

## **Horticultural Exports from Africa and Understanding Culture in Global Trade: A Review of the Literature**

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Horticultural exports (fresh vegetables, flowers) from sub-Saharan Africa constitute one of the rare economic successes of African agriculture in the past decades. Although its growth took shape within the context of economic liberalization, academic understandings of this export sector's success usually stress the highly regulated nature of this trade, focusing on economic institutions. European supermarkets and quality standards are often seen as major forces structuring the economic organization of the horticultural export business into global commodity or value chains. Such regulation is generally seen as functional, that is, transaction cost reducing, although added-value appropriation and unequal power relations within chains may be stressed.

The importance of institutions in the organization of this trade as stressed in the academic literature does not explain the large diversity in institutional arrangements and development trajectories that can be observed. For instance, large-scale capitalist production and smallholder production may co-exist or be articulated in particular export trades, with varying success. To understand this heterogeneity in organization and success of the horticultural export trade, this paper suggests a shift in perspective from generalized economic institutions, towards the sociogenesis of economic behaviour. A critical review of the literature suggests that socio-cultural forces and the embedding of horticultural production and trade in specific livelihoods may be major forces shaping economic behaviour of economic actors involved in this globalizing trade connecting different socio-cultural worlds. Thus this paper aims to contribute to understanding the understudied but salient point of culture in global trade.