5.1 The role of partnerships in unlocking BioTrade potential

The governance of biodiversity-based endeavours, including BioTrade, requires the orchestration of diverse actors and multi-level incentives in terms of regulation, finance, technology and capacity building. In a scenario of growing demand for biodiversity-based products and services, partnerships will play an important role in further strengthening frameworks, mechanisms and networks to scale up BioTrade, from both supply and demand sides.

Introduction

BioTrade reflects many of the most complex challenges society faces today, especially in natural resource-based developing economies. It can be of great value in overcoming the persistently incentivized misalignment between sustainable use of natural resources and economic growth, rural development and international trade. It is amidst these challenges that many opportunities for BioTrade lie. In seizing these, BioTrade can contribute to unlocking long-term development in line with the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and SDGs (12, 15 and 17) (UNCTAD, 2015a; UNCTAD, 2016a).

In this context, partnerships are being recognized as a fundamental element to foster cooperation among actors for achieving all SDGs. Similarly, partnerships will play an important role in BioTrade initiatives.

"BioTrade reflects many of the most complex challenges society faces today, especially in natural resource-based developing economies..."

Orchestrating the governance of BioTrade

The governance of BioTrade, and biodiversity-based endeavours, requires orchestration of diverse actors and multi-level incentives due to its value chains and characteristics (Becerra, 2009b). This means engaging public organizations (at international, national and subnational levels), private sector – ranging from transnational corporations (TNCs) to SMEs – development banks, civil society (including NGOs, think tanks and academia), and indigenous and local communities in a common framework aiming at putting biodiversity and livelihoods at the heart of trade agendas and increasing the likelihood of achieving the SDGs.

In a scenario of growing demand for biodiversity-based products and services (UNCTAD, 2013) and increasing pressures on natural resources (UNEP, 2012), partnerships will play an important role in further strengthening governance frameworks, mechanisms and networks to scale up the BioTrade agenda, from both supply and demand sides. Therefore, further advancements may be reinforced in terms of regulation, governance, finance, technology and capacity building to foster the climate for common solutions.

From the regulatory framework perspective, partnerships between governments, the private sector and civil society are essential for enhancing BioTrade-related international trade and MEA implementation at national level (Chandra and Idrisova, 2011). This means that all countries can implement the appropriate policies, mechanisms and institutional architecture for taking advantage of BioTrade opportunities.

Partnerships are also key for enabling multi-level and multisectoral governance dedicated to more innovative, inclusive and participatory arrangements (including market-based, self-regulation and/or co-regulation) (Hepburn, 2006). This may enhance the already existing set of environmental, social and economic sustainability criteria that guides the commercialization of bio-based products and services such as BioTrade (UNCTAD, 2007a).

The financial system may be of great value in two ways. Firstly, by freeing access to finance to enhance...
processes, equipment and facilities and to develop value added products in compliance with market requirements. Secondly, by providing market information, guarantees and loans suitable to SMEs’ needs, on one side, and TNCs, on the other, in favour of more equitable value chains (Jaramillo, 2012; Klein et al., 2014).

Lastly, the implementation of measures towards capacity building for enhancing supply chain management under social and environmental concerns, technological development and data and monitoring, may greatly contribute to innovative arrangements in order to strengthen BioTrade practices across sectors and among countries while conserving nature.

**Partnerships as challenges and opportunities for BioTrade**

Existing experiences from developing and developed countries highlight the importance of building partnerships when dealing with biodiversity and BioTrade, as a means to match societal demands, priorities and expectations towards sustainable development. More specifically, BioTrade initiatives require more than “one size fits all” solutions. They mobilize a broad number of stakeholders in view of the need to capture different approaches, knowledge and expertise, such as entrepreneurship, innovation, value chain and ecosystem thinking, while considering the local circumstances of beneficiaries.

In this context, partnerships are fundamental for a global BioTrade strategy that fosters economic growth and reinforces intergovernmental commitments (e.g. CBD and CITES) and, at the same time, contemplates development opportunities for local communities from developing countries based on the sustainable use of biodiversity.

In a globalized world where everyone has the right to have a say – from natural resource-based traditional communities to consumers – collaboration via partnerships will be crucial for addressing emerging issues that will impact the biodiversity-based and BioTrade global scenario.