

# Assessment of Rural Entrepreneurs Integration Strategies in Value Chain Activities: With Emphasis to Rural Micro and Small Enterprises Found in Arsi Zone

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## Abstract

Entrepreneurship development via value chain is an effective, and often the only route to building prosperous, dynamic, and sustainable economies across rural communities in developing countries, where majority are living in rural area. MSEs are one strategy through which entrepreneurship fostered in Ethiopia. But MSEs are not integrated into the value chain activities accordingly, and most of the time they cease their operation within short period of time because of lack of integration in the value chain activities. Hence, the overall objective of this study is to assess the extent to which rural entrepreneurs (MSEs) participated in the value chain activities and to identify integration strategies for rural entrepreneurs in the value chain activities in selected district of Arsi Zone. MSEs engaged in rural agricultural activities of three districts of Arsi Zone; namely Tiyo, Hetosa, and Digalu and Tijo were taken as target population for this study and considered as strata and proportionate stratified sampling was used to select respondents from the three districts. In order to determine the sample respondents from each stratum simple random sampling was used and the data was analyzed descriptively. The finding of the study revealed almost there is no as such clear integration of rural entrepreneurs in the value chain activities of their produces. Access to credit, access to technology, enterprise resource capability, market information, and enterprise profitability are the five top factors that influence rural entrepreneurs' participation in to the value chain activities. The research propose the value chain approach development specifically Value chain Upgrading and Financing for rural entrepreneurs found in Arsi Zone so as to ensure integration of them in the value chain activities.

**Keywords:** Value Chain, Integration, Rural entrepreneurs, MSEs

## 1. INRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background of the Study

Entrepreneurship is a key for development of every country. It can make people an extra mile runner who will genuinely run to create something unusual, something different. To be an entrepreneur is to be a blessed national economically, socially, psychologically and morally (Woretahu, 2010). That is why today every country government gives due attention for entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs play a key role in value chain development activities. The government of Ethiopia gives attention for the development of entrepreneurship in both rural and urban in order to achieve GTP-II and MDGs. Nowadays entrepreneurial activity is fostered in Ethiopia via establishment of MSEs throughout the country. Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) are key contributors to the well-being of developing country households, and have the potential to make significant contributions to national economic growth and poverty reduction. Besides, Entrepreneurship Development Centre/EDC was established in June, 2013. EDC runs the new Entrepreneurship Development Program in the country. Majority (82.40%) of Ethiopian population are living in rural area whereby the livelihood depends on agricultural produces. As rural economies change, new strategies for sustaining rural communities exist, such as encouraging entrepreneurship via value chain activities. Rural entrepreneurship is the creation of a new organization that introduces a new product, serves or creates a new market or utilizes a new technology in rural area. To have rural entrepreneurs the government of Ethiopia currently develop MSEs development strategy that form and promote entrepreneurs in rural areas.

A value chain describes the entire range of activities undertaken to bring a product from the initial input-supply stage, through various phases of processing, to its final market destination, and it includes its disposal after use. For instance, agro-food value chains encompass activities that take place at the farm or rural level, including input supply, and continue through handling, processing, storage, packaging, and distribution. As products move successively through the various stages, transactions take place between multiple chain stakeholders, money changes hands, information is exchanged and value is progressively added. Macroeconomic conditions, policies, laws, standards, regulations and institutional support services (communications, research, innovation, finance, etc.) –which form the chain environment – are also important elements affecting the performance of value chains (UNIDO,2009).

Value chain analysis is important in understanding markets, inter-firm relationships, and critical constraints

that limit MSME growth and industry competitiveness, while market-based, commercially viable solutions can result in results that are sustainable in the long run and that do not distort local markets. AFE's program design approach includes collaborating with and supporting the initiatives of Lead Firms (also referred to as Inclusive Businesses) that have the potential to increase their competitiveness and support the development of other stakeholders in their value chains (AFE, 2014).

A value chain constitutes whole range of discrete, though interrelated, activities involved in the design, production and marketing of a product (Porter, 1985). Entrepreneurship via value chain development is an effective, and often the only route to building prosperous, dynamic, and sustainable economies across rural communities. Rural producers are the starting point of most value chains. Helping them capture market opportunities, obtain fair deals, and produce higher-quality products improves value chain performance while increasing rural incomes and employment and harnessing economic growth for rural areas. There are rural entrepreneurs (MSEs) engaged in different agricultural business activities in Arsi Zone. Therefore, this research aimed at assessing extent to which rural entrepreneurs engaged in value chain activities and identifying integrating strategies in value chains activities for rural entrepreneurs from empirical evidences. And the research was mainly emphasis to Micro and Small Enterprises engaged in selected rural agriculture activities of Arsi Zone selected districts.

### 1.2. Statement of the Problem

The Millennium Development Goals set forth by the United Nations are a guiding light for international cooperation for development, in particular the target to halve the proportion of hungry and extremely poor people by 2015 (IFAD,2002). But the starting point to achieve this target must be the recognition that poverty is predominantly rural. The reality is that the millennium poverty target cannot be met unless the world addresses rural poverty. In developing countries, a significant proportion of national funds are used to support agricultural production inputs – primarily seeds, fertilizers and irrigation systems. Traditionally, little attention has been paid to the value chains by which agricultural products reach final consumers and to the intrinsic potential of such chains to generate value added and employment opportunities (UNIDO, 2009). It is becoming increasingly crucial for policy makers to focus immediate attention on agro-industries. Such industries, established along efficient value chains, can increase significantly the rate and scope of industrial growth. Agro-industrial products offer much better prospects of growth than primary commodities.

As rural economies change, new strategies for sustaining rural communities, such as encouraging entrepreneurs who are strongly engaged in value chain activities must be explored. Entrepreneurship has the potential to boost local economies by tapping local talent and resources via value chain development activities. Value chain development is fundamentally about strengthening market relationships so that businesses work better together to compete more effectively in the global market (Meihlbradt and McVay, 2005).

Entrepreneurship development via value chain is an effective, and often the only route to building prosperous, dynamic, and sustainable economies across rural communities. It is argued that integration into value chains helps the micro and small firms to: 1) increase the efficiency of its internal operation; 2) develop inter-firm linkages that reduce transaction costs; and 3) upgrade along the value chain (introduce product branding, new products, and improved version of existing products in the market faster than the rivals) (Kaplinsk, 2000). Studies also reveal that, by forging extensive collaborative ties between the firms facilitate: sharing of knowledge, technologies and inputs (Storper, 1997); develop greater responsiveness to global demands (Canina, 2005); and attain greater export levels as a result of collective efficiency and improving competitiveness of MSEs (Schmitz, 1995).

Moreover, agriculture-related industries are often labour-intensive and recruit much of their workforce from the most vulnerable population groups. Improving the performance of these industries can therefore have a direct positive impact on job creation and human security (UNIDO, 2013). That is why currently the government of Ethiopia give attention for agro-industries and MSEs engaged in agricultural sector.

At this time, the government of Ethiopia gives attention for fostering entrepreneurship through establishment of MSEs both in rural and urban areas. But MSEs are not integrated into the value chain activities accordingly, and most of the time failed within short period of time because of lack of integration in the value chain activities. Therefore, this study focused on assessment of integration strategies for rural entrepreneurs to value chain activities with emphasis to MSEs found in Arsi Zone of selected districts.

### 1.3. Research Questions

This research attempted to answer the following research questions;

- To what extent rural entrepreneurs engaged in the value chain activities?
- What are the factors that influence the participation of rural entrepreneurs in the value chain activities?
- What are strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of rural entrepreneurs' vis-à-vis their engagement in the value chain activities?

#### 1.4. Objectives of the Study

The overall objective of this study is to assess the extent to which rural entrepreneurs (MSEs) participated in the value chain activities and to identify integration strategies of rural entrepreneurs in the value chain activities.

Specifically the following objectives were achieved;

- To analyse the extent to which rural entrepreneurs engaged in value chain activities;
- To identify factors influencing participation of rural entrepreneurs in the value chain activities
- To conduct SWOT analysis of rural entrepreneurs vis-à-vis their engagement in value chain activities

## 2. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

### 2.1. Description of the Study Area

Arsi is one of the 17 zones of the Oromia National Regional State in Ethiopia. Arsi is bordered on the South by Bale, on the Southwest by the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and People's Regional State and West Arsi Zone, on the Northwest by East Shewa, on the North by the Afar Region and on the East by West Hararghe. Arsi zone has 25 districts. Of the 25 districts, this study focused on three districts; namely, Tiyo, Hetossa, and Digalu and Tijo. There are number of Micro and Small Enterprises/MSEs engaged in rural agriculture in aforementioned districts such as fattening, dairy, poultry, apiculture, nursery, and so on. Hence, the study focused on MSEs engaged in such agricultural business activities.

### 2.2. Sources and Method of Data Collection

Both primary and secondary sources of data were used for this research. The primary data were collected by questionnaire (Scheduled Interview Questionnaire), and Direct Observation. Scheduled Interview Questionnaire was collected by enumerators from members of MSEs engaged in selected rural agriculture sector. And Observation was made by visiting some of the business area of rural entrepreneurs/MSEs.

### 2.3. Target Population and Sampling Techniques

The target population for this study was MSEs engaged in rural agricultural activities of Arsi zone. In this zone there are 25 districts. From these districts three districts were selected purposively and because of the number of MSEs engaged in rural agriculture in the districts. Namely; Tiyo, Hetossa, and Digalu and Tijo. The total MSEs engaged in Rural Agriculture in the aforementioned districts were taken as the target population for the research. Each districts considered as strata and Proportionate Stratified Sampling was used to determine sample size from each stratum. From tabulated values of different sample sizes, a population of **837** individuals requires a minimum sample size of **272** for a 95% confidence level at 5% margin of error (Saunders, et.al 2009). Therefore, a proportionate stratified sampling was used to select 272 respondents from the three districts. And sample size from each district was determined as follows.

**Table 2.1: MSEs Engaged in Rural Agriculture**

S/No	Districts	Number of MSEs in Rural Agriculture	Sample Size of each district
1	Tiyo	101	33
2	Hetossa	169	55
3	Digalu and Tijo	567	184
	<b>Total</b>	<b>837</b>	<b>272</b>

*Source: Arsi Zone, MSEs Development Agency, 2014*

In order to determine the sample respondents from each stratum simple random sampling was used. Unfortunately, it was possible to obtain the data only from 200 respondents and hence the analysis was based on 200 respondents.

### 2.4. Method of Data Analysis

After collecting the data using questionnaire, and observation, it was analysed descriptively, inferentially, cross tabulation and using Value Chain Mapping. SPSS version 22 was used for questionnaire analysis. Finally, the summaries were presented in the form of tables, bar graph, frequency counts, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and interpreted in line with the objectives of the study.

## 3. MAJOR FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

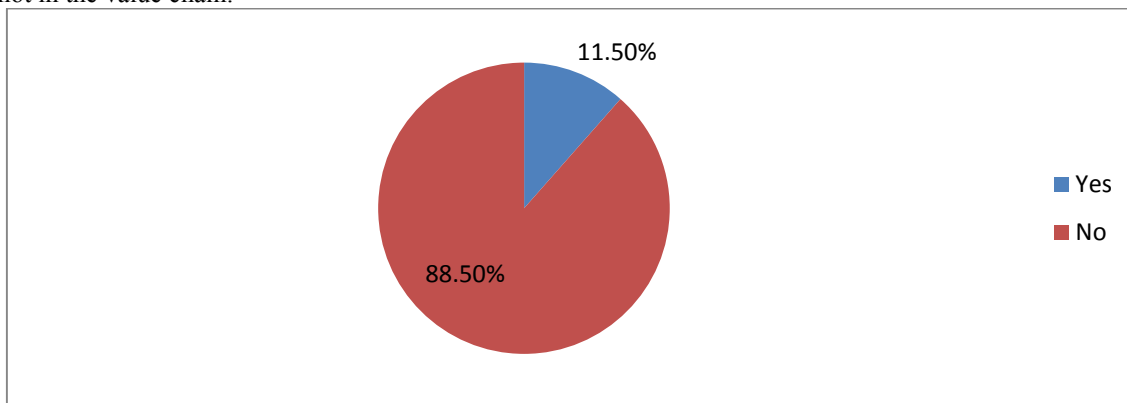
### 3.1. Extent of Rural Entrepreneurs Integrations in the Value Chain Activities

Value chain development is strengthening product to market systems to increase productivity and trade, and ultimately, economic returns for small producers/rural entrepreneurs and other actors in the value chain of that sector. The productivity and market improvements are the critical role of participation in value chain activities of rural entrepreneurs since their livelihood and food security can be expanded via it. The current productivity of rural entrepreneurs falls significantly below the demonstrated potential in developing countries as compared to

developed countries. Under this section the responses of rural entrepreneurs and previous findings on the issue were analyzed and substantiated to strengthen the findings.

### Existence of Integration

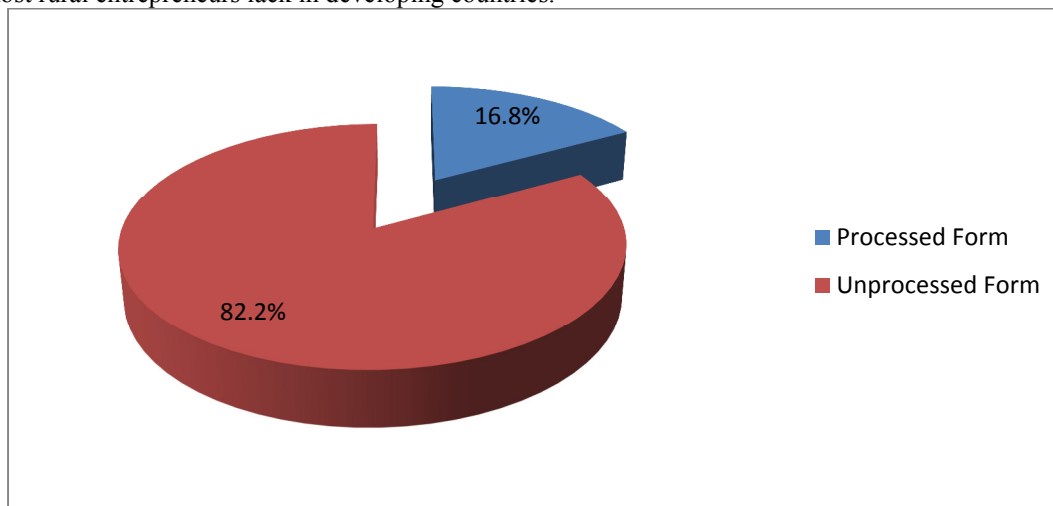
Value chain activities start from integration among the actors in the value chain, which means all the actors such as input suppliers, producers, processors, distributors, and retailers that participate in bringing a product or service from its conception to its end use in the market, as well as the extent and type of relationships between these actors. Hence, figure below shows the responses whether rural entrepreneurs integrated with others actor/s or not in the value chain.



**Figure 3.1: Existence of Integration**

*Source: Primary Data Survey, 2015*

The above figure (Figure 3.1) depicts that majority of rural entrepreneurs (88.50%) in the study area replied that they have no any integration with different actors in the value chain and only 11.5% of the respondents replied that they have integration with actors in value chain. The interview result also indicates that those who have integration integrated vertically both backward and forward and no one stated that they created horizontal integration. From this finding one can conclude that majority of rural entrepreneurs in the study are have no any integration though other findings proves that integration is crucial for participation in the value chain activities that most rural entrepreneurs lack in developing countries.



**Figure 3.2: Forms in which Rural Entrepreneurs Sold their Produces**

*Source: Primary Data Survey, 2015*

The above figure depicts that majority of the respondents (82.2%) sold their produces in unprocessed form, i.e. they sold without any value addition activities and the remaining only 16.8% add some value before selling. And this finding was compatible with findings given by Accelerated Micro enterprises Advancement Project shown in Table 3.1 below.

**Table 3.1: Comparative Data on Processing of Agricultural Products in Industrialized and Developing Countries.**

	Industrialized Countries	Developing Countries
Agricultural Products Processed (%)	98	38
Value added of Agricultural products processed (USD/Tone)	185	40

**Source: AMAP, 2013**

The above table conveys that agricultural products in industrialized countries are highly processed (98%) whereas only 38% of agricultural products are processed in developing countries. And also, value added agricultural products processed are 78.4% lower in developing countries as compared to industrialized countries. From this it is possible to conclude that developing countries engagements in the value chain activities are by far lower than industrialized countries. And also the same is true for rural entrepreneurs asked in the study area.

**Table 3.2: Current Situations of Rural Entrepreneurs Enterprises**

Description of the items	Yes		No		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
The competitiveness of the enterprise is increasing	14	7	186	93	200	100
Existence of access to International Marketing	48	24	152	76	200	100
Presence of training on value chain activities	35	17.5	165	82.5	200	100
Existence of workshop with actors in the value chain	35	17.5	165	82.5	200	100
Need of technical assistance	188	94	12	6	200	100

**Source: Primary Data Survey, 2015**

The above table (Table 3.2) reveals the current situation of rural entrepreneurs' enterprise with regard to competitiveness, access to international market, availability of training, existence of workshop, need for technical assistance. As shown above 186 (93%) of the respondents witnessed that their enterprises competitiveness was not increasing, and 152 (76%) of them disagree with existence of access to international marketing to them, 165 (82.5%) of them replied that there was no training given to them on the value chain activities, 165 (82.5%) also responded there was no workshop conducted so far with actors in the value chain. Besides, almost all 188 (94%) of the respondents replied that they need technical skills assistance so as to engaged themselves in the value chain activities. The finding was contrast with the outcome set by Entrepreneurship Development Program in Ethiopia support by UNDP that says by 2015, private sector-led Ethiopian manufacturing and services, especially MSME, sustainability improved their competitiveness and employment creation potential.

This finding also indicates that value chain analysis is important in understanding markets, inter-firm relationships, critical constraints that limit enterprise growth, and industry competitiveness. ILO approach to value chain focuses on improving value chains that offer opportunities to generate wealth, create jobs, and enhance job quality by providing technical support, coordination among the actors, networking and information dissemination, helping existing market systems. Therefore, poor competitiveness, absence of training, workshops, market access, and high need for technical assistance can be solved using ILO approach to value chains.

### 3.2. Factors Influencing Rural Entrepreneurs in Participation to Value Chain Activities

Although MSEs possess innate advantages in certain sectors, there may be significant obstacles to including them in competitive value chains activities. While trends like increased outsourcing and innovative use of information and communications technologies (ICTs) can create new opportunities, the growing concentration in ownership of buyer firms and the emergence of private international standards raise barriers to entry for small firms. Global competition is such that to survive, all firms must be part of a constant upgrading process. Only through linkages—with larger firms and with each other—can MSEs access the knowledge and resources necessary to compete (USAID, 2007).

This section explores the critical success factors that can influence small firms to achieve their productive potential within value chains activities. Hence, the following factors were identified and asked the level to which they influence rural entrepreneurs' participation in value chain activities.

**Table 3.3: Factors Influencing Rural Entrepreneurs Participation in Value Chain Activities**

Factors	Mean	Standard Deviation
Access to credit	2.705	0.825
Access to market information	2.62	0.56
Access to technology	2.64	0.751
Inter firm communication	2.39	0.748
Access to transformation facilities	2.44	0.497
Access to international markets	2.445	0.748
Training (learning opportunities)	2.49	0.560
Institutional support services	2.435	0.497
Distance from the market	2.49	1.142
Good governance among value chain actors	2.445	0.474
Storage facilities	2.46	0.714
Transaction cost	2.375	0.641
Knowledge and skill	2.49	0.814
Enterprise Profitability	2.605	1.365
Risk	2.46	0.523
Enterprise resource capability	2.625	0.412
Sustainability	2.41	0.743

**Source: Primary Data Survey, 2015**

**Key: No influence=0, low influence=1, medium influence=2, and high influence=3**

The above table revealed that (Table 3.3) revealed that access to credit, access to technology, enterprise resource capability are the three top factors that influence rural entrepreneurs participation in to the value chain activities with mean value of 2.705, 2.64, and 2.625. Almost factors such as access to market information, and enterprise profitability have approximate impact on rural entrepreneurs regarding participation to value chain activities. This finding is consistency with the study done by Canina and Harisson (2005) also found that integration of MSEs in to market is constrained by a host of factors such as small size, limited access to resources, information, skills, technology, and access to other business services. Inter firm communication, access to transportation facilities, access to international markets, access to training (learning opportunities), institutional support services, good governance among value chain actors, storage facilities, transaction cost, knowledge and skill, risk, sustainability are also influential factors that influence rural entrepreneurs from participation to further value addition activities.

The findings given by USAID (2005), stated that rural entrepreneurs often do not comfortable in interacting with other more from and larger business as they do not understand the language of business, and do not feel comfortable negotiating business contracts, or even negotiating basic pricing and ordering. And they are constraints by limited capacity and resources, vulnerability and over indebtedness, strong risk aversion, time poverty, high transaction costs, social exclusions, and limited knowledge of markets.

### **3.3. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats/SWOT of Rural Entrepreneurs in Value Chain Activities**

Environmental scanning plays a key role in strategy formulation by analysing the strengths and weaknesses and opportunities and threats in the environment. Environmental scanning is defined as monitoring, evaluating, and disseminating of information from external and internal environments to entrepreneurs/managers in enterprises so that long term health of the organization will be ensured and strategic shocks can be avoided. Any company's internal and external analysis is a prerequisite for entrepreneurs to succeed in crafting a strategy. Even though rural entrepreneurs often differ significantly from each other with respect to the way they strategically position their products in the market in terms of such factors as the distribution channels they use, the market segments they serve, the quality of their products, technological leadership, customer service, pricing policy, advertising policy, and promotions. As a result of these differences, within most industries it is possible to observe groups of enterprises in which each company follows a business model that is similar to that pursued by other companies in the group. Accordingly, in this research rural entrepreneurs engaged in different business activities are taken as strategic groups and their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats were identified with observation and respondents responses.

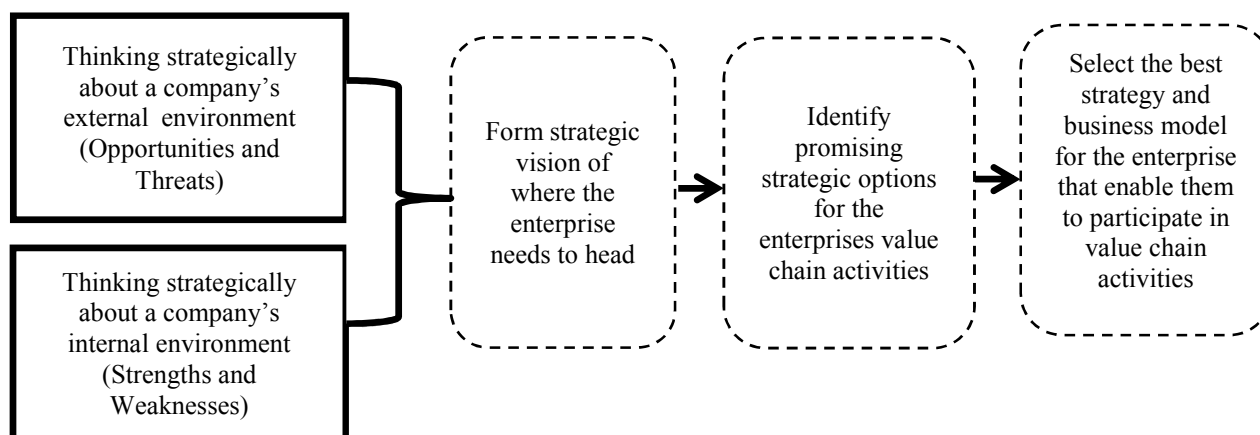


Figure 3.3: From thinking Strategically to Choosing a Strategy Model, taken from Porter, 1985

Table 4.4: SWOT Analysis of MSEs for Integrations into Value Chain Activities

<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commitment and willingness for integration</li> <li>• Low cost production in rural areas</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of adequate skill to upgrading</li> <li>• Absences of strong linkage with buyers/users</li> <li>• Lack of knowledge about end market conditions</li> <li>• Absence of collaboration among rural entrepreneurs</li> <li>• Inability to produce the required quality level</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Favourable government policy</li> <li>• Access to information via mobile</li> <li>• Proximity to markets</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weak linkage among the actors in value chains</li> <li>• Absence of formal value chain governance</li> <li>• Lack of cooperation from large firms in the industry</li> <li>• Requirement for higher standards and increased competition</li> <li>• Absence of institution that deals on Value Chain Approach</li> <li>• Absence of technology that enable them to Participate in Value chain activities</li> </ul>

## 4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 4.1. Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study the following conclusions are drawn

- The value chain approach offers a way of addressing the deficiencies of rural entrepreneurs. It has the potential to high light path ways for inclusive economic growth by identifying leverage points along the chain be it upstream or downstream, which if addressed, yield the highest positive outcome for small producers, traders, and processors. But currently there is almost non-existence of integration in the value chain activities of rural entrepreneurs in Arsi Zone.
- Involvement of rural entrepreneurs in value chain activities in the study is very low majority of them indicated that they sale their produces without further processing.
- Access to credit, access to technology, enterprise resource capability, market information, and enterprise profitability are the five top factors that influence rural entrepreneurs' participation in to the value chain activities.
- Rural entrepreneurs in the study area have strengths such as commitment and weaknesses that include lack of adequate skill to upgrading, absences of strong linkage with buyers/users, lack of knowledge about end market conditions, absence of collaboration among rural entrepreneurs.

### 4.2. Recommendations

In the Value chain approach all the actors (including producers, processors, distributors, and retailers) that

participate in bringing a product or services from its conception to its end use in the market, as well as the extent and type of relationships between these actors have influence the value chain approach. Based on the finding, the researcher recommends the following points:

- Entrepreneurship is a good and efficient tool to development of rural areas. Existence of some entrepreneurs in rural area alone couldn't bring the development. Entrepreneurs in rural area should sustain and participate in innovative activities. For this the governments at different level, NGOs, higher education institutions should work on integrating rural entrepreneurs in to the value chain activities.
- Currently in the study area there is no clear value chain from which rural entrepreneurs obtain benefits. Therefore, government should facilitate the participation of MSEs/rural entrepreneurs in the value chain activities by fostering an enabling policy, legal and regulatory environment and by providing public goods such as basic infrastructure (road, electric power, and pure water), education, and training, and information services that enable them to benefit from value chain of their produces.
- Access to credit is one of the crucial factor that influence participation of rural entrepreneurs in to value chain activities; therefore the government should implement value chain financing model that was successfully implemented in many developing countries and foster the participation of rural entrepreneurs in to the value chain activities.
- In order to encourage value chain activities by rural entrepreneurs, the government should develop strategic partnership with local MSEs/rural entrepreneurs to develop services to value chain stakeholders like processing, storage facilities, transport, maintenance and repair, input supply. And encourage development and establishment of agro industries in Arsi zone providing pulling factors for domestic and foreign investors.
- Establishing a plat form that bring together stakeholders from different production stages and sectors, to create a productive and innovative dialogue and draw attention to mutual benefits of all stake holders from the value chain development.

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