

## ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RESEARCH COUNCIL IMPACT REPORT



### For awards ending on or after 1 November 2009

This Impact Report should be completed and submitted using the **grant reference** as the email subject to **reportsofficer@esrc.ac.uk** on or before the due date.

Completion of this Impact Report is mandatory. It will not be possible to edit this Impact Report at a later date, as it is designed to provide a statement of the impacts of your project to date 12 months after your grant ends.

**Please note that the Impact Report will only be accepted if all sections have been completed in full.** If a section does not apply to you, please enter 'n/a'. Grant holders will not be eligible for further ESRC funding until the Report is accepted. (Please see Section 5 of the ESRC Research Funding Guide for details.)

Please refer to the Guidance notes when completing this Impact Report. In particular, the notes explain what the ESRC means by 'impact'.

<b>Grant Reference</b>	RES-167-25-0195-A		
<b>Grant Title</b>	Governance implications of private standards initiatives in Agri-food chains		
<b>Grant Start Date</b>	01/05/07	<b>Total Amount Expended:</b>	£216,861.34
<b>Grant End Date</b>	09/05/10		
<b>Grant holding Institution</b>	University of Leeds		
<b>Grant Holder</b>	Dr Anne Tallontire		
<b>Grant Holder's Contact Details</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Email</b>	
	School of Earth and Environment, University of Leeds, LS2 9JT	a.m.tallontire@leeds.ac.uk	
		<b>Telephone</b> 0113 34 36469	
<b>Co-Investigators (as per project application):</b>		<b>Institution</b>	
Valerie Nelson		NRI, University of Greenwich	
Adrienne Martin		NRI, University of Greenwich	

[note: Dr Maggie Opondo was not included as a Co-I on the application due to the challenges associated with registering the University of Nairobi with the ESRC in the time available.]

To cite this output:

Tallontire, AM, *et al* (2011) Governance Implications of Private Standards Initiatives in Agri-Food Chains  
ESRC Impact Report, RES-167-25-0195-A. Swindon: ESRC

## 1. SCIENTIFIC IMPACT

A Please **summarise** below the scientific impact(s) your project has had. [*Max 250 words*]

Our work has had scientific impact through contributions to theoretical debates and by extending empirical understanding. Our research on the politics and governance of private standards is at the forefront of a new wave of institutional analysis in the context of the global value chain. This looks beyond both the practice oriented debates about content and implementation of private standards and beyond more recent work on the impact in terms of changes achieved worker and smallholder living standards and organisational development. Instead there is the beginning of an exciting new field of enquiry which seeks to understand private standards, and related initiatives, in global value chains in terms of whose interests they promote and whose interests and voices are excluded, the issues they tackle and the dynamic power relations embedded within them, including the inter-play of actors and ideas at different spatial scales from the global to the local. Our work has contributed to a more nuanced understanding of standards as political rather than technical instruments and to a better understanding of the horizontal dynamics of value chain governance.

In particular we have based our research on a grounded, in-depth field analysis with diverse stakeholders at multiple levels. This has provided rich empirical material on the perspectives and interactions between companies, NGOs, trade unions, auditors, donors, smallholders and workers etc. It has also enabled us to advance theoretical understanding drawing on a real world, dynamic and evolving case study of a constellation of actors and set of processes.

B Please outline the **findings and outputs** from your project which have had the scientific impact(s) outlined in 1A. [*Max 250 words*]

Focusing on fresh vegetables and cut flowers from Kenya, the project explored what private standards and initiatives mean for 'governance' or the exercise of power. It explored the power relations amongst different groups participating in or excluded from Private Standards Initiatives (PSIs) with a view to identifying which actors were most powerful and how roles were changing.<sup>1</sup> The powerful role of retailers and exporters in PSIs has been highlighted, but also how new actors such as donors, NGOs (international and national), researchers and auditors have played a role in shaping these initiatives. We showed how smallholders and workers have been effectively excluded from the debates and how NGOs etc that seek to speak for smallholders and workers have also been constrained. The dominant narratives of retailers have shaped views of potential solutions, whilst local priorities and alternative narratives have been sidelined or remain unarticulated.<sup>2</sup> Our fieldwork in Kenya demonstrated the limited ability of PSIs to instigate transformative change. There have been some improvements in how labour rights and good agricultural practices standards have been implemented and some changes to standards and audits reflect local conditions, particularly on food safety. However, the highly political nature of private standards and related

<sup>1</sup> Tallontire, A; Opondo, M; Nelson, V; Martin, A (forthcoming 2011) Beyond The Vertical? Using Value Chains And Governance As A Framework To Analyse Private Standards Initiatives In Agri-Food Chains. . *Agriculture and Human Values*, Online first, doi:10.1007/s10460-009-9237-2.

<sup>2</sup> Tallontire, A (2010) In the name of the farmer and of the worker? Emerging spaces for smallholder and worker participation in agricultural value chains, Presentation at ESRC Workshop, The Global Politics of Rural Development in Sub-Saharan Africa, University of Warwick, 14<sup>th</sup> September 2010.

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institutions and the power inequalities involved means that the agenda is largely about how to ensure compliance rather than how to institutionalize improvements on farms.<sup>3</sup>

Our work also shows that it is fruitful to consider standards in a systemic fashion – too often standards are treated as individual entities separated from their context – rather than studied as part of a process of power struggles and local context.<sup>4</sup>

C Please outline **how** these impacts were achieved. [*Max 250 words*]

Presentations have been made to date at academic workshops at Leeds (2008, 2009, 2010), Muenster (2008) Manchester, Aston, Warwick (all 2010) universities and the STEPS Annual Conference at Sussex (2010) (STEPS is an ESRC centre working on Social, Technological and Environmental Pathways to Sustainability) and the European Association of Development Institutes conference (2008).

Some of the seminar presentations were to academics working on standards, worker rights, agriculture and sustainability but the audience of one comprised academics working more theoretically on 'collaborative governance' in a wide range of sectors. We therefore sought to disseminate our research beyond a niche in development studies/ business and development.

One paper has been accepted for publication (available online) in *Agriculture and Human Values*, and a book chapter is due to be published by Ashgate. Nelson's presentation at the STEPS Centre conference has led to an invitation to contribute to a special issue of *Development and Change* focusing on environmental justice. A further article drawing on our field work with farmers and workers in relation to spaces for participation is about to be submitted to *Geoforum*.

We plan to further disseminate our work in development studies journals and also in journals focusing on business. An article is in preparation focusing on dominant narratives in ethical sourcing that we anticipate submitting to *Journal of Business Ethics*. A paper based on engagement with the private sector in the 'beyond auditing' debates will be submitted to the forthcoming Corporate Responsibility Research Conference, September 2011.

D Please outline **who** the findings and outputs outlined above had an impact upon. This can include specific academics/researchers through to broader academic groups. [*Max 250 words*]

We have presented our findings to social and political scientists interested in governance and politics of the food system (conferences etc at Universities of Muenster, Aston, Warwick); development studies (University of Manchester development economics series and Development Studies Association Business and Development event at Leeds) and at the STEPS Centre (Social, Technological and Environmental Pathways to Sustainability).

Our work has influenced other researchers and academics. E.g. working in the area of value

<sup>3</sup> Nelson, VJ; Tallontire, AM; Opondo, M; Martin, A (Not yet published) Pathways of transformation or transgression? Power relations, ethical space and labour rights in Kenyan cut flower value chains. In: Goodman, M; Sage, C (Ed) *Food Transgressions: Making Sense of Contemporary Food Politics*. Ashgate.

<sup>4</sup> Nelson, V. (2010) Pathways of Power in African Agri-Food Chains, presentation at STEPS Conference 2010: Pathways to Sustainability, (STEPS Centre: Social, Technological and Environmental Pathways to Sustainability) <http://www.slideshare.net/Stepscentre/valerie-nelson-pathways-of-power-in-african-agrifood-chains..>

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chain analysis (e.g. Peter Lund Thomsen at Copenhagen Business School and Lone Riisgaard at Danish Institute for International Studies. DIIS); political scientists concerned with private governance (Doris Fuchs, Muenster and Agni Kalfagianni, Vreij University Amsterdam), academics working specifically on social and environmental and food safety standards (e.g. at Michigan State University) as well as economic geographers (cited by Stefan Ouma and Suzanne Friedberg).

Our development of the concept of ‘horizontal governance’ in value chains has been cited by a number of academics (in some cases the citation is a paper published just as we started the project and which formed the basis of the proposal).

Team members were named on a proposal to the Danish Research Council led by Copenhagen Business School that aims to examine MSIs in the cotton sector. Nelson and Tallontire were invited to form part of this team as the project leader wanted to draw on our methodology.

Opondo has been invited join the ‘Capturing the Gains’ research network,  
<http://www.capturingthegains.org/>

The framework for analysis of formal governance was also used in a PhD at DIIS (Riisgaard).

## 2. ECONOMIC AND SOCIETAL IMPACT

A Please **summarise** below the economic and societal impact(s) your project has had. [*Max 250 words*]

The importance of our research has been in revealing the power relations at work across standard systems. Whilst it is not surprising that more powerful actors in global value chains, (principally but not exclusively private sector ones) exert power to further their own interests it is in the unpacking of how this governance process plays out that we reveal important insights. The work makes a timely contribution to on-going debates about how private standards are chosen as the tool for action, how their content and approach is bounded and implemented, who pays for certification, how purchasing practices affect the efficacy of standards. Our research asks questions about the priority given to standards in the supply chains operating between supermarkets and producers in Africa, at the expense of more transformative processes.

There is a groundswell of thinking amongst those practicing ethical sourcing and seeking to promote it (e.g. multi-stakeholder initiatives) that recognizes the flaws in current approaches and seeks to move the agenda forwards: e.g. ‘beyond auditing’, ‘beyond compliance’ and beyond the sort of technocratic, risk–minimizing and top-down approaches that have come to the fore.

We have provided concepts, evidence and analysis to advance the debates on standards. These include:

- a) Mapping players and unpacking processes in the legislative, judicial and executive aspects of the governance of standards, highlighting who is included and excluded;

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- b) Characterising the power relations associated with different kinds of space for participation;
- c) The call for enhanced ‘political literacy’ amongst participants in private standards initiatives

B Please outline the **findings and outputs** from your project which have had the economic and societal impact(s) outlined in 2A. *[Max 250 words]*

Focusing on fresh vegetables and cut flowers from Kenya, the project explored the powerful role of retailers and exporters in PSIs, but also how newer actors in the area such as donors have played a role in shaping these initiatives - both in terms of how they are structured but also how the agenda for debate is set. We showed how smallholders and workers have been effectively excluded from the debates and how other organizations e.g. NGOs that seek to speak for smallholders and workers are constrained. Our project provided evidence of worker and smallholder perspectives that sometimes diverged from the objectives embodied within standards and that demonstrate exclusion from discourse and action. It has revealed the dynamics of the relevant governance processes. This includes the trend towards an increasingly distanced, ‘command and control’ style approach of retailers that emphasizes compliance and reliance on technical instruments.

We showed how private standards initiatives are not neutral but are highly political. Our research has revealed that efforts to improve social auditing of labour rights standards through local multi-stakeholder approaches have stumbled due to a continued failure to recognize social and political context and the imbalance in power and resources, both between actors in the local context but also in the value chain<sup>5 6</sup>

The main outputs that have brought these findings to a wider audience have been:

- Validation and Feedback workshop, Nairobi 2010
- Politics of Private Standards: Briefing Paper 1
- Presentation at the RIIA/ DFID seminar Procurement for Development
- Project website
- Presentation at Women Working Worldwide international meeting.

C Please outline **how** these impacts were achieved. *[Max 250 words]*

These impacts have been achieved through dialogue with specific organisations and individuals, presentations at stakeholder conferences and internet communications.

At the outset of our project we met with key staff members of standards initiatives (specifically the Ethical Trading Initiative and GlobalGAP) to introduce the project and gather advice on how best to disseminate findings. Our ongoing dialogue with the ETI led to an invited presentation at the DFID/RIIA seminar as part of the Procurement for Development Forum and the ETI’s support for our proposed follow-on project.

<sup>5</sup> Tallontire, A; Opondo, M; Nelson, V; Martin, A (forthcoming 2011) Beyond The Vertical? Using Value Chains And Governance As A Framework To Analyse Private Standards Initiatives In Agri-Food Chains. , *Agriculture and Human Values*, Online first, doi:10.1007/s10460-009-9237-2.

<sup>6</sup> Nelson, VJ; Tallontire, AM; Opondo, M; Martin, A (Not yet published) Pathways of transformation or transgression? Power relations, ethical space and labour rights in Kenyan cut flower value chains . In: Goodman, M; Sage, C (Ed) *Food Transgressions: Making Sense of Contemporary Food Politics*, Ashgate.

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Throughout the project we have participated in numerous retailer, donor, NGO and standards initiative workshops and conferences (including ETI, ISEAL, Standards and Trade Development Facility, Food and Farming Futures Project, Solidaridad-ISEAL, Women Working Worldwide), with a view to networking with potential users and to publicise the project. The profile of the project has been maintained in Kenya through the participation of Dr Opondo in standards and horticulture-related workshops and conferences including Business Social Compliance Initiative; Marks and Spencer; African Insect Science for Food and Health (ICIPE); Global Horticultural Workers and Environmental Rights Network (GHOWERN) and Better Work Advisory Committee.

There was strong demand to feedback our findings so we held a feedback/validation workshop in Nairobi in January 2010 (this was not in the original proposal). Our interviews and workshops have consolidated good relationships and key individuals have shown interest in taking the work forward.

We have a regularly maintained website and have produced a Briefing Note that has been disseminated widely by email.

D Please outline **who** the findings and outputs outlined above had an impact upon. This can be at a broad societal level through to specific individuals or groups. *[Max 250 words]*

Our main impact has been on multi-stakeholder standards organisations, civil society organisations working on private standards as well as consultants.

As noted elsewhere we have continued this engagement in a Follow-On proposal to the ESRC which was developed in partnership with Women Working Worldwide and the Lorna Young Foundation, selected on the basis of their experience in the private sector and development of worker and farmer networks in Africa as well as their research and advocacy capacity. We presented at a workshop organised by Women Working Worldwide in April 2011.

We have had some impact on individuals in the private sector (particularly ethical trade or CSR officers who are increasingly open to discuss ideas), but especially as they may be quite isolated in their organisations, further impact in retailer or food brand companies cannot be claimed. This is an objective in our follow-on project.

We have influenced standards organisations which act as important gatekeepers to private sector stakeholders adopting their standards, as well as being important actors in their own right. In particular we have gained the attention of the Ethical Trading Initiative (the director of which has written a letter of support for our ESRC follow-on proposal) and the ISEAL Alliance (with whom the PI is a co-applicant for an FP7 European Union project and which sent a working letter of support for the Copenhagen Business School proposal for which Nelson and Tallontire are co-investigators, as did Fairtrade International). The chief executive of the Kenya Flower Council has also sent us supportive emails.

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### 3. UNEXPECTED AND POTENTIAL FUTURE IMPACTS

#### A Unexpected Impacts

Please note which, if any, of the impacts that your research has had were *unexpected* at the outset of the research, explaining where possible why you think this was the case. *[Max 250 words]*

n/a

#### B Potential Future Impacts

If you have a clear idea of the impact your research is likely to have in the future please detail these below. *[Max 250 words]*

Our research provides rich empirical evidence from Kenya, and draws on examples from other countries. However, there are also opportunities to share lessons with other researchers working in other types of value chains and geographical locations and who have new findings to share, that will create more than the sum of the parts.

Moreover, the impact of our research findings can be maximized by translating the findings from this academic study of this situation into more policy-friendly and practitioner-friendly materials, language and concepts.

Whilst many companies and other stakeholders have been aware of our research project, they have also asked for increased interpretation of what the findings mean for them and for others involved in ethical sourcing and responsible business. Some elements of our findings may not be immediately palatable to certain stakeholders, as they may feel threatened or challenged. Our validation meetings (e.g. in Nairobi January 2010) and presentations to certain stakeholders indicate that more work is required to communicate our findings and to build up political literacy about private standards in global value chains – amongst other academics, policy-makers, and practitioners.

We have therefore submitted to the ESRC an application for a follow-on project, together with two civil society organisations (**Politics of Private Standards: Advancing a development agenda**). This aims to build on our initial presentations and our contacts to translate academic study into policy-friendly and practitioner-friendly language and concepts.

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## 4. IMPACT LIMITATIONS

### A Limited scientific impact

Please state below any major scientific difficulties that have limited the scientific impact of your research. The statement should refer to an effect on *impact* rather than simply detail research difficulties. *[Max 250 words]*

n/a

### B Limited economic and societal impact

ESRC recognises that some of the research it funds will not have an economic or societal impact in the short term. Please explain briefly below if this is the case for your project, and refer to your grant application where relevant. *[Max 250 words]*

n/a

### C No impact to date

This project has had no impact to date

Please note that ESRC projects are evaluated on the basis of their scientific and/or economic and societal impact. Grant holders are expected to report any future impacts as they occur using the Impact Record, downloadable from the ESRC website.

If you have no impacts at this stage, please give reasons below. *[Max 250 words]*

n/a



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## 5. DECLARATIONS

Please read the statements below. Submitting this Impact Report to **reportsofficer@esrc.ac.uk** confirms your agreement.

- i) This Impact Report is an accurate statement of the impacts of the research project to date. All co-investigators named in the proposal to ESRC or appointed subsequently have seen and approved the Report.
- ii) Details of any subsequent impacts will be submitted via an Impact Record as they occur.

Thank you for completing this Impact Report. Your Impact Report will be considered along with your End of Award Report in the evaluation of your research.

You are now invited to complete the confidential Nominations form, which will assist with the evaluation of your project.

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## NOMINATED OUTPUTS

Please nominate a maximum of two outputs from your research which you would like to be considered as part of the evaluation.

<b>Output type</b> (eg journal article, book, newspaper article, conference proceedings)	<b>Publication details</b> (eg author name, date,, title, publisher details)	<b>Uploaded toESRC website?</b> (Yes/No)
Journal article	Tallontire, A M; Opondo, M; Nelson, V; Martin, A. (2011 forthcoming). Beyond The Vertical? Using Value Chains And Governance As A Framework To Analyse Private Standards Initiatives In Agri-Food Chains. <i>Agriculture and Human Values</i> , doi:10.1007/s10460-009-9237-2.	Yes
Book Chapter	Nelson, VJ; Tallontire, AM; Opondo, M; Martin, A (Not yet published) Pathways of transformation or transgression? Power relations, ethical space and labour rights in Kenyan cut flower value chains , In: Goodman, M; Sage, C (Ed) <i>Food Transgressions: Making Sense of Contemporary Food Politics</i> , Ashgate.	Yes

Please email your completed Impact Report with electronic copies of your nominated outputs to [reportsofficer@esrc.ac.uk](mailto:reportsofficer@esrc.ac.uk), using your **grant reference number** as the email subject.