countries presented where relevant.

Section 2 reviews approaches to the analysis of agricultural markets and marketing. It describes the characteristics of agricultural marketing systems in developing countries, with particular reference to sub-Saharan Africa, and goes on to highlight the gendered nature of marketing structures, with evidence from varied settings. Section 3 gives an overview of the rationale for agricultural market liberalisation, and the main policy instruments used, as well as a brief account of experiences of agricultural market liberalisation. Section 4 draws out the gender implications of these experiences, at macro- meso and micro-levels. Section 5 summarizes the main findings and suggests ways in which policy and research may be taken forward. A bibliography and an appendix, listing current and recent research initiatives in this area, are also attached.

2 AGRICULTURAL MARKETS IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

2.1 Analysis of agricultural markets and marketing

There are a variety of different perspectives on and approaches to the analysis of agricultural marketing.² Broadly speaking, these divide into those that favour an unfettered market mechanism and those that are more cautious about the potential of markets to bring about a desirable allocation of agricultural products. The current, dominant ‘market optimism’ (Jones, 1996) view is that government intervention in markets should be reduced wherever possible. ‘Market optimism’ draws on neoclassical welfare economics, essentially arguing that where markets are competitive, an economically efficient (i.e. Pareto optimal) allocation of resources will result. Studies of agricultural markets from this perspective use price data to ascertain the competitiveness and efficiency of existing market systems, through analysis of marketing margins and of correlations between price series in spatially and temporarily separated markets.³ Although conventional neoclassical economic analysis recognises that agricultural markets are risky (e.g. because of unpredictable weather conditions) and imperfect (e.g. private traders are reluctant to engage in inter-seasonal grain storage), beyond a limited enabling and regulatory role, see little role for government intervention.

Conventional neoclassical economics proposes a positive association between increased trade (whether domestic or international) and economic development, seeing processes of exchange as mutually (even if not equally) beneficial. According to Colman and Young (1989), values added associated with transformation in time, space or form increases as incomes increase and demand becomes more sophisticated. Abbott (1987) takes the point further and argues that the importance of agricultural marketing, not just as a means of distributing agricultural produce, but also in

² Jones (1996) divides the history of research on agricultural markets into three main phases: ethnographic and anthropological studies, which focused on the social meanings and functions of exchange relations, with little reference to policy debates (up to 1950s/60s); studies on the structure, conduct and performance (SCP) of agricultural markets and of marketing systems and commodity *filières* (1950s onwards); and more recent (1980s/1990s) studies of agricultural markets under adjustment.

³ Analyses of agricultural markets using price data are hampered by lack of reliable data on private food trading, partly due to the formerly illegal nature of some of this activity. Also, there is a tendency to collect price data in the most organised (and therefore most integrated) parts of the marketing system, and overlook segmentation elsewhere, closer to farm gate level (Jones, 1996).

stimulating new forms of production and value added, is often underplayed in economic analysis.

In other views, rooted in political economy, trade is not necessarily beneficial to either allocative efficiency or equity, but may be characterised by speculation, unequal exchange and non-productive accumulation by particular classes, fuelling increased economic and social inequality. Increased commercial activity is not always a sign of increasing wealth: it may be an indicator of distress sales and increased poverty (Hewitt de Alcántara, 1993). Such views emphasise the importance of protecting farmer interests against powerful merchants, the need to reduce the risks of agricultural production through price stabilisation, and to protect rural livelihoods and food security at both micro- and macro-levels.

In the early 1980s, 'market optimism' began to dominate the debate on agricultural policy, arguing that in the absence of state intervention, agricultural markets will function competitively and that the indigenous marketing capacity exists for an efficient marketing system. The 1980s and 1990s have seen challenges to this dominant model, both conceptually and empirically. These have been in the form of the 'real markets' critique (e.g. Hewitt de Alcántara, 1993; Harriss-White, 1996); and the development of theoretical models drawing on the 'new economics of information', enabling a clearer distinction to be made between market inefficiency (due to high transaction costs and risks) and the economic motivation of farmers and traders. New econometric techniques have also been developed which throw into question some of the assumptions of earlier economic literature with respect to market integration (Jones, 1996).

A problem with the 'market optimism' approach is that it neglects consideration of the institutional infrastructure required for the functioning of markets and of the political economic of policy formation (Jones, 1996). This is highly relevant to gender concerns, since the legal and social norms governing transactions are closely intertwined with prevailing gender ideologies and inequalities, relating to property rights, legal capacity, social and familial obligations and appropriate forms of behaviour. Collective actions to influence policy formulation also reflect gender-specific interests and, in general, men's interests are much more dominant in policy making processes because women's relative lack of social and political power, formal or informal.

In the 'new institutional economics', market interlinkages and personalised relationships are seen as a rational response to high transactions costs and the absence of key markets. However, this functional analysis is questionable, since the interests of dominant power groups may not always be congruent with allocative efficiency (Jones, 1996). In a similar way, it could be argued that there are conflicts between current patterns of accumulation by men, subsidised by the cheap or 'free' labour of women, and allocative efficiency.

The 'real markets' approach draws on institutional economics but directly addresses questions of social power, including gender (e.g. Harris, 1996). From this perspective, transactions take place in the context of personalised relationships, involving interlinkages between different markets, which affect the market power of different participants. The terms on which transactions take place are complex and diverse, and are strongly structured by ideological and social factors such as gender, class and caste. Barriers to market entry and cost structures affecting different groups are also seen as highly varied (Jones, 1996).

The existing research base on agricultural marketing is limited by its focus on price analysis and lack of attention to institutional and political factors underlying market development. Generic policy models are of limited value where marketing systems and their institutional setting varies so much between different contexts. More research is needed in the form of panel studies tracing the patterns of market development over time, at the level of the individual trader, or in micro- and meso-studies which examine a range of economic and social factors (including gender relations) affecting marketing and marketing behaviour (*ibid*).

2.2 Agricultural marketing systems in developing countries

According to Abbott (1987: 1) 'marketing is defined as the business activities associated with the flow of goods and services from production to consumption'. Marketing chains are the 'series of changes of ownership and economic processes by which products are transferred from the primary producer (the farmer) to the final consumer', (Colman and Young, 1989: 186). Marketing chains can be described institutionally, in terms of the category of business involved at a particular stage, or functionally, in terms of the value-added activity involved (*ibid.*). While marketing chains varied and overlapping, a typical chain might involve producers, country dealers (or assemblers, who bulk up supplies), wholesalers and processors, retailers and finally consumers. Marketing also includes the supply of inputs to farmers for

production (*ibid.*). Marketing activities include: finding a buyer and transferring ownership, assembling and storing; sorting, packing and processing; providing finance for marketing; and assorting and presenting to final customers (Abbott, 1987: 1).

Marketing enterprises in developing countries include locally-based private firms, marketing boards, transnational corporations and cooperatives or farmers' associations (Abbott, 1987). These are not comparable or alternative entities, however, in that there are often complex linkages between different types of organisation within marketing systems. Also, their degree of market power varies considerably, e.g. between individual private traders and large, vertically-integrated multinational corporations.

Marketed output of agricultural produce forms a varied and often small proportion of total agricultural output in some developing countries. Much produce is retained by households for their own consumption. This dual role of rural households as producers and consumers, the large number and often dispersed locations of producers, means that developing country agricultural markets operate under very different conditions to those in developed countries. Transaction costs are high and markets are often highly segmented, in part due to the historical development of marketing institutions.

The setting up of state marketing boards in SSA was designed to protect and promote settler agriculture (against world markets and peasant surplus) in Eastern and Southern Africa and of plantation agriculture in West Africa. Food grains (maize) were the main cash crop grown by commercial farmers in much of southern and eastern Africa and state marketing boards in these countries became the main buyers of staple foods, as well as providing a single channel for most non-food export groups (e.g. tobacco, cotton, coffee). By contrast, in West Africa, marketing boards tend to be primarily organised around non-food cash crops such as cocoa, coffee and cotton. Food markets have traditionally been dominated by the private sector, with a high proportion of women traders. In the immediate post-Independence era, the role of marketing boards was strengthened by interventionist policies. In some countries, cooperative movements were also set up to provide farmers with direct marketing services, in effect as an extension of the state marketing system. The state also regulated trading, through the imposition of hygiene and other standards and through controls on geographical movement of agricultural produce (Duncan and Jones, 1993). Market liberalisation policies have mainly focused on reducing the role of these state agencies (see Section 3) and have generally succeeded in significantly

reducing the proportion of agricultural trade passing through state channels (Jones, 1995).

Private trading in developing country agricultural markets is characterised by low entry barriers at low levels of the marketing chain, with only initial working capital required. Marketing margins and returns to grain trading are low, unless traders are able to finance and risk inter-seasonal storage. Storage is concentrated at farm level, traders own few assets) e.g. transport, storage) and turn over stock rapidly. Food marketing chains contain few intermediaries. For example, in Tanzania, a typical chain involves rural based assemblers (farmers) who deliver to urban wholesalers, who in turn sell on to final retailers. In Malawi, private maize trading is focussed on bulking up for delivery to marketing board (Jones, 1996). Export marketing chains tend to be longer and more complex, often involving multinational corporations in vertically integrated systems, with sharecropping or contract growing arrangements with small farmers.

In sub-Saharan Africa, credit links between different parts of the marketing chain are few and limited and usually short term in scope. In Tanzania, for example, wholesalers do not extend credit to suppliers; in fact, suppliers effectively give produce to wholesalers on credit (see Box 1). Commercial credit for private trading is virtually non-existent and credit is mainly raised from family or relatives. Collective activity of private traders is also limited, and mainly found among urban trader associations in large wholesale markets. There are no systematic support services to private trading and in many countries, while state intervention in private markets has been reduced, local government and police controls on marketing are still pervasive, for purposes of raising legal and illegal taxes (Jones, 1996). In some countries, the environment was strongly hostile towards private traders (e.g. Tanzania, Ghana) even until as recently as the early 1980s. In Ghana, traders were stigmatised as ‘speculators and hoarders’ and grain seized from them during 1981-2. In most countries, credit policies have been unfavourable to private traders while strongly supporting parastatals with subsidised finance (Coulter, 1994). In practice, state regulation may have had a limited impact and been mainly used to harass small traders and processors operating outside the licensing system, typically women (Jones, 1996).

In a general assessment, Jones (1996: 7) finds that ‘[food] marketing systems operate at a sub-optimal scale, with a limited capacity to pool risks or to carry out temporal or spatial arbitrage, but in which competitive pressure on margins is strong in urban markets’. To capture economies of scale and improve efficiency, the expansion of

trading enterprises and delegation of tasks to agents is required. Credit relationships between wholesalers and lower sections of the marketing chain might enable this.

Box 1: Urban food markets in Tanzania

Staple food trading in Tanzania is characterised by low investment and overheads. Few traders, even wholesalers, own their own means of transport, or storage. In 1988, only two per cent of traders in urban food markets had motorized transport and 17 per cent had their own storage facilities, mainly in their own homes. An expected feature of wholesalers, the extension of credit to suppliers, was also not apparent; in fact, traders effectively gave wholesalers credit in kind. The functional division of labour between different levels of the maize marketing chain consisted of retailers, stationary wholesalers and mobile intermediaries, although this varied with the context, depending on the distance of the supply and size of market, *inter alia*. While most traders aspire to become wholesalers, the marketing system is characterised by limited upward mobility: retailers rarely become wholesalers. There is more movement between retailers and mobile intermediaries but this requires time, mobility and a high level of risk taking.

(Source: Bryceson, 1993)

Hewitt de Alcántara (1993) also questions the competitiveness and efficiency of developing country agricultural marketing. There is no such thing as ‘the market’ but rather a network of micro-markets with remarkable spatial variation. She finds that agricultural markets in Africa are characterised by a low level of market integration, while South Asian countries such as Bangladesh exhibit ‘exploitative integration’. In South Asia, there are strong social barriers to entry (e.g. caste, gender) at different levels of trading. Mercantile assets are polarized and concentrated with petty trade tied to large operators through debtor relations and markets are spatially and socially differentiated (Jones, 1996). For Jaffee and Morton (cited in Jones, 1996), high transaction costs explain variations in market performance and the diversity of marketing enterprises. High transactions costs⁴ mean that it is not worth many rural households participating in critical markets, even if they exist (*ibid.*).

Jones (1996) concludes that three key factors – absence of key markets, high transaction costs and the dual role of agricultural households – create particular constraints for agricultural marketing in developing countries. The physical and institutional infrastructure required for the development of marketing is lacking and, given its public good features, requires government to take a role in its provision. There is a need to shift from a focus on market liberalisation to market development.

⁴ Where the margin between consumer and producer prices is wide, because of high costs of transport, storage, processing etc., changes in consumer or producer prices below a certain level will not affect incentives to producers (Jones, 1996).

What is known about agricultural markets and recent advances in thinking, however, suggest that policy responses based on generalised models are highly suspect. Much more empirical work is needed, with attention to the local political environment, to the institutional and social context of markets and to the collection of price data at all levels, as well as information on contractual relations (*ibid.*).

2.3 The gendered nature of agricultural marketing systems

Women and men are differently located in marketing systems or, more broadly, agricultural marketing systems are 'gendered'. The structure and length of marketing chains, their degree of concentration and functional specialisation varies considerably between contexts, depending on a range of factors (e.g. nature of commodity; whether in a surplus or deficit area; distance and transport issues; size and location of market) (Bryceson, 1993). Moreover, there may be parallel marketing systems, e.g. official alongside private, private alongside cooperative, or segmented private sector systems serving different markets. The precise location of men and women in any given marketing system will thus vary considerably. However, some general features of agricultural marketing systems can be ascertained with regard to their gendered nature.

The misconceived perception of farming in sub-Saharan Africa as a predominantly male activity means that state marketing boards as well as cooperatives have tended to buy from and distribute agricultural supplies, credit and extension advice, where available, through male heads of household. Female membership of agricultural marketing cooperatives is generally low. Often women may not even know what income their husbands are getting from the sale of crops and may have little control over, or say in, how the proceeds are spent. They lack information about prices and marketing systems. In some instances, female household heads are recognised as independent farmers by marketing boards or cooperatives.

Numerically, women dominate the trading sector in some areas, or for specific commodities, particularly foodstuffs, as, for example, in West Africa. In Eastern Guinea, 90 per cent of rice trading is done by women (see Box 3). In Zimbabwe, women have come to dominate fresh produce marketing in urban areas because of the migrant labour system which created demand in urban and mining areas, while creating a need for women to earn cash incomes (Horn, 1994). (See Box 3).

Box 2: Gender in urban food markets in Tanzania

Bryceson's (1993) study of food market liberalisation in Tanzania found that 75 per cent of traders in the sample were male and that women were mainly concentrated among retail traders. 'The maize wholesale and intermediary trade is almost exclusively the preserve of men. Women surfaced as 20 per cent of the Songea intermediaries' sample and 25 per cent of the Mwanza wholesalers sample. Women were predominantly retailers and overwhelmingly so in Songea and in Arusha' (Bryceson, 1993: 134). Women dealt in main grain commodity produced in their town's hinterland and traded in smaller quantities than the men. Their average age was slightly older than the men (36.1 years compared to 32.9 years).

Women who act as intermediaries tend to take a low-risk intermediary approach by collecting produce from their home locality and selling in a location where they have established contacts, thus limiting their potential to become wholesalers. In order to build up contacts and access information, intermediaries have to live a mobile and outgoing lifestyle, often involving drinking and sexual promiscuity. For these reasons, women may be discouraged from this activity. In rice marketing, women traders purchase paddy from farmers, process, transport and then sell it in urban markets; male traders have carved a niche in trading processed rice between town and the goldmines at Chunya, with huge margins.

However, according to Harris (1996: 6): 'Women tend to occupy particular niches in marketing systems'. Bryceson, in her detailed study of the Tanzanian food market, also finds that 'women in general seemed to be found in low profit niches in the marketing hierarchy' (1993: 137; see Box 2 above). Pujo, in her study of the rice market in Eastern Guinea, finds that 'female traders tend to be confined to small-scale, specialised exchange, with a level of activity that varies seasonally, whereas male traders are generally wholesalers who deal with a wide range of products' (1996: 264; see Box 3 below). Similarly, Jones (1996) finds that men dominate wholesale trade.

Typically, women are concentrated in small-scale, retail trading, with fewer women involved in trading high up the marketing hierarchy, e.g. as mobile intermediaries or wholesalers (Bryceson, 1993). It is not just the function and scale of operations which differentiates men and women involved in trading. Women tend to be involved in trading of particular commodities. Fresh produce (vegetables, fruits) with a high degree of perishability are typically traded by women (see Box 4 on Zimbabwe). Trading in small quantities of foodstuffs is an extension of women's widespread role in household food provisioning and thus accords with prevailing gender ideology in many societies, while providing a legitimate means for women to meet needs for cash

income on a regular basis (Horn, 1994). Gender divisions over commodities in trading are related to gender divisions of labour in agricultural production, though not always in direct and obvious ways (Harriss-White, 1996). Table 1 illustrates this with respect to agricultural production and marketing in Uganda. Women have limited control over the marketing of crops even where they have made a major labour input, particularly cash crops. They are far more likely to be involved in marketing crops and to retain control of the income from the sale of food crops. More generally, agricultural product markets in Uganda are found to be segmented by gender, through biases in access to transport; through women’s concentration in local markets, while men trade in international markets; through access to information on prices and marketing systems which is monopolised by men in male-intensive marketing networks, or through their control over the use of radios where information on prices is broadcast (Elson and Evers, 1996: 12-13).

Table 1: Gender divisions in labour input and control over income in agricultural production and marketing in Uganda

	Percentage of respondents	
	<i>Food Crop</i>	<i>Cash Crop</i> ⁵
<i>Women grow crop</i>	68	53
<i>Women sell crop</i>	30	9
<i>Women decide use of proceeds</i>	27	10
<i>Joint husband and wife decision over use of proceeds</i>	12	7

Source: Elson and Evers, 1996: 19, citing ACFODE, 1989.

Trading relationships also operate **within households**, often in the form of men selling products to women who then process and/or market the produce, for a fixed price or in exchange for labour on men’s fields, or other payment in kind (Palmer, 1991). For example, in Ghana, women ‘buy’ fish from men to smoke and sell (Baden *et al.*, 1994). The degree to which women control the incomes from sale of household produce is highly varied and relates to the nature of gender relations in a given context and particularly to the relative bargaining power of men and women within the household. Given inequalities of power between men and women and the

⁵ Cash crop is not defined in the source: It is assumed to mean tradition export crops such as tobacco, cotton, coffee and tea (Elson and Evers, 1996:19).

‘monopolistic’ power of the male household head, the terms of exchange are likely to disadvantage women.

Box 3: Gender and the market for local rice in Eastern Guinea

Pujo (1996) describes how the structure of the local rice market in eastern Guinea is highly gendered. Women sell small quantities of rice on weekly rural markets, whereas men sell larger quantities in their villages. Female traders tend to be confined to small-scale specialised exchange subject to seasonal variations, whilst male traders tend to be wholesalers dealing in a wide range of products including rice. Related services, such as husking, transport and storage of rice which involve high levels of technology, are all controlled by men. Purchases of rice are also gendered, with women tending to buy smaller quantities on the retail market for family consumption, whilst men buy monthly supplies wholesale. Rice is one of the only crops considered appropriate for peasant women to produce, and one of the small range of goods that women in urban areas can trade.

Women in rice markets are caught up in a cycle of pettiness of activity. Gender ideologies limit women’s access to capital, land, seed, tools and bullocks, reinforcing the gendered division of labour. Peasant women’s capacity for capital accumulation is further constrained by lack of control over common output and the money obtained from its sales. Urban women traders may have to rely on other household members for initial trading capital, and therefore can only set up small-scale activities. Because of the difference in scale between men’s and women’s activities, women generally have less access to borrowing than do men. Women can only borrow small amounts from money-lenders at higher interest rates, due to their lack of collateral. For men, access to borrowing is easier, so they can increase the scale of their activities and accumulate capital more easily. Thus the gendered nature of rice production and trade is perpetuated.

Box 4: Gender and fresh produce marketing in Zimbabwe

In Zimbabwe, the gendered and racially bifurcated nature of agricultural marketing is related to colonial history and the labour reserve system it created. Staples and cash crops are marketed through the parastatal system⁶, set up to serve the interests of large-scale white commercial farmers, while fresh produce is privately and largely informally marketed (except for horticultural crops grown for export). Under the migrant labour system, women’s movements were not curtailed so that they retained the freedom to sell fresh produce in towns, marketing vegetables and fruits to township Africans. Initially, women left behind in rural areas would travel into towns to market foodstuffs. Later women moved to urban areas and engaged in marketing foodstuffs bought from African male wholesalers in central urban

⁶ There have been recent changes in the marketing system in Zimbabwe, which have brought an end to the parastatal monopoly.

locations to high density neighbourhoods. A parallel marketing system, through formal sector retail outlets, caters to the 'white' market (Horn, 1994: 3).

Geisler (1993) writing on southern Zambia, finds that the definition of cash and food crops is blurred and itself reflects prevailing gender ideologies. Where women process and market food crops (e.g. in beer brewing) to raise household incomes, in times of scarcity men often claim part of the cash income derived from such sales. Differentiation along gender lines may also exist within trading households, with male wholesalers coexisting alongside female petty traders. These intra-household marketing chains and relationships require much more attention.

Other ways in which rural commodity markets are 'gendered' are identified by Harriss-White (1996), summarised in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Gendered nature of rural commodity markets

Gendered nature of rural commodity markets	
commodity	Women tend to trade in staple foods, cooked foods and beer, where production can be carried out domestically; also commodities themselves may be 'gendered' with female goods seen as inferior. Men trade in a wide range of goods including major cash crops.
points in the market system	Women are concentrated in small-scale processing and retailing, while men dominate wholesaling activities.
organisational form	Women mainly run individual enterprises which are oriented to subsistence rather than accumulation.
motivation	Women's trading is motivated by the need for regular income for household expenditure, rather than by profit/accumulation.
territoriality and spatial mobility	Women tend to be concentrated in local trading, because of restrictions on their mobility in public space and their lack of access to means of transport. Men trade in national and international markets.

by season	Women's trading is concentrated in rapid turnover activities in post-harvest months.
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Source: Harriss-White, 1996

Age and lifecycle issues also interact with gender. For women, trading is an option often taken up at a certain stage of the life-cycle, i.e. when they have young children, or because due to gender biases in labour markets, age and lack of education, that have no access to formal employment. Trading is flexible in terms of hours and location, has few entry barriers and requires limited education or start up capital. Women are most likely to get start up capital for trading from their husbands or families but by this time, they already have household obligations and so their prospects for accumulation are constrained (Pujo, 1996). For men, trading is more likely to be a route to upward mobility. They may move out of formal employment to become entrepreneurs, using their salary base and contacts built up in formal employment as means to establish themselves. Men start trading younger and also marry later on average than women, giving them more scope for accumulation as traders. Bryceson (1993) found that in the urban food markets of Tanzania, women traders were older than men, on average (see Box 2).

In spite of this general pattern, it is important to recognise that women traders are also not a homogeneous category. Some women do accumulate and become large-scale traders (e.g. Market Queens in Ghana – see Box 5 below) although this is rather exceptional. A minority of women trade long distance across international boundaries, often informally and illegally.

As well as direct involvement in marketing as traders, women are also involved in marketing systems less directly, as casual employees in large scale trading or milling enterprises; in small-scale processing activities, and as employees in food processing industries (e.g. fish processing and fruit and vegetable canning plants). In many instances, the returns to women's labour in these activities is low relative to returns to male labour, or else (in the case of household-based processing, for example), may not be directly remunerated, being seen as 'family labour' in household-based enterprises (Abbott, 1987; Harriss-White 1996).

Transportation is also a female intensive activity in many settings although this is often not reflected in official statistics. In Ghana, it was found that men spent only 35 per cent of the time spent by women in transport activities and transported just 25 per cent of the tonnage carried by women (Brown, 1995: 25). Panuccio (1989, cited in

Baden *et al.*, 1994: 13) finds that headloading of produce takes 50 person days per hectare of cassava, 12 person days per hectare of maize and 29 per days per hectare.

Box 5: Gender and agricultural marketing in Ghana

Agricultural marketing in Ghana is dominated by the private sector, with parastatal institutions playing a diminishing role in both cash- and food-crop marketing. The Ghana Cocoa Marketing Board (COCOBOD) buys, processes and markets cocoa and, increasingly, coffee and sheanuts. COCOBOD provides training and extension to farmers, but as COCOBOD crops are mainly farmed by men this rarely reached women farmers. The Ghana Food Distribution Corporation (GFDC) is a last-resort buyer of maize and rice, accounting for five to ten per cent of the market (although this varies across regions, with the GFDC no longer active in the Volta region). The private sector is dominated by women traders, as sellers, producer/sellers, traders and entrepreneurs; women dominate petty trading but there are also organised female wholesalers – the visible and prominent ‘Market Queens’ – in urban wholesale markets and national periodic markets. As shown in studies of Kimasi’s Central Market (Akenhora *et al.*, 1995) and Techiman market (Ameyaw, 1990), these female entrepreneurs trade in organised commodity groups, settling disputes and supporting local production through relationships cultivated with male and female farmers. These women control large sums of money and have access to capital, storage and inexpensive transport.

Despite the prominence of ‘Market Queens’, the majority of women in both central and local markets are involved in petty trading. Over 90 per cent of the women involved in Techiman market have less than 5,000 *cedi* trading capital (Ameyaw, 1990) and are limited both in the type and volume of commodities traded and in their functions in the market. The majority of market women thus make insufficient profits to support family needs; their market activities tend to be low-paid and risky. A study of rural women in northern Ghana finds much less involvement of women in trading than reported elsewhere for West Africa (Whitehead, 1993). Women farmers in Bawku District commonly sell small quantities in petty trading, but there are only a small number of independent traders, who are often also involved in pito brewing.

Women’s trading activities are hindered by poor infrastructure, bad roads, weak marketing channels, lack of credit and limited storage facilities (Baden *et al.*, 1994). The lack of all-weather roads and available inexpensive transport creates disincentives for small farmers, especially women, to engage in marketing activities due to the time costs involved. Lack of access to storage facilities limits the extent and seasonality of marketing activities for the majority of women traders, and even the minority of powerful market women suffer from a lack of appropriate marketplace facilities (such as toilets, water and sheds or shelter) (Ameyaw, 1990).

2.4 Causes and consequences of the ‘gendered’ nature of agricultural marketing systems

The different ways and terms on which men and women are engaged in agricultural production and marketing systems and the gendered nature of these systems has evolved through a dynamic, historical process. Gender biases have come about both as a result of state policy (e.g. marketing boards’ privileging of male heads of household; legal systems reinforcing male property rights) through the market itself, e.g. women’s lack of credit for trading and lack of information about prices; and through social norms relating to gender. These biases in turn reflect women’s lack of political organisation and influence over state policy, as well as their lack of social and bargaining power.

Box 6: Harassment of market women in Ghana

In Ghana, market women – as highly visible sub-wholesale and retail sellers of smuggled and other goods – became scapegoats for all the economic ills and trade malpractice affecting the country. Physical attacks on traders, and forced sales and confiscations occurred under both Rawlings’ governments in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Although large-scale wholesalers – with a higher concentration of men – were supposed to be the main targets of state control, in practice retailers bore the brunt of these policies. Since women are the majority of small-scale traders and were the most prominent middle trader group, the harassment and controls in this sector led to many losing capital and/or suffering from business failure. Overall this led to an increased dominance of larger-scale traders (more likely to be men) and greater dependence of smaller-scale traders on large-scale ones (Baden *et al.*, 1994: 2)

The harassment and scapegoating of women traders, in a variety of settings, exemplifies the way in which state policy on marketing has gendered consequences (see Box 6). The state also restricts women’s trading activities through taxation (Pujo, 1996), through licensing requirements, credit policy, biases in the supply of information and inferior education (Harriss-White, 1996). In some contexts, men are, either legally or socially, expected to give permission for their wives to engage in business activities, or to travel in order to trade. In Bwisha, Zaire, women’s trading opportunities were restricted because of this requirement for husband’s permission for long-distance travel (Fairhead, 1993).

As shown in Box 6, the gendered nature of marketing and marketing policy has consequences for the nature and structure of the marketing system, in this case leading

to greater concentration and reduced competition. More generally, Pujo (1996), argues that the gendered nature of trading has consequences for the macro-economy. The biases which result in women being trapped in petty trading have economic costs. Women receive limited rewards from marketing systems and so lack incentives to produce. Economies of scale are lost because of women's concentration among retailers and small traders, so that services are high cost and these prices are passed on to consumers. This can lead to nutritional problems and/or to increasing imports to make up the shortfall in production.

Accumulation and concentration of higher level marketing activities among men potentially leads to collusive price practices and oligopolistic service sectors (processing, transport etc.). Again, these result in high costs being transmitted to consumers. Speculation by male traders who hold stocks until prices increase, lengthens the scarce season (Pujo, 1996: 269).

3 GENDER ISSUES IN AGRICULTURAL MARKET LIBERALISATION

3.1 Agricultural market liberalisation policies and their implementation

Intervention in agricultural markets has long been a feature of agricultural policy in both developed and developing countries, motivated by the need to reduce uncertainty due to climatic and price instability, to assure national food supplies, to give income support to producers and to maintain low food prices for consumers. Interventions have mainly taken the form of price controls with some quantity rationing and controls too. Whilst this has an economic basis, it is argued that in developing countries political and ideological factors became the main motivation behind continued intervention, i.e. surplus extraction from rural areas to fuel urban and industrial development; the support of rent seeking groups in urban areas; and the desire to placate urban populations by keeping food prices to consumers low (Duncan and Jones, 1993: 1496).

In 1981, the Berg Report produced by the World Bank challenged the existing policy regime and proposed a development strategy for SSA based on agricultural market liberalisation. The report identified ‘government intervention in agriculture and the resulting poor producer price incentives as the main reason for sub-Saharan Africa’s overall poor economic performance compared to other developing countries’ (cited in Duncan and Jones, 1993: 1496).

Motivating the proposed reforms was the idea that state intervention in agricultural markets was causing economy-wide distortions and inefficiencies. Also, state price support and subsidies to parastatals and marketing boards was creating a huge fiscal burden. Finally, in many cases, marketing systems did not appear to have fulfilled their objectives and export performance was poor (Duncan and Jones, 1993). To some extent this position also reflected changes in economic thinking. While it is still accepted that agricultural markets are imperfect (e.g. the private sector doesn’t

undertake long-term storage of low value grains), the rationale for state intervention to address these imperfections is now widely questioned⁷ (*ibid.*).

While the dominant view is that the role of the state in agricultural marketing should be reduced, there is less consensus on what the positive role of the state should be, beyond providing a regulatory and enabling environment. There are economic reasons to support a role for government in areas of market failure, e.g. production support services (moral hazard); physical infrastructure and marketing and distribution activities (economies of scale and externalities); information and standardisation, advertising/promotion (public goods); institutional infrastructure, i.e. regulatory framework (reduce transactions costs). Financial sector development to support trading, international trade policies and interannual price stabilisation are other suggested roles⁸ (Jones, 1995: 555; Coulter, 1994).

Agricultural market liberalisation has taken place in the wider context of economic reform at both macro-economic (Structural Adjustment Loans – SALs) and sectoral (Sectoral Adjustment Loans – SECALs) levels.⁹ Both macro-economic policies (in particular devaluation and fiscal reform) as well as sectoral policies impact on the agricultural sector (Guillaumont, 1994). Reforms in other areas, particularly financial sector reform, are also crucial for the success of agricultural adjustment (Baden, 1996; Coulter, 1994).

⁷ This is related to arguments around economies of scale in distribution; and to the technical difficulties of setting prices.

⁸ There is considerable controversy over the value of state intervention to in price stabilisation: The distributional costs of keeping buffer stocks are said by some to outweigh the efficiency gains from reducing price variability, although this neglects consideration of the negative effects on investment and growth of price instability.

⁹ Between 1980 and 1987, 80 per cent of SALs in sub-Saharan Africa had agricultural pricing policy as a major component (Commander, 1989). By 1984, 20 out of 28 SSA countries designated as undergoing adjustment had lifted restrictions on market participation and the share of production marketed by state agencies had fallen to insignificant levels in most cases. (Jones, 1995.)

Sectoral policies for the liberalisation of agricultural markets fall in to a number of main categories:

- reform of regulatory environment (i.e. increased competition, removal of entry barriers etc.)
- reform of pricing regime (i.e. move away from administered prices to economical determined prices)¹⁰
- cost saving measures associated with stabilisation (e.g. subsidy removal)
- restructuring and privatisation of state marketing agencies
- pro-active measures for market development (e.g. market information systems, technical assistance to farmers on storage and grain quality etc.) (Jones, 1995: 552-3; Coulter, 1994)

Implementation of these policies has been patchy and dependent on the context. To some extent donor pressure and the relative bargaining power of the country concerned has been a key factor. Donor agencies have also been inconsistent with their support for agricultural market liberalisation, with some agencies continuing to support state intervention in agricultural pricing, storage and marketing as recently as the late 1980s¹¹ (Coulter, 1994).

¹⁰ Basically, this implies moving from administered price setting to market determination. There are many variations on this, but the bottom line is reducing the divergence between administered and 'market' prices. Methodological issues here are complex. Generally, there has been movement towards economic pricing, i.e. use of border parity as criteria for setting prices, although this is also controversial (Harrigan, 1988). There is considerable variation in the degree of implementation of price reform, e.g. Tanzania has wholly deregulated food prices and retains administered control over export crops. In Zimbabwe, pricing is decided in negotiations between producers, government and marketing boards. In Kenya, government intervenes to keep prices within designated bands (Duncan and Jones, 1993).

¹¹ The key donors in this area are the World Bank, the European Commission and the United States Agency for International Development. Some donors were supporting the development of public sector storage capacity and marketing co-operatives until the late 1980s. (Coulter, 1994; Duncan and Jones, 1993).

A range of initiatives to support private sector development has been tried in different contexts but this has not, to date, been the main focus on agricultural liberalisation. For example, the development of market information systems; schemes to finance the importation of small mills; schemes to finance traders¹²; and assistance to farmers to set up on farm storage and their own marketing services. Where public sector monopolies are being dismantled, transitional measures to support farmers and traders assume new roles in storage and marketing are crucial, with potentially serious consequences if this is not done (Coulter, 1994).

Sub-Saharan African countries fall into different categories based on the type of marketing system and also on the approach to market reform. Some undertook quite major liberalisation early on (e.g. Ghana) although in the context of market systems where the private sector already had a dominant role. Others, (e.g. Tanzania, Guinea, Ethiopia) have liberalised by default, as the private sector effectively usurped state marketing functions, due to budgetary crisis with the deepening economic crisis. Others, like Zimbabwe and Malawi, until recently retained extensive state involvement in grain and other crop marketing and have favoured a more gradual approach to market liberalisation. (Duncan and Jones, 1993.) Export crop marketing has proved more difficult to reform than food marketing, partly because marketing chains are more complex and inherently more monopolistic than food systems; and also because taxes on exports are significant source of government revenue (Duncan and Jones, 1993; Mosley and Smith, 1987).

In general:

‘Reform to date has mainly focused on reducing the legal and administrative barriers to participating in marketing activities (liberalisation) with domestic market reform usually preceding external trade liberalisation and on reducing the role of state marketing agencies in performing these functions (privatisation). Much less progress has been made in defining the new role that the state should now play, the appropriate

¹² Credit schemes for traders are necessary because of the lack of development of the financial sector and the reluctance of banks after restructuring to lend to traders. Inventory credit schemes have

methods and instruments to undertake that role, and how donor support and state resources can most effectively be used to make markets more efficient and equitable' (Jones, 1995: 553).

3.2 Supply responses to agricultural pricing reform: constraints and opportunities

Overall, the impact of agricultural market liberalisation on agricultural supply response has been relatively weak, though better in adjusting than non-adjusting countries (Guillaumont, 1994; Jaegar, 1992).¹³ Most commentary on the impact of adjustment on agriculture points to the fact that price reform is a necessary but insufficient condition for increased output (Chibber, 1989; Duncan and Howell, 1992). While supply response for a particular crop, or a particular category of producer, can be significant, aggregate supply response is comparatively low, suggesting that at least some increased output occurs through switching of resources between crops, with changing price incentives.

The theoretical case that price reforms will lead to supply response is weak, especially in relation to food production, where policy biases limited. Food prices may fall in relative terms. Price variability also affects supply response, but in no standard direction. Where consumption and production decisions both take place within households perverse supply responses can result. Household marketing and production responses to price changes vary systematically according to: household composition, land and asset holdings and tenure, non-farm income sources and the transactions costs faced in different markets. The nature of decision-making in the household also causes variations in response, particularly taking into account gender relations (Jones, 1996).

The reasons for weak supply response have been much debated and a number of studies have highlighted gender issues in agricultural production systems as a key factor in explaining this. Women contribute the majority of labour to SSA agriculture

been tried in Mali and Malawi but have experienced some problems (Coulter, 1994).

¹³ In fact, growth rates for adjusting countries were highly variable, with a highly positive response in some countries counteracted by limited response in others. (Jaegar, 1992.)

and so the extent to which they are able to increase their labour input and productivity in agriculture is a determining factor in supply response. This is limited by three sets of constraints: gender inequalities in access to productive resources (including market information) which restrict the scale of women's independent activities; rigidities in gender divisions of labour including demands on women's labour in the household, which limit the elasticity of female labour supply; and weak producer incentives to women who often are unable to retain control over the proceeds of their labour.

Output and marketing of food crops has, in some instances, exceeded that of non-food cash crops, due to the failure to fully liberalise export marketing systems and realise significant increases in export crop prices. To the extent that this reflects increases in production/marketing (rather than simply redirection from previously illegal and unrecorded trading activities) there is a possibility that women have benefited in both relative and absolute terms from increased food prices and output, through their food production and local food trading activities. This may be particularly the case where increasing import prices and falling real incomes as well as food subsidy removal (especially in urban areas) have led to a substitution effect among consumers away from highly processed wheat, maize or rice towards traditional staples such as cassava, millet or sorghum, where women are traditionally heavily involved in production, processing and trading. Where women have access to transport and are situated near to urban markets, they may be able to capitalise on these changes.

Guyer and Idowu (1991) found that some women were able to expand their production of food crops in the wake of structural adjustment in Nigeria. The ending of reliance on food imports increased demand for import substitutes, in particular cassava. In the particular region studied, the availability of tractors for transport (acquired before the onset of adjustment) and the relative proximity of urban markets to facilitate marketing, as well as the availability of hired labour in the area enabled women to expand cassava production in their own right.

In general, the likelihood of women gaining from local food trading is constrained by their lack of access to credit, storage and transport. These constraints affect female traders to a greater extent than male. They are less likely to be able to move produce

quickly from surplus to deficit areas, or to store it, and are thus more likely to sell close to the farm gate at a low price, while male long distance traders, transporters or processors are able to capture the benefits of increased market prices and speculate on inter-regional and inter-temporal price fluctuations. The dismantling of parastatals and the ending of their role as buyers of last resort, in most cases, has also created a vacuum in trading and storage capacity which in many instances has not been filled by a rapidly expanding private sector, so that farmers may be unable to find ready markets for their produce, especially in surplus years.

The promotion of non-traditional agricultural exports (NTAEs) under agricultural liberalisation – particularly high value, exotic horticultural products – often involves major labour inputs from women and children. In Uganda, women provide 80 per cent of the labour in non-traditional export production, which includes maize, beans, horticultural products and vanilla. By 1992, nearly half of women farmers were growing NTAEs. While this activity has led to increased incomes for households involved in growing NTAEs, the demands on the labour of women and children may have other social costs. For example, hand pollination of vanilla at crucial stages in the growth cycles is often done by girls at the expense of their schooling. (Elson and Evers, 1996: 7, 20-21). Effective marketing of these products relies on sophisticated information systems which monitor foreign consumer demand and price trends and on air freighting to distant markets. Transnational corporations with their own outlets in, or direct knowledge of, developed country markets, have privileged access to this market information.

3.3 Changes in marketing activity and systems

Under agricultural liberalisation, evidence suggests that there has been an increase in the number of women engaging in agricultural trading activities, in absolute and in some cases (e.g. Tanzania), relative terms. A higher proportion of female than male traders set up in business since market liberalisation began in the mid-1980s, suggesting that previous regulations acted as a major deterrent to women trading (Bryceson, 1993; see Box 7). Large-scale trading corporations are increasingly hiring women as buying agents (e.g. in Ghana; see Box 9) particularly where women are

involved in the production of cash crops. The increase in women trading may reflect rising poverty and the need for women to earn cash to supplement household income particularly as unemployment has risen among men.

Food crop marketing and processing tends to be competitive. 'Under liberalisation, there is typically rapid entry into small-scale trading as the regulatory barriers are removed. There are, however, barriers to the expansion of individual enterprises which keep most of these enterprises small and make it difficult for them to capture economies of scale' (Jones, 1996:). The barriers include lack of investment in storage, leaving economies and consumers vulnerable to price fluctuations. This in turn is due to lack of access to formal sector credit and high interest rates for informal credit, which make storage uneconomic. Other constraints to newly liberalised marketing systems are: inadequate roads and vehicles; lack of trader credit; lack of availability of storage chemicals; lack of market information; and lack of supportive legal frameworks. All these constraints have gender specific dimensions (as seen in Section 2), so that women's enterprises are more likely to be trapped in the 'vicious cycle of petty trading' (Pujo, 1996).

Box 7: Food market liberalisation in Tanzania:

Food market liberalisation in Tanzania took place from around 1984. A survey of 196 food traders in 1988 found that 75 per cent were men. Sixty per cent of traders had started activities since the liberalisation process, suggesting an expansion of private staple food trading. Women, particularly, had started up in the new environment, suggesting that the pre-1984 trade controls were more intimidating for women than for men. The decline in real incomes from 1984 onwards led many women to engage in staple food trading as a means of supplementing falling household incomes. Men tended to move from salaried employment (as retrenchments took hold) into trading whereas women's capital for trading usually came from a family member. In Bryceson's (1993) study of food market liberalisation in Tanzania, comparing the profile of traders in 1988 with an earlier (1972) survey, the age of traders had increased, as had the level of occupational commitment, suggesting that trading was no longer seen as a temporary activity for young people seeking work. The degree of specialisation and competition had also increased.

'While the majority of staple food traders were men, women traders were especially prevalent in retailing and in areas where female produce trading was important traditionally . . . The policy changes represented the removal of some, but not all, of the restrictions on staple food trading which had deterred those with an inclination to trade. It is apparent that women traders felt more "liberated" by the policies than men. Presumably this was because women had been more intimidated by the previous restrictions on trade' (Bryceson, 1993: 149, 199).

Deregulation of trading has reduced entry barriers and led to a massive expansion in small-scale trading activity. There has also been a reduction in harassment of traders by government, to which women were particularly vulnerable. Nevertheless, in some places, local or informal taxation on trading is still imposed (Jones, 1996) and women may be especially vulnerable to this. As small-scale, often unlicensed traders, women are still the most vulnerable to harassment and may be denied access to marketing support services, or wholesale markets, because of their unlicensed status (as in Zimbabwe, see Box 8).

The increase in market entrants has increased competitive pressures such that the rate of attrition of trading enterprises may have increased, particularly among small-scale women traders operating on very tight margins (as in Ghana and Zimbabwe – see Boxes 8 and 9). There has been increased dependence of small-scale traders (predominantly women) on larger traders, due to problems of accessing working capital. In Ghana, women traders are experiencing pressures to sell on credit and

increasing problems in enforcing payment by clients (Verstalen, 1995, cited in Baden, 1996).

Box 8: Market liberalisation in Zimbabwe

‘Changes in the economic context in which vendors operate have had an extremely negative impact, owing in large part to the devaluation of the Zimbabwe dollar and the relaxation of urban vending regulations. Changes in the value of the dollar have impoverished urban workers and increased the prices of all foodstuffs, while the relaxation of vending regulations has produced an explosion in the number of ad hoc streetside vendors throughout the city, each trying to earn any income possible to meet basic needs’. ‘Competition has led to declines in income and the decision by many business women to quit their stalls and go to the streets or quit vending altogether . . . Many . . . had taken to ad hoc streetside tables or door to door sales in order to avoid weekly rental fees’ (Horn, 1994: 10-11, 64).

The increase in the number of vendors since market liberalisation has meant that women, who are largely unlicensed traders, are no longer able to buy produce at the main wholesale market, since access has been confined to licensed traders. This means they must travel further to the out of town wholesale/farmers’ markets to get their produce. Fluctuations in seasonal wholesale price have to be buffered by vendors if they wish to retain customers (Horn, 1994: 155). With increasing competition, small-scale vendors are under pressure to retain existing clientele by ensuring they have their preferred commodities available, even at the expense of profit margins. Formalisation of the informal sector under ESAP has focused on production rather than trading activities, so that little support has been given to the development of private sector marketing, e.g. through credit facilities.

A small minority of women, especially in West Africa, has been able to accumulate and expand or diversify their trading enterprises to move into wholesale or other more lucrative areas of marketing activity. The majority, however, are caught in the ‘vicious cycle of petty trading’ (Pujo, 1996),¹⁴ lacking access to credit, transport and market information and constrained by social obligations and norms imposed by gender ideologies. Even those women who are successful in trading face constraints in accessing formal sector credit and harassment from government officials.

¹⁴ The reasons why certain women are able to expand trading activities deserves further investigation.

Box 9: Agricultural market liberalisation in Ghana

Structural adjustment in Ghana has seen a series of policy changes since 1984. The main changes in agriculture have arisen through currency devaluation, reduced cocoa export taxes, increased commodity taxes, public sector retrenchment and the introduction of user fees for health and education. GFDC discontinued its Guaranteed Minimum Price scheme in 1992; this had little effect on farmers but deprived traders (especially the less educated) of valuable price information. New private marketing firms such as Equinox and Goldcrest purchase coffee from male and female farmers for export, and often employ female buying agents, because they are considered more reliable suppliers (Akenhora *et al*, 1995). The liberalisation of domestic markets in Ghana had little impact in practice as the food-crop market was already effectively free (Pearce, 1992). Devaluation and reduced export taxes have improved producer incentives in the cocoa sector, and medium and large cocoa farmers have been the main beneficiaries from adjustment. Small farmers outside the cocoa sector have been squeezed by relative price shifts as liberalisation results in higher prices of agricultural inputs and lower relative price of non-tradables (i.e. food crops), whilst credit tightening further reduces the availability of formal credit and increases demands on informal credit sources. Market women have also been squeezed by falling demand and rising costs: devaluation resulted in higher prices for both imported and locally produced goods, whilst increased taxes and user fees have reduced consumption levels and thus market demand; increased business costs for traders have raised demands for capital whilst credit tightening reduces the supply of credit. Furthermore, retrenched government and private sector workers (both male and female) have entered the marketplace in search of alternative sources of livelihood, increasing the number of traders chasing lower demand and lower availability of credit. Such increasing pressures have led many traders to withdraw to less profitable activities or to work for wealthier traders, which in turn has weakened female trader groups and increased inequality between market traders (Akenhora *et al*, 1995).

Liberalisation has led to increased competition in the milling sector, as small-scale milling has expanded to compete with larger-scale operations. This may be beneficial to women producers and traders, since it reduces monopsonistic tendencies in processing (and therefore downward pressure on purchase prices), and may save time and energy in home-based processing for either consumption or sale, providing that women are able to access small-scale milling facilities directly, and can afford the service fees. It is not clear, however, how the introduction of new processing technologies interacts with household-based processing tasks and how it might affect the degree of control women have over processed output.

Liberalisation has increased the costs of transportation due to the increased cost of fuel and vehicles, although this may be offset by the greater availability of imported vehicles following trade liberalisation. Lack of investment in roads as a result of expenditure cuts may have led to a deterioration in conditions for transporting goods in some areas, again raising marketing costs. These cost increases, as well as increases in the price of agricultural inputs, offset the impact of rising producer prices. The end of pan-territorial pricing has also meant that in more remote regions, production of crops which cannot be locally marketed has become uneconomic, leading to increased regional differentiation.

The large capital investment required to purchase means of transport and the riskiness of trading mean that in many countries there is little integration between transport and marketing activities. Traders, even wholesalers, are largely dependent on hired transport services, provision of which is monopolised by men. There is some evidence that rising transport costs have led to an increase in headloading of produce to markets by women and children, both on their own behalf and for men (e.g. in Ghana and Zambia), with opportunity costs to their time as well as demand on their energy and possibly health.

Overall, evidence is patchy on the increased competitiveness, efficiency and integration of agricultural markets due to liberalisation. While some integration appears to have occurred, developing country agricultural markets are still beset with problems of high transactions costs, sub-optimal scale of operations, imperfect competition and poorly developed services and infrastructure. Pujo (1996; see Box 10) argues that these problems relate to the gendered nature of agricultural marketing:

‘The imperfect and highly gendered nature of competition in the rice market in Eastern Guinea and its resultant imperfect performance at micro- and macro-economic levels calls into question the current policy of non-intervention’.
(Pujo, 1996: 269).

In general, then, there may be considerable inefficiencies in marketing systems even once liberalised, which related to their gendered nature. Harriss-White (1996) goes

further in arguing that ‘liberalisation leads to masculinisation’, i.e. that even where women are becoming increasingly involved in trading, men gain control of integrated market systems. While some of the evidence here points in that direction, it is unclear to what extent, in SSA at least, markets are becoming integrated under liberalisation. There appears to remain considerable segmentation in agricultural product markets, including along gendered lines, with women producers less able than men to capture the benefits of increased producer prices and women traders largely unable to capture the most profitable marketing opportunities.

Box 10: Rice market liberalisation in Guinea

Since the mid-1980s, Guinea has undergone drastic changes in economic policy, which have led the country from a very high level of state intervention to an almost complete market liberalisation. The rice economy of Guinea has been affected by these changes with the privatisation of paddy production, local rice trade and rice imports. The policy of liberalisation is based on the assumption that private production and trade will lead to the best possible market performance.

However, an investigation of the functioning of the rice market in eastern Guinea, shows that this optimum performance has not yet been reached. The gendered division of labour, limits on women’s activities involving alternative products, and gendered access to capital all result in an imperfectly competitive market structure. Male service providers are able to implement collusive price policies, charging high prices in comparison to their actual costs. Male wholesalers can use their higher levels of capital to speculate on seasonal price variations of local rice. Peasants and petty female traders speculate on local rice on a small-scale as a form of savings to compensate for their low earnings. The relative market power of traders means that peasants receive small returns and therefore lack incentives to produce. The rice market is thus characterised by a lack of supplies and a lack of quality. Although local rice is strongly preferred, 50 per cent of the population in urban areas have to resort to imported rice in the post-harvest period when local rice becomes too expensive. This contributes to high levels of malnutrition among children. Rice imports from Asia and America have increased due to the lack of competitiveness of local rice, in turn increasing the balance of payments deficit.

This imperfect and highly gendered nature of competition in the rice market in eastern Guinea, and its resultant imperfect performance at micro- and macro-economic levels, calls into question the current policy of non-intervention. Some possible policy strategies are; publicity campaigns to promote equal economic rights for women and men; legal changes to counteract a gap in land ownership legislation which leaves room for 'traditional' rules favouring men; increasing the number of mills to create lower processing prices; changing the taxation structure which currently results in women being taxed more heavily. However, some state interventions to counterbalance gender biases (such as intrahousehold control over output) may be difficult to enforce. *Source: Pujio (1996)*

3.4 Distribution of benefits to agricultural market liberalisation

According to Duncan and Jones (1993: 1505): 'Even if the aggregate effect of market reforms on earnings within the sector is beneficial, as it is in many countries, the effect on particular groups, defined regionally, socio-economically, or ethnically, can be harmful'. Producers, consumers and traders will be affected differently by policies of market liberalisation and there may be conflicts of interest between these groups. In practice, most households combine these activities so that net effects may be hard to predict. A high proportion of rural households in East and Southern Africa are in food deficit for part of the year, so that higher food prices will hurt rather than benefit them.

In general, commercial farmers are in a better position than small-scale producers to respond to new incentives. Small farmers do respond to price incentives where they have the available resources but lack the influence to demand services. Surplus output tends to be generated by a small minority of producers, e.g. in Zimbabwe, ten per cent of small farmers, concentrated in particular geographic areas, produce significant surpluses. Overall, the extent to which agricultural liberalisation has benefited smallholder farmers is questionable. While some may have gained, the largest benefits have accrued to medium and large-scale commercial farmers and to marketing boards or private traders. Not all traders will benefit from market liberalisation. Collier and Appleton (1990) found that traders in Côte d'Ivoire were vulnerable to price fluctuations because of their high dependence on trading incomes and small-scale of operations, in contrast to those in Ghana. In Tanzania, Luguru fruit and vegetable traders viewed liberalisation as a bad thing because, as early market

entrants, they faced much more competition than before and had no farming prospects to fall back on (Bryceson, 1993: 143).

3.5 Agricultural marketing and intra-household relations

Changing price incentives and increasing commercialisation in agriculture bring the danger that women lose decision-making power over what happens to cash income and over production planning, as an increasing share of household resources and labour are devoted to the production of male-controlled cash crops. In part this relates to their lack of control over the marketing of these crops. Also, as women market more of their own produce (e.g. foodstuffs, cooked foods, beer, etc.) to derive cash incomes, there is a danger that men will either claim some of this income or that they will withdraw from responsibility for household expenditures on the basis that women now have their own income (Geisler, 1993). Such sales by women may in fact be 'distress sales', at the expense of household consumption and may point to worsening nutritional levels within the household.

Overall, it cannot be assumed that increased household income resulting from increased marketing of agricultural output translates into an equitable distribution of benefits within the household.

4 CONCLUSIONS: RESEARCH AND POLICY AGENDA

4.1 Main issues and findings

A key finding of this topic paper is that markets are not abstract, neutral entities but are real processes of exchange embedded in social institutions, including gender relations. Exchange processes in agricultural markets involve personal relationships between actors who bring different degrees of economic, social and political power to transactions, have varied motivations and face divergent sets of costs. Gender is one major differentiating factor in these processes. More simply, agricultural markets are themselves ‘gendered’, in a variety of ways. This can be observed in the differentiation of women’s and men’s engagement in rural commodity markets, by commodity traded, by point in the marketing system; by scale and type of enterprise; by temporal and spatial location; and by season (Harriss-White, 1996). The conceptual basis for this argument and a wide range of empirical evidence to support it, from Zimbabwe, Guinea, Uganda, Ghana and Tanzania, have been presented.

The gendered nature of agricultural marketing systems means that policies of market liberalisation are not neutral in their impact with respect to gender differences. The implementation of these policies are also affected by the gendered nature of markets. The failure to elicit the expected supply response from price reform, or the failure of private sector traders to fill the vacuum left by the winding down of state marketing organisations, and the failure to achieve competitive and efficient agricultural marketing systems is associated with gender based constraints to market development and particularly with the vicious cycle of petty trading in which women are often trapped, alongside the concentration of large-scale trading among a small number of male-controlled firms. Thus far, the benefits of agricultural market liberalisation have been skewed towards medium- and large-scale commercial farmers, large-scale private traders/wholesalers and processors, and transporters and other providers of market services. Since the majority of women’s activities are concentrated in small-scale farming, processing and petty trading, they have gained relatively limited benefits from liberalisation. The constraints on women’s benefits from market reforms are not only due to the small size of their enterprises: women are also

disadvantaged because both state and market institutions exhibit gender biases which prevent them from expanding the scale of their operations and diversifying their activities; and because, due to intra-household inequalities, they often do not control the proceeds of their labour.

In order to make agricultural liberalisation and market reform more effective and efficient, there is a need to address the gender dimensions of these processes. The following sections propose a research and policy agenda to this end.

4.2 Research agenda

Both the theoretical and empirical basis for particular policy approaches to agricultural markets in developing countries is quite weak (Jones, 1995; 1996). One strong conclusion from a review of existing studies is that generalisable policy models for agricultural market reform are not justified by the current state of knowledge.

There is a clear need for more studies of actual markets, to inform policy in different contexts. This requires methodological innovation, perhaps using panel studies at the level of individual traders tracing the development of markets at different levels over time, rather than simply descriptive analyses of marketing chains for particular commodities.

Given the relative weakness of the current knowledge base to inform policy and recent advances in thinking about the importance of social and political factors, including power relations, in shaping market transactions gender-aware economics has a major contribution to make to the analysis of agricultural markets and the identification of constraints to their development.

Based on the evidence reviewed in this report, the following areas deserve further more systematic investigation:

- In the expansion of private trading under agricultural market liberalisation, what evidence is there that women are more likely to enter trading than men, and what are the different motivations, life-span and trajectory of men's and women's trading operations under liberalisation?

- What are the relative proportions of women and men at different points in the marketing chain (wholesale, intermediary, retail etc.) and how do these change over time under liberalisation? Does the data suggest increasing concentration under liberalisation, and does this have gender-specific aspects, i.e. do women increasingly become agents of/vendors for larger traders?
- To what extent are agricultural markets segmented by gender, i.e. are women and men (as producers, traders, or consumers) dealing in separate markets, in terms of their location, the type of produce, or point in the marketing chain? The evidence here suggests that women tend to be concentrated in small-scale trading of their own produce, partially processed, direct to consumers in local (or urban) markets while men engage in longer distance trade, buying from urban and local markets, assembling and selling on to wholesalers or in other retail markets. Are markets becoming more or less segmented over time? One approach to this would be the mapping of market systems and trade flows using gender as a differentiating factor.
- To what extent have women been able to expand their production and marketing of non-refined food staples to urban and other local consumers, as a result of substitution in consumption with changing food prices and incomes? Evidence from Nigeria presented above shows that this is possible; a research project in Uganda also plans to examine this question in relation to local food trading (see Appendix).
- To what extent has the expansion of small-scale milling and other local processing enterprises affected the women's home based processing activities, or increased their scope for marketing their own produce more widely? Do processing technologies encompass the crops mainly traded by women?
- Have rising transportation costs under adjustment made small-scale (women's) trading uneconomic, or forced women and children to increase their work in head loading to get goods to market (either on their own behalf or as agents for male producers)?

- At the household level, what are the determinants of women's ability to control the proceeds from the sale of crops (e.g. type of crop; nature of involvement in production system; nature of marketing system; independent access to resources; membership of community organisation or similar; other personal or household characteristics?). How can control be defined in this context and what are the mechanisms by which men (and women) secure control over resources within the household?
- Methods to estimate economic losses associated with gender biases in marketing systems and empirical application of these would be valuable in assessing the potential benefits of interventions to reduce these biases. Methodologies have been developed to estimate output losses due to biases in the allocation of productive resources in agriculture (Saito *et al*, 1994) and to gender divisions of labour (Tijabuka, cited in Elson and Evers, 1996), which could be adapted for this purpose.
- The reasons for the success of the minority of women who become large-scale commercial traders, intermediaries or wholesalers. To what extent does this relate to their background and characteristics (e.g. access to resources, husband's or family's status, kinship, ethnicity, age etc.); to what extent is it related to the formation of organisations of women traders; or to the structure of particular marketing systems? What is the social standing of women who become successful traders in relation to prevailing gender ideologies and how does this impact on their capacity to access financial and other resources, to negotiate with officials and with other traders?

4.3 Policy agenda

Much of market reform so far has focused on measures to reduce the role of the state in agricultural markets. Greater emphasis is now needed on defining a positive role for government (and donor agencies) in assisting market development (Jones, 1996; Coulter, 1994). In devising and implementing such measures, the gendered nature of marketing systems, discussed in Section 2, needs careful consideration and policy should be informed by context-specific research of the kinds outlined in 5.2.

However, unless gender biases are tackled, there is a danger that the promotion of private sector agricultural marketing will lead to accumulation and business development by male traders, while female traders who lack access to finance and are constrained by gender divisions of labour and responsibility as well as social norms of appropriate behaviour, will become incorporated as agents in men's operations, or be unable to compete and cease trading.

Market information systems are one of a range of measures which can assist market integration and particularly support those lower down the marketing train, with limited access to price information, where women farmers and small-scale traders form a high proportion of market participants. As government involvement in setting prices has receded under liberalisation, the value of the dissemination of official prices to farmers particularly and also traders, is being recognised. Absence of knowledge of market prices has meant that producers particularly are vulnerable. Wholesalers operating in urban markets tend to have detailed price knowledge but others lower down the marketing chain may not. With moves towards market determined prices, there is also increasing awareness of the extreme complexity of price formation processes, and of the variability of prices even within the same day and the same marketplace, depending on a variety of factors. The collection and dissemination of market prices for different products and locations is potentially a valuable service both to farmers and smaller scale traders. (Coulter, 1994.) In devising such systems, the gendered nature of agricultural production and trading would require consideration, in terms of the range of products covered, the markets where data is collected and the means by which price data is publicised and disseminated. Consultation with

associations of women producers and traders would be important in the pre-design stage, and use of such networks to gather and promote price information.

One of the major constraints identified to the development of private agricultural trading is the lack of access to finance for traders either as working capital or for capital investment, e.g. in storage and transport facilities (Coulter, 1994). Few traders, even wholesalers, own means of transport or storage. Formal sector lenders have been reluctant to extend credit for trading activities, outside the parastatal system, so that traders have had to resort to borrowing from family and friends and informal sector loans often at high rates of interest. This, in turn, renders uneconomic tying up expensive capital in inventory. Unwillingness to lend to traders in part results from political and cultural biases against private traders (who have often been associated with particular ethnic or national groups, or seen as exploiters) and earlier biases towards the state sector. In practice, the system is strongly biased against producers, who effectively give credit in kind to wholesalers, since the latter often do not have the funds to purchase produce up front.

These biases against lending to traders are particularly acute for women traders, including those operating in urban wholesale markets. Financial sector reform is being undertaken alongside market liberalisation in many countries, but this does not assure the provision of financial services to women entrepreneurs, or even the trading sector in general. Indeed, formal sector banks have, following bank restructuring, often become even more conservative than before in their lending policies and tend to favour established corporate clients. Some non-bank financial institutions have emerged through financial liberalisation which have developed a range of services geared towards the needs of traders, and women traders in particular, such as Citi Savings and Loans in Ghana. Banking legislation is required which takes account of the different financial and client base of such institutions, and which does not unnecessarily limit the services which they can provide. Project support could be given for the development of private sector institutions specialising in lending for agricultural marketing (trading, transportation, processing), perhaps including the provision of market information among the range of services offered (Baden, 1996).

Inefficiency and waste in marketing systems and poor prices obtained by farmers are in part caused by lack of appropriate storage facilities. Previous policies and donor support encouraged the development of centralised buffer stocks and public storage facilities. In order to prevent farmers having to sell at low prices in the immediate post harvest period, there is a need to further develop on-farm storage facilities.¹⁵ Perceived problems of wastage and pests are less serious than previously thought and can be tackled in a number of ways (Coulter, 1994). There is also a need for secure storage facilities for traders, in marketplaces. The development of storage facilities under agricultural market reform raises questions about which (or whose) crops are prioritised for storage development, about control of inventory and about decisions on appropriate timing of sales. Investment in storage facilities may, in itself, be gender biased, in that ‘women’s crops’ are often perishable in nature so that storage development favours male produced crops. An increase in farm-level storage may increase the work required in post-harvest processing (drying, treating etc.), which is traditionally performed mainly by women. Issues of post-harvest losses and wastage are thus closely bound up with gender divisions of labour and implicit assumptions about who will perform the necessary work should be questioned.

The development of processing facilities at different levels of the marketing chain is crucial to raising incomes in the agricultural sector, by increasing value-added. Subsidies of various kinds to parastatals and pan-territorial pricing have tended to support the centralisation of processing facilities, as, for example, in Tanzania and Zimbabwe, leading to monopsony pricing. Liberalisation appears to have increased competition in this area, particularly with regard to food crops. The development of small-scale milling in rural areas has been observed in several countries, sometimes with donor or other assistance, i.e. through subsidies to or special licenses for mill importation. From a gender perspective the impact of this is not clear and relates to women’s major role in post-harvest and household based processing, both for sale and home based consumption. The increasing popularity of cheaper, less refined staple food products from small mills may increase women’s (unpaid) labour input in the

¹⁵ Lack of storage facilities is not the only reason for selling during the immediate post-harvest period. Paying off loans and other lumpy expenditures also create pressures to sell among poor households.

household in food preparation. On the other hand, the availability of processing facilities within relatively close proximity may have reduced women's labour in post-harvest processing and enabled farmers and smaller traders, as well as millers themselves, to gain the benefits of value added lower down the marketing chain. Further investigation is required here. The design of processing technologies and their suitability for processing different staple crops, including those requiring labour intensive input by women, also has gender dimensions.

Considerable donor investment has been put into the development of processing facilities for agricultural produce specifically to alleviate rural women's labour burden. Such initiatives have not always been successful and the negative lessons of these experiences should be borne in mind, for example, the danger that men take over processing equipment, lack of capacity for maintenance, problems of group formation and cohesion, poor quality of output and lack of marketing outlets. There is a need to promote the development of processing controlled by, or accessible to, women, with a view to increasing value added under current market conditions and to enabling women to secure at least some of the benefits of this. This would include consideration of a broad range of processing technologies, not just milling. (References for this and more specific recommendation.)

Lack of adequate transport facilities and the costs of transport is a major constraint cited by many small traders (Bryceson, 1993). For women this has added dimensions of appropriate public behaviour, the requirement in some cases to seek permission from male household members to travel, and safety. Given gender differences in trading activities and patterns already highlighted, and in access to capital for purchase of means of transport, it is clear that women face gender-specific disadvantages in accessing transport to move their produce to markets, or to conduct trading activities. In the absence of other means of transport which they control, many women (and children) headload produce to local markets, a very time- and energy-consuming activity. Where mechanised or motorised means of transport are available they tend to be monopolised by men.

The development of physical infrastructure to support market development needs to take account of these gender differences. In the current situation, for example, investment in rural road development is of more obvious and greater direct benefit to male transporters and traders than to women involved in petty trading, who in any case can rarely access motorised transport. Mapping of gender differences in patterns and flows of marketing activity would assist in identifying where the main transport blockages are for women, as well as men. Encouragement of group hire of vehicles (through financing based on social collateral) might be a way for women to move produce to markets which they would otherwise have to sell at lower price at the farm gate.

A further possible area of proactive intervention to assist in market development is in provision of facilities in marketplaces, such as roofed stalls (to protect from the sun); secure and dry storage space; amenities such as toilets. It is important to bear in mind that centralised markets are likely to be accessible to only a minority of traders, with many women particularly operating in marginal locations, or as unlicensed mobile vendors. Furthermore, many traders (including wholesalers) prefer to operate from anonymous locations such as guest houses, rather than centralised market places, possible due to fear of harassment and taxation, causing problems for farmers coming to market to sell produce, who had difficulty in locating buyers (Bryceson, 1993). Therefore, provision of market facilities should not necessarily be conceived of solely as centralised, stationary facilities. The dangers of this highlighted by the lack of use of market stall facilities constructed by municipal government for women traders in Zimbabwe, because of excessive competition between women traders all selling the same produce, with very low margins, and because of fees for licenses (Horn, 1994). The first step in design of such facilities would be to make a needs assessment based on surveys of women traders, or on participatory research involving trader associations and individuals.

A major constraint to women realising benefits from their involvement in agricultural marketing is the small-scale of their activities and the narrow commodity base and seasonal activity involved. Based on studies of successful woman-controlled trading enterprises, there is potential for support to small-scale women traders to diversify and

increase the volume of their trading activities, perhaps employing other women as agents. However, the scope for reaching many women with such interventions is limited and context-specific social, cultural and historical factors also need to be taken into account when attempting to replicate successful models.

As well as support to the development of physical and communications infrastructure for assisting marketing, with specific attention to gender-based constraints, the development of institutional infrastructure is equally if not more important. This includes a functioning legal system to uphold and enforce contracts, ownership transfers and property rights; a regulatory environment which governs trading standards and sets down clear rules about licensing, taxation etc.; and support to the development of associations among market participants, as well as consulting with such organisations in matters of policy development.

As seen in Section 2, women traders have been particularly vulnerable to harassment by police and government officials, being concentrated among highly visible and often unlicensed street vendors. The onset of liberalisation has meant a reduction in harassment of traders generally, as the environment has become more tolerant of private sector commercial activity. But women are still particularly vulnerable, because they are often unlicensed, to moving on, confiscation of goods, and other informal forms of taxation by police or local government officials. Women traders are known to manipulate volumetric measures in order to increase their incomes, whereas men tend to speculate over time and between markets. (Harriss-White, 1996.) Given the small-scale, informal and low profit nature of much of women's agricultural trading, the tightening up of quality and measurement standards and in general the formalisation of informal trading, may hit women particularly hard. Efforts should be made to ensure that women are not singled out as scapegoats in the imposition of new standards, that they are fully informed of changes in the regulatory system and are given support to make any required changes. Streamlined systems to grant licenses to small-scale women traders, with no or low fees for those trading below a certain volume, would reduce women's vulnerability to harassment and arbitrary taxation.

Equitable and effective legal systems for enforcing payments, property rights etc. are crucial to the development of marketing systems. Women tend to be discriminated against by both the stance and the application of laws and also to have limited legal capacity, because of institutional biases in the judicial system (i.e. lack of women judges, lack of appreciation of the particular constraints faced by women) as well as broader, gender biases, such as lack of education. Women's relatively weak property rights limit their capacity to expand independent trading activities, as it restricts their access to finance and their control over assets such as land, vehicles, storage facilities and inventory, which can be easily appropriated by relatives. Social norms and customary law also restrict women's freedom of movement, interaction (e.g. with strange men) and scope for activity, often requiring husband's permission. Changes to legal systems which strengthen women's independent property rights and rights to engage in economic activity are desirable and must be complemented by other measures which improve women's access to legal systems and their effective implementation.

In general, collective activity of traders is limited and where traders do organise it is often in response to state policies, to share information and give mutual support in the absence of organised support services (Jones, 1996). In some contexts, women traders have their own associations (e.g. Ghana's Market Queens). Such groups are potentially important in representing the interests of women traders and forming a lobby to influence policy, particularly pricing regimes and regulatory frameworks, in gathering and disseminating market information, and in providing a channel for training and for group guarantees for borrowing. It is important to support the development of existing associations of traders, at different levels of the marketing chain (i.e. not just powerful associations of wholesalers), while ensuring that this does not foster restrictive practices. In particular, it is important that women traders' groups are consulted in relating to major policy changes.

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APPENDIX: CURRENT AND RECENT RESEARCH INITIATIVES ON
AGRICULTURAL MARKETING, MARKET LIBERALISATION
AND GENDER

<p>Deborah Fahy Bryceson Afrika-Studiecentrum (ASC) Rijksuniversiteit Leiden Postbus 9555 2300 RB Leiden The Netherlands Tel: (0031) 71 527 3372 Fax: (0031) 71 527 3344 E-mail: bryceson@rulfsw.fsw.leidenuniv.nl</p>	<p>Deborah Fahy Bryceson has worked extensively on Tanzanian agriculture. Her published work includes <i>Liberalising Tanzania's Food Trade</i> (James Currey, 1993), <i>Gender Relations in Tanzania: Cultural Consensus or Power Politics</i> (in Creighton and Omari (eds.), Avebury, 1995), <i>Women Wielding the Hoe: Lessons from Rural Africa for Feminist Theory and Development Practice</i> (Berg, 1995) and <i>Structural Adjustment in Tanzania: Rural Women Farmers' Production Opportunity or Overload</i> (in Scmied (ed.), Universitat Bayreuth, 1996)</p>
<p>Tchalling Dijkstra Afrika-Studiecentrum (ASC) Rijksuniversiteit Leiden Postbus 9555 2300 RB Leiden The Netherlands Tel: (0031) 71 527 3372 Fax: (0031) 71 527 3344</p>	<p>Tchalling Dijkstra is a Wageningen University PhD student who has been engaged in field research in Kenya for the last three years, examining the activities of women traders of horticultural products. The expected research output will be: <i>Evolution of Horticultural Marketing Channels in Kenya</i>, Wageningen University, Ph.D. thesis, 1997.</p>
<p>Barbara Harriss-White Queen Elizabeth House 21 St Giles Oxford OX1 3LA Tel: (01865) 273600 Fax: (01865) 273607 E-mail: postmaster@qeh.ox.ac.uk (general) harriss@qeh.ox.ac.uk</p>	<p>Barbara Harriss-White has worked extensively on agricultural markets in India and is currently Director of Graduate Studies in Development at Oxford University. Her most recent book, <i>A Political Economy of Agricultural Markets in South India</i>, is the culmination of ODA-funded work in Tamil Nadu from 1977 to 1981. Forthcoming publications include: <i>The gendering of rural market systems: analytical and policy issues</i> (in Pearson and Jackson (eds.) forthcoming).</p>
<p>Stephen Jones Oxford Policy Management (formerly the Food Studies Group) Queen Elizabeth House 21 St Giles Oxford OX1 3LA Tel: (01865) 270261/2 Fax: (01865) 514468 E-mail: stephen.jones@qeh.ox.ac.uk</p>	<p>Has worked on macro-level review of policy issues relating to food market reform and structural adjustment and published an FSG working paper <i>Food Markets in Developing Countries</i>.</p>
<p>Jonathan Kydd/M. Warner Department of Agricultural Economics Wye College University of London Wye Ashford Kent TN25 5AH Tel: (01233) 812401 Fax: (01233) 813320 E-mail: j.kydd@wye.ac.uk m.warner@wye.ac.uk</p>	<p>Have produced a series of papers on broader themes relating to the economic roles of women in northern Ghana</p>

<p>Paul Moustier Centre de Cooperation Internationale en Recherche Agronomique pour le Developpement (CIRAD) 2477 Avenue du Val de Montferrand BP 5035 34032 Montpellier cedex 1 FRANCE Tel: (0033) 67615800 Fax: (0033) 67615988 E-mail: moustier@cirad.fr</p>	<p>The 'Economies des Filiere' research unit at CIRAD produces work analysing all transfers between production and consumption focussing on specific crops, particularly rice, vegetables and maize.</p>
<p>Natural Resources Institute Central Avenue Chatham Maritime Kent ME4 4TB Tel: (01634) 880088 Fax: (01634) 880066/880077 Contact: Martin Hebblethwaite E-mail: martin.hebblethwaite@nri.org</p>	<p>NRI is involved in ongoing work (research and development) on marketing in sub-Saharan Africa, which includes components that relate to liberalisation and/or gender issues but does not explicitly focus on gender issues in market liberalisation. Recent projects include an ODA-funded study of the practical implementation of grain market liberalisation in sub-Saharan Africa, an appraisal for FAO of agricultural marketing services in the light of structural adjustment in Mali, and a joint World Bank/ODA study of private sector food processing and marketing in Africa.</p> <p>Previous work on market liberalisation has been undertaken largely by Jonathan Coulter and colleagues. Publications include: <i>Liberalisation of cereals marketing in sub-Saharan Africa</i> (NRI Marketing Series No. 9, 1994), <i>Cereal marketing liberalisation in Tanzania</i> (Food Policy, December 1992) and <i>Grain market liberalisation in Tanzania, Mali and Ghana</i> (in NRI, 1994) NRI publishes much relevant work in its Marketing Series and Socio-economic Series</p>
<p>Pauline Peters Harvard Institute for International Development One Eliot Street Cambridge MA 02138 USA Tel: (001) 617 495 2161 Fax: (001) 617 495 0527 E-mail: info@hiid.harvard.edu (general) ppeters@hiid.harvard.edu</p>	<p>Pauline Peters and colleagues at HIID are involved in ongoing research on agricultural liberalisation in Malawi. Existing research outputs include Tomich, Peters and Deolalikar, <i>Social Impact of Agricultural Policy Reform: Evidence from Rural Households in Southern Malawi</i> (HIID, September 1995). Forthcoming.</p>
<p>Laurence Pujo Residences le Grands Cers 1 Allee Recamier 9220 Chateauny Maladry Paris FRANCE</p>	<p>Laurence Pujo is a final year DPhil student at Queen Elizabeth House, Oxford. Her thesis examines the embeddedness of agricultural markets in gender relations. The expected research output will be: <i>Towards a methodology for the investigation of the embeddedness of markets in social institutions: Application to gender and the market for local rice in eastern Guinea</i>, Oxford University DPhil thesis, 1997</p>

<p>Elsbeth Robson Department of Geography University of Keele Keele Staffordshire ST5 5BG Tel: (01782) 583160 Fax: (01782) 584144 E-mail: geb02@keele.ac.uk (general) gea06@keele.ac.uk</p>	<p>Elsbeth Robson is currently completing her Oxford DPhil thesis, which (among other things) examines the gendering of markets in rural Northern Nigeria. Her work has not yet been published, and her thesis will be completed in 1997.</p>
<p>David Sahn Cornell Food and Nutrition Policy Program Division of Nutritional Sciences College of Human Ecology 3M28 Van Rensselaer Hall Cornell University Ithaca NY 14853 USA Tel: (001) 607 255 8093 Fax: (001) 607 255 0178 E-mail: david.sahn@cornell.edu</p>	<p>Editor of <i>Economic Reform and The Poor</i> (Oxford, 1996) with chapters on agricultural market liberalisation and on exchange rate depreciation and its effects on export producers.</p>
<p>Edward Seidler Marketing and Farm Supply Group Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) Viale delle Terme di Caracalla 00100 Rome ITALY Tel: (0039) 6 52251 Fax: (0039) 6 52253 E-mail: edward.seidler@fao.org</p>	<p>The Marketing and Farm Supply Group of FAO provides support to developing countries and the emerging economies in the improvement of marketing systems for both farm produce and inputs. The Group is part of the Marketing and Rural Finance Service of the Agricultural Support Systems Division of FAO. The main areas of the Group's work are: marketing policy; market information services, marketing extension; marketing infrastructure; urban food marketing; and farm input marketing. The Group has produced a number of publications on Marketing Liberalisation and Structural Adjustment and the subject remains a priority area of work; however, no publications (past or planned) focus specifically on gender issues.</p> <p>Recent publications include: <i>Inventory Credit – An Approach to Developing Agricultural Markets</i> (J. Coulter (NRI) and A. Shepherd, Agricultural Services Bulletin No. 120), <i>Promoting private Sector involvement in agricultural marketing in Africa</i> (Agricultural Services Bulletin No. 106), <i>Structural Adjustment and the Provision of Agricultural Services in sub-Saharan Africa</i> (by Michael Westlake) and a range of manuals on market planning and design, marketing extension, seed and fertiliser marketing.</p>

<p>Aad van Tilburg Department of Marketing and Market Research Wageningen Agricultural University Hollandseweg 1 6706 KN Wageningen THE NETHERLANDS Tel: (0031) 8370 83385 Fax: (0031) 8370 84361 E-mail: aad.vantilburg@alg.menm.wau.nl</p>	<p>From 1982-1994 Wageningen ran a research programme on 'Agricultural marketing in developing countries with a focus on marketing decisions of farming households and traders, and the performance of marketing channels and markets in developing countries (notably East Asia, West Africa and Central America). The current research programme 'Agricultural Marketing and Economic Development' focuses on regional trade and strategies of wholesalers. Recent publications include Jansen, H.G.P. <i>et al</i> (1996) <i>Agricultural Marketing in the Atlantic Zone of Costa Rica</i>, CATIE, informe Técnico no. 271, Janssen, W.G. and Tilburg, A. van, 'Marketing Analysis for agricultural development: suggestions for a new research agenda' in Wierrega, B <i>et al</i> eds. (1997) <i>Agricultural Marketing and Consumer Behaviour in a Changing World</i> Kluwer Academic, Boston.</p>
<p>Patricia Howard-Borjas Department of Gender Studies Wageningen Agricultural University Hollandsweg 1 6706 KN Wageningen THE NETHERLANDS Tel: (0031) 8370 83385 Fax: (0031) 8370 84361 E-mail: patricia.howard-borjas@alg.vsl.wau.nl</p>	<p>Patricia Howard-Borjas is involved in setting up a research programme on gender and rural transformation in Central and Eastern Europe, and has produced a paper with Sabine Rooij on <i>Women and Food Systems in Europe</i>.</p>

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