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# Income Intervention Quick Scan: Agro-Corridors

Farmer Income Lab Intervention Quick Scan

Hermine ten Hove



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Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation  
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Abstract UK This quick scan, commissioned by the Farmer Income Lab, is part of a wider research effort looking at, "What are the most effective actions that lead buyers can take to enable smallholder farmers in global supply chains to meaningfully increase their incomes?". The quick scan provides an overview of the publicly available evidence on the impact of agro-corridors have had on raising farmer income. Such subsidies have had little positive effect on farmer income, are not notably beneficial for women nor is this effect long-term. They have been applied at large scale. This quick scan is part of a series of 16, contributing to a synthesis report "What Works to Raise Farmer's Income: a Landscape Review".

Keywords: farmers' income, intervention, agriculture, smallholders, agro-corridors, multi-stakeholder cooperation, inclusive business models

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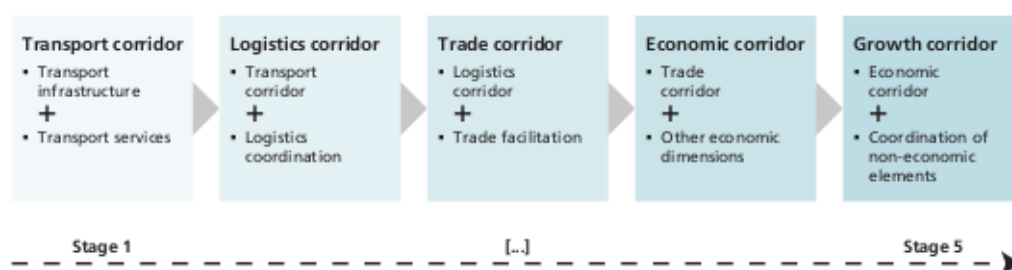
# List of abbreviations and acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
BAGCI	Beira Agricultural Growth Corridor Initiative
CGIAR	Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EWEC	East-West Economic Corridor
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GMS	Great Mekong Subregion
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IDB	Islamic Development Bank
IFI	International Financial Institution
IMF	International Monetary Fund
NDF	Nordic Development Fund
OFID	OPEC Fund for International Development
PPP	Public Private Partnership
PRA	Poverty Reduction and Alleviation
SAGCOT	Southern Agricultural Corridor of Tanzania
SEZ	Special Economic Zone
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WCDI	Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation, Wageningen University & Research
WEF	World Economic Forum
WUR	Wageningen University & Research

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Definition

Economic corridors are “programmes that foster promising economic sectors in a territory by facilitating access to markets, inputs and services, and leveraging economies of scale along a physical backbone of transport infrastructure” (FAO, 2017). They promote spatially targeted and coordinated public and private investment. Agro-corridors more specifically foster agriculture, and are a type of territorial tool for agricultural development. Agricultural growth corridors have additional non-economic elements, for example related to health, environment or culture.



**Figure 1** Stages toward Growth Corridors (FAO, 2014). Agro-corridors can be both a subcategory of economic corridors and of growth corridors.

## 1.2 Theory of change

Agro-corridors would increase farmer income through the four intermediary effects that are outlined in the first column of Figure 2 below. The figure also shows the effects for agribusinesses and governments, per the example of the BAGCI and SAGCOT agro-corridors:

For farmers	For BAGCI and SAGCOT agribusinesses	For governments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reduced costs of agricultural inputs, improving farmers' profitability.</li> <li>▪ Reduced prices of goods consumed by local farmers, improving farmers' standard of living.</li> <li>▪ Increased income from selling agricultural products.</li> <li>▪ (Usually) easier access to finance and supporting services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reduced transportation costs of shipping inputs, which can encourage new investments in processing plants, input suppliers, etc.</li> <li>▪ Help connect agribusiness to new ports or cities.</li> <li>▪ Improved business-enabling environment.</li> <li>▪ Dedicated financial facilities and non-financial services targeting agribusiness firms (particularly those working with smallholder farmers).</li> <li>▪ Enhanced access to land.</li> <li>▪ Improved power and telecommunications.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Potentially positive impact on foreign exchange, either through exports or market-based import substitution.</li> <li>▪ Open up new regions to development.</li> <li>▪ Potentially positive income-distribution effects, although these must be managed (potentially negative impacts also possible).</li> <li>▪ Increased GDP.</li> <li>▪ Can increase the availability of domestic staples at competitive costs for the national population.</li> </ul>

**Figure 2** Potential benefits of agro-corridors (using BAGCI and SAGCOT as corridor examples) (FAO, 2017).

## 1.3 Geography

Agro-corridors have been implemented all over the world. They can either be located within one country, or connecting several. Benefits of encompass an entire region, is that its weakest links can be strengthened, which is the case for Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar in the GMS corridor programme (FAO, 2014). Corridors may be close to the sea, as they are a useful instrument to connect landlocked countries to ports, for example the West-African corridor that connects Mali and Burkina Faso to shipment routes to Europe (FAO, 2017). Most corridors cover both urban and rural areas (FAO, 2014). For examples per region, see Table 1 below.

**Table 1** Examples of various corridor types (FAO, 2017).

Region	Name	Countries involved	Key driver	Year of start	Estimated budget
Asia	GMS corridor programme	Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam and China	ADB, in collaboration with the European Investment Bank (EIB), IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development), the Nordic Development Fund (NDF, climate change investments), OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID) and the World Bank	1992	US\$17.8 billion (1992–2014) + US\$321 million in technical assistance (TA)
Asia	CAREC corridor programme	Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan	ADB, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), International Monetary Fund (IMF), Islamic Development Bank (IDB), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank	(1996) 2001	US\$46 billion + US\$1270 million in TA
LAC	PRA project	Peru	USAID, in collaboration with two public and nine private partners	1998	Phase I (1998–2008) US\$38 million and Phase II (2009–2014) US\$23.9 million
Africa	BAGCI	Mozambique	WEF's New Vision for Agriculture	January 2010	US\$0.4 billion, of which US\$20 million in a Catalytic Fund
Africa	SAGCOT	Tanzania	WEF's New Vision for Agriculture	May 2010	US\$1.3 billion, of which US\$650 million (backbone infrastructure) + US\$570 million (last-mile infrastructure) + US\$50 million (Catalytic Fund)
Asia	Indonesian Corridors	Indonesia	Government of Indonesia	2011	US\$398 billion, of which 10% funded by the public sector + 18% by state enterprises

## 1.4 Role of actors

Table 1 introduced different types of actors that can be the key driver of an agro-corridor – local, subnational or national governments, international financial institutions and development organisations. Private sector parties may also take the lead.

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Most economic corridors have a top-down nature, and are led by public institutions. The government typically is responsible for setting infrastructural and sectoral priorities for corridors. They may also need to forge international treaties in case a corridor stretches across multiple countries. If a government is the key driver, they may also need to arrange funding and other support. Agro-corridors can be supported by the international community, through donors, international financial institutions and technical agencies. Other responsibilities of the government may be the removal of barriers to transport goods, streamlining trade and investment regulations, and providing incentives for stakeholders to participate (which can be fiscal or non-fiscal) (FAO, 2017). Other actors, such as change agents or private sector representatives, may be involved in identifying these barriers. Government benefits from participation in an agro-corridor are outlined in Figure 2.

Agro-corridors also require private investment. Private sector parties may also play a large role in leading them (FAO, 2014). For example, according to WEF, their New Vision project is led by 28 global partner companies that represent the whole supply chain (Box 1).

*Agco Corporation, Archer Daniels Midland, BASF, Bayer AG, Bunge Limited, Cargill, CF Industries, The Coca-Cola Company, Diageo, DuPont, General Mills, Heineken NV, Kraft Foods, Louis Dreyfus Commodities, Maersk, Metro AG, Monsanto Company, Nestlé, PepsiCo, Rabobank, Royal DSM, SABMiller, Swiss Reinsurance Company Ltd., Syngenta, The Mosaic Company, Unilever, Wal-Mart Stores Inc., and Yara International*

**Box 1** *Companies involved in the WEF New Vision project (World Economic Forum & McKinsey & Company, 2013)*

Private interests may include ensuring growing supplies from diversified sources and regions. FAO (2017) names the cocoa production in Brazil as an example of such an interest. The supply mainly comes from West Africa, which entails climatic and geopolitical risks. Other potential benefits for private sector parties have been mentioned in Figure 2. A growing number of corridors is initiated by private sector parties and takes a bottom-up approach, in which civil society and private interests are represented through public-private partnerships. These are typically smaller in scale and scope (FAO, 2014).



## 2 Summary and justification of assessment

Strength of outcome		
Assessment criterion	WUR score	Rationale for score
<b>Scale:</b> Size of the population intervention could impact and potential to scale to other contexts (i.e., geographies, value chains)	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agro-corridors are not a new concept, but have recently experienced an upsurge because of success stories, and their potential to leverage PPPs and promote inclusive agribusiness growth in lower- and middle income countries. In Africa alone, over 30 growth corridors are now being developed or are planned.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FAO (2017) and Byiers, Bizzotto Molina, and Engel (2016)</li> </ul> </li> <li>Large numbers of people can be reached, e.g. the Poverty Reduction and Alleviation (PRA) I Project in Peru helped to improve productivity and income generation of over 42,000 small producers and firms.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FAO (2014)</li> </ul> </li> <li>Agro-corridors can encompass a multitude of different value chains. SAGCOT, for example, focuses on rice, sugar and livestock.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FAO (2017)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Impact:</b> degree of increase in incomes	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quantified income increases found for this study range between 20-30%.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FAO (2014) and Asian Development Bank (2008)</li> </ul> </li> <li>Income improvement seems to depend on the extent to which infrastructure has improved through the corridor initiative. Improvements are less when infrastructure was already in relatively good condition before.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Asian Development Bank (2008)</li> </ul> </li> <li>Income improvement may also depend on farm size, the geographic location of farmers and their ability to practice modern agriculture.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Byiers et al. (2016)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Sustainability:</b> financial ability of farmer income increase to endure independent of ongoing external support	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agro-corridors are a systemic approach, aiming to change conditions to achieve sustainable agricultural sector improvement.</li> <li>External support remains necessary for maintenance of agro-corridor infrastructure, which should be possible through increased governmental tax incomes. Past examples show that this is possible.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Asian Development Bank (2008)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Gender:</b> Potential of intervention to positively impact women	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Corridor development provides the opportunity to embed innovative and inclusive business models to engage women.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FAO (2014)</li> </ul> </li> <li>A thorough review of the evidence for both positive and negative impacts, and an overview of best practices on how to engage women seem to be lacking at this point.</li> </ul>

Strength of evidence		
Assessment criterion	WUR score	Rationale for score
<b>Breadth:</b> amount of rigorous literature that exists on the impact of the intervention, as defined by the minimum quality of evidence for this paper	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scientific proof on the effectivity of this type of intervention is next to impossible due to its complexity and dependence on context factors.</li> <li>• However, cases in which agro-corridors seem to have improved farmer income do exist. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ FAO (2014) and Asian Development Bank (2008)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Consistency:</b> Degree to which the studies reviewed are in agreement on the direction of impact (i.e., positive or negative)	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The used literature considers agro-corridors to be promising territorial tools that offer possibilities for inclusive development.</li> </ul>

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## 3 Methodology

Searches via an academic (Google Scholar) and a non-academic (Google) search engine yielded a total of 15 documents for a brief review. Some of these documents were rejected based on either a lack of information specifically on income, or because of low research quality. 8 elaborate, in-depth papers authored or commissioned by supranational organisations (FAO, UNDP, CGIAR, ADB and WEF) were reviewed in more detail and used to inform this report. The literature that is used for this study is therefore mostly grey. Scientific literature on the topic of agro-corridors and income is scarce. This is partly inherent to the scale of corridors, which makes experimental design and use of control groups next to impossible. Instead of hard evidence of the effectiveness of agro-corridors, the used literature shows which effects are known to have occurred in existing corridors. Although it is likely that changes can be attributed to the intervention, this cannot be backed up by solid evidence. Secondly, the complex nature of corridor initiatives would make extrapolation of findings from one corridor to another hard to justify.

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## 4 Impact

### 4.1 Effect on income

There are indications for corridors having medium-sized economic impacts on farmers. A 2008 evaluation of corridors in the Great Mekong Subregion (GMS) reported improved incomes. Farmers living along its East-West economic corridor (EWEC) claimed income rises of 20% and that they got 20-30% better prices for their production after road improvements as part of the corridor programme (Asian Development Bank, 2008). Further along the EWEC, in Vietnam, over 80% of household reported increases in production, selling volumes and income. Vietnamese farmers along another trade route (Phnom Penh – HCMC Highway) reported only marginal benefits, which may be due to that road already being in good condition before it became part of a corridor (Asian Development Bank, 2008). Income results are also reported by the Poverty Reduction and Alleviation (PRA) I Project - a Peruvian growth corridor programme. Part of the corridor programme was to help improve productivity and income generation of over 42,000 small producers and firms by establishing long-term commercial linkages (FAO, 2014). It is estimated that 43% of the beneficiaries earned less than US\$1 per day, and that 37% were women. For some value chains and corridors within that project, there is evidence on the size of this impact. For example, artichoke producers in the Mantaro Valley saw a 30% average net income improvement, and replacement of potatoes by snow peas in the Ayaicho corridor led to an additional US\$351 in sales and 269 person-days of employment per hectare (FAO, 2014).

Apart from increased access to regional markets, smallholder farmers can also benefit by feeding the staff and their families living in the communities within the corridors (UNDP African Facility for Inclusive Markets, 2012).

### 4.2 (Possible) intermediate and other outcomes

Improved infrastructure can go side by side with improved access to finance, ICT infrastructure and supporting services (FAO, 2017). Better road conditions also facilitate access to local health services (Asian Development Bank, 2008). Agro-corridors can take migration pressure away from rapidly growing urban areas by encouraging regional decentralisation: lower density regions may become more attractive to both companies and (young) people seeking jobs. Labour mobility is encouraged, although this could go both ways (i.e. to and from less developed regions) (FAO, 2017; UNDP African Facility for Inclusive Markets, 2012). Finally, there may be improvements in availability, access, nutritional quality and stability of the food supply. Agro-corridors also allow for area-specific food security policies and interventions (FAO, 2017).

#### *Adverse effects*

A common adverse effect of agro-corridors is environmental degradation, caused by activities such as illegal logging, wildlife trade and deforestation (Asian Development Bank, 2008; FAO, 2017). Out of the 33 current and planned corridors in Sub-Saharan Africa, 28 show high environmental costs (Byiers et al., 2016; Laurance, Sloan, Weng, & Sayer, 2015).

Agro-corridors may also lead to social issues: tensions, dispossession, land grabbing, marginalisation and conflict in corridor regions (FAO, 2017). Land tenure and property rights are essential enablers for a successful agro-corridor (Christy, Mabaya, Wilson, Mutambatsere, & Mhlanga, 2009; FAO, 2017). Land grabbing particularly occurs in contexts that have weak institutions and unclear land rights. For example, there are reports of Nigerian farmers being forced off lands to make way for a large rice plantation owned by a US company (Byiers et al., 2016). Marginalisation of subsistence that beyond the geographic boundaries of a corridor is also an issue, as described in the next paragraph.

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Finally, there are health and safety issues involved with agro-corridors. An increase of communicable diseases such as HIV/AIDS has been observed in corridor areas (Asian Development Bank, 2008). Improvement of roads can lead to deterioration in road safety due to increase in traffic and speed (Asian Development Bank, 2008).

### 4.3 Sustainability

Sustainability of agro-corridors heavily depends on complex context factors, such as government stability, which makes its lifespan hard, if not impossible, to predict. An element of agro-corridors that warrants specific attention in terms of sustainability is infrastructure maintenance, which has to be planned and prioritised. Allocations have to be made to enable road resurfacing every 6-7 years, which has been proven to be possible, for example in the corridors that are part of the GMS programme (Asian Development Bank, 2008).

### 4.4 Applicability of impact

#### *Gender*

Women may play an important role in agriculture. For example, in Sub-Saharan Africa, women account for up to 50% of the agricultural labour force (UNDP African Facility for Inclusive Markets, 2012). Corridor development provides the opportunity to embed innovative and inclusive business models to engage women. This opportunity has been made use of in the PRA programme, where a new artichoke and jalapeño processing plant has hired 600 employees, 90% of which women employed in their first formal job (FAO, 2014). GMS corridors also indirectly provided “new opportunities for women to play a greater role in the economic development of their villages” by participating in road maintenance activities (Asian Development Bank, 2008). However, a thorough review of the evidence for both positive and negative impacts, and an overview of best practices seem to be lacking at this point.

#### *Farmer segments*

There are differences in the extent to which different types of farmers can benefit from agro-corridors. That difference is partly determined by the borders of the corridor. Farmers that fall outside the scope of the corridor do not enjoy the benefits of infrastructure developments and may be (further) marginalised. They may be forced to seek employment in urban areas, or to become workers on farms in more well-off areas. Anecdotal accounts exist of daily paid wage labourers on commercial farms who have higher incomes than independent smallholders in neighbouring areas (Byiers et al., 2016).

Farm size can also be an issue: “impacts on smallholders are highly dependent on local circumstances, with the potential for both positive and negative outcomes. Smallholders may lose their land to investors, they may suffer from land competition from migration of people from other areas to the corridors and in some situations they may enable smallholders to capture the benefits of market access. Competition with large commercial farms may render smallholder farming for commodity crops such as maize uncompetitive – however smallholders may move into more specialized markets for tree crops, vegetables, etc. and thus benefit from the new development” (Byiers et al., 2016). To promote positive outcomes for smallholder farmers, many corridor initiatives (such as PRA, Beira and SAGCOT corridors) have inclusive strategies in place to also offer economic opportunities to smallholder farmers as well (FAO, 2014).

Another difference is caused by farmers’ ability to practice modern agriculture and meet new market standards. If an inclusive approach to agro-corridors is taken, this issue may be addressed through farmer trainings (Byiers et al., 2016; FAO, 2017).

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## 4.5 Enhancing the intervention

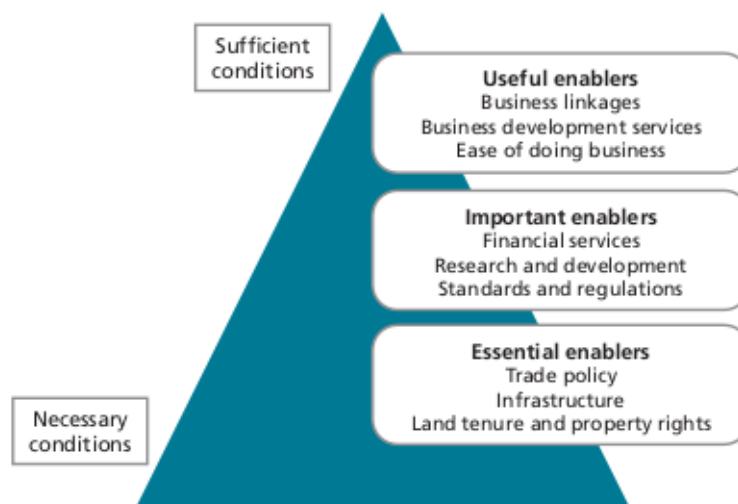
Agro-corridors are territorial tools for agricultural development. Other types of territorial tools are the agrobased special economic zone (SEZ): “a demarcated geographic area in which firms that are engaged in agribusiness and agro-industrial activities benefit from a more favourable regulatory, business and fiscal environment than those in the rest of the country” (FAO, 2017), and the agrocluster: “a geographic concentration of interconnected producers, agribusinesses and institutions that are engaged in the same or related agricultural or agro-industrial subsectors.” Clusters encompass and promote horizontally and vertically connected companies and institutions of a specific field (ibid.) Combining these tools with one another can create synergy and catalyse investment.

The implementation of agro-corridors provides the opportunity to embed inclusive business models to empower smallholder producers, which may extend to women, youth and other vulnerable groups. Smallholder farmers may be linked to particular corridor activities through direct employment, acting as land lessors, or take part in contract farming and outgrower schemes. Arrangements to improve farmers’ access to finance, inputs and technologies could be included, which are at the core of some existing corridor initiatives (BAGCI, SAGCOT and PRA) and can even be made a condition for accessing catalytic funds or services.

## 5 Key success factors

### *Enabling environment*

Figure 3 below offers a summary of conditions that are needed for agro-industry success.



Source: Christy et al. 2009, p. 150.

**Figure 1** Enabling environments for competitive agro-industries (Christy et al., 2009; FAO, 2017).

Literature also suggests the following success factors for an enabling environment:

- Adequate public sector, third-party, donor or IFI capital should be mobilised for infrastructure investments, as well as ancillary private investments (FAO, 2017).

### *Implementation*

- Selecting an appropriate region is of the utmost importance. Having neutral analysts involved can help to navigate political interests. Comprehensive and realistic cost-benefit analyses and (environmental and social) risk analyses are required (FAO, 2017).
- Good multi-stakeholder cooperation is key to prevent weak design and overly slow, cumbersome and uncoordinated implementation (UNDP African Facility for Inclusive Markets, 2012).
- Implementers need to look beyond basic transport infrastructure, and also invest in feeder roads, dams, irrigation, power facilities and logistics support, input infrastructure, distribution networks, service provision and the post-production food chain (sometimes the cold chain) (FAO, 2017).
- It is important to address the softer aspects of trade facilitation in effective trade policy (e.g. harmonisation of regulations, procedures and standards) to fully make use of the benefits of harder infrastructure such as road improvements (Asian Development Bank, 2008).
- Goals for environmental sustainability, social inclusion and gender equity should be taken into account. FAO (2017) suggests having a team in place that is dedicated to assessing these impacts at all stages of corridor planning, construction and operation.

### *Individual farmer*

Whether farmers are able to benefit from agro-corridors may depend on their ability to produce efficiently and meet market specifications which may be more demanding than before. This warrants special attention to training on modern agricultural practices (FAO, 2017).

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## 6 Barriers addressed

Agro-corridors are systemic approaches to foster agriculture, which means that ideally, a multitude of barriers is addressed simultaneously. Which ones specifically, depends on the way the intervention is implemented. Inputs are the most important barrier that is addressed through agro-corridors: by improving infrastructure and access to value chain participation, but also access to value chain participation, (ICT) services and finance may also be addressed. Secondly, agro-corridors tend to address the role of governments. They may address the softer aspects of trade facilitation (e.g. harmonisation of regulations, procedures and standards (Asian Development Bank, 2008). Capacity building may also be part of an agro-corridor, for example technical trainings and capacity building for farmers' organisations (FAO, 2014).



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## 7 Questions for further research

Byiers et al. (2016) identified knowledge gaps regarding the winners and losers of growth corridors in terms of impact, effects on implementation and accompanying institutional challenges:

- Integrated and interdisciplinary research on agro-corridor impacts on food and nutrition security, poverty and sustainability, inclusivity and how to reach the most vulnerable.
- Lessons learned from existing corridor implementation, which implications for impact. (Note: this knowledge gap may already be partly addressed by the publication of the FAO (2017)'s guidebook of territorial tools for agri-industry development.)
- Studies of the institutional environment in which corridor development takes place, which includes research into the formal and informal 'rules of the game' around corridors. This will contribute to understanding on how agro-corridors can link farmers to innovation systems to build skills and knowledge.

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The mission of Wageningen University and Research is "To explore the potential of nature to improve the quality of life". Under the banner Wageningen University & Research, Wageningen University and the specialised research institutes of the Wageningen Research Foundation have joined forces in contributing to finding solutions to important questions in the domain of healthy food and living environment. With its roughly 30 branches, 5,000 employees and 10,000 students, Wageningen University & Research is one of the leading organisations in its domain. The unique Wageningen approach lies in its integrated approach to issues and the collaboration between different disciplines.



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The Centre for Development Innovation works on processes of innovation and change in the areas of food and nutrition security, adaptive agriculture, sustainable markets, ecosystem governance, and conflict, disaster and reconstruction. It is an interdisciplinary and internationally focused unit of Wageningen UR within the Social Sciences Group. Our work fosters collaboration between citizens, governments, businesses, NGOs, and the scientific community. Our worldwide network of partners and clients links with us to help facilitate innovation, create capacities for change and broker knowledge.

The mission of Wageningen UR (University & Research centre) is 'To explore the potential of nature to improve the quality of life'. Within Wageningen UR, nine specialised research institutes of the DLO Foundation have joined forces with Wageningen University to help answer the most important questions in the domain of healthy food and living environment. With approximately 30 locations, 6,000 members of staff and 9,000 students, Wageningen UR is one of the leading organisations in its domain worldwide. The integral approach to problems and the cooperation between the various disciplines are at the heart of the unique Wageningen Approach.

