

## ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RESEARCH COUNCIL END OF AWARD REPORT



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

This End of Award 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.

The final instalment of the grant will not be paid until an End of Award Report is completed in full and accepted by ESRC.

Grant holders whose End of Award Report is overdue or incomplete will not be eligible for further ESRC funding until the Report is accepted. ESRC reserves the right to recover a sum of the expenditure incurred on the grant if the End of Award Report is overdue. (Please see Section 5 of the ESRC Research Funding Guide for details.)

Please refer to the Guidance notes when completing this End of Award Report.

<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>	10/09/07	<b>Total Amount</b>	£216,861.34
<b>Grant End Date</b>	9/05/10	<b>Expended:</b>	
<b>Grant holding Institution</b>	University of Leeds		
<b>Grant Holder</b>	Dr Anne Tallontire		
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<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.]

## 1. NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

Please provide below a project summary written in non-technical language. The summary may be used by ESRC to publicise your work and should explain the aims and findings of the project.

*[Max: 250 words]*

Suppliers in agri-food chains are required to comply with an ever-growing set of standards to secure market access. This project is concerned with private standards initiatives (PSIs) and the actors involved in developing and monitoring these standards particularly those in developing countries.

Focusing on fresh vegetables and cut flowers from Kenya, the project explores what private standards and initiatives mean for 'governance' or the exercise of power. It explores the power relations amongst different groups and organisations participating in or excluded from PSIs with a view to identifying which are most powerful and how roles are changing.

Our research highlights the powerful role of retailers and exporters in PSIs, but also how new actors such as donors have played a role in shaping these initiatives. We show how smallholders and workers have been effectively excluded from the debates and how other organisations such as NGOs that seek to speak for smallholders and workers are also constrained in the context of retailer power.

Our fieldwork in Kenya demonstrates the limited ability of PSIs in this particular situation 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. However, the highly political nature of private standards and related institutions and the power inequalities involved means that the agenda is largely about how to ensure compliance rather than how to institutionalise improvements on farms.

## 2. PROJECT OVERVIEW

### a) Objectives

Please state the aims and objectives of your project as outlined in your proposal to the ESRC.

*[Max: 200 words]*

The overall objective of the project is to examine the governance implications of private standards initiatives (PSIs) in agri-food chains, particularly with respect to southern actors and institutions by developing a conceptual framework that draws on value chain analysis and insights from approaches to regulation.

There are three specific research questions:

1. How can we characterise the nature of governance in private standards initiatives?

2. What are the governance implications of "private standards initiatives" applied in agri-food chains, particularly with respect to actors and institutions in the south?

3. How do private standards initiatives change the relationship between the private sector and national institutions of governance, with respect to standards in the agri-food chain?

The overall hypothesis is that PSIs in agri-food chains have potential to displace and/or change domestic institutions of governance. Our research has implications for national institutions, accountability, local governance and democracy.

### **b) Project Changes**

Please describe any changes made to the original aims and objectives, and confirm that these were agreed with the ESRC. Please also detail any changes to the grant holder's institutional affiliation, project staffing or funding. *[Max 200 words]*

The original aims and objectives have not changed, but rather they have been refined as the conceptual framework has developed.

The grant holder's institutional affiliation has changed from the University of Greenwich to the University of Leeds (from September 2007).

The ESRC granted a 12 month no-cost extension to the Award due to the change in the grant-holder's institutional affiliation (and corresponding increase in teaching and administrative duties) and to account for the delay to the start of field work due to the post-election violence in Kenya in early 2008.

£ 3844.00 was allocated for administrative support by B J Oakenfull (directly incurred post). Such support was not available when the Award was moved to Leeds. Some of this has been vired to fund some ad hoc research assistance in the latter stages of the project.

### **c) Methodology**

Please describe the methodology that you employed in the project. Please also note any ethical issues that arose during the course of the work, the effects of this and any action taken. *[Max. 500 words]*

We analysed Private Standards Initiatives (PSIs) in the horticulture and floriculture global value chain (GVC) between Kenya and Europe, particularly the UK, drawing on previous field work and contacts. We chose this particular bilateral linkage to

study because of the importance of the sector to the country's exports as well as the morass of private standards and private standards initiatives being applied in the sector.

We focused on two PSIs in particular (HEBI and KenyaGAP) but considered these initiatives in the context of the highly dynamic standards environment and the patterns of involvement and power dynamics of and between different actors in the value chain and more horizontally in value chain governance. The GVC and the array of actors linked vertically through trading relationships was the starting point for scoping the study and then through an iterative process during phases of interviewing, workshops and documentary analysis we identified key actors both 'vertically' and 'horizontally' related to the chain (e.g. NGOs working with workers, local communities, auditors).

There were three main data creation processes:

- a) Key informant interviews
- b) Participatory workshops
- c) Focus group discussions (FGDs)

### **Key informant interviews**

We first interviewed representatives of private and multi-stakeholder standards bodies in the UK, elsewhere in Europe, donors in the UK and Germany and UK based NGOs. While in Kenya the interviews included representatives of Kenyan government, horticultural producers, private standards bodies, NGOs and trade unions. Over sixty key informant interviews were undertaken in Europe and Kenya.

### **Participatory workshops**

Three workshops were held in Nairobi in September 2008 which sought to map different perspectives concerning private standards and their implementation in Kenya and the trajectories of different PSIs. Participatory exercises were devised to elicit participants' understanding of the horticulture and floriculture value chain, key events affecting the value chain, including the evolution of standards, mapping key stakeholders with respect to certain standards and the relative influence they exert.

Different stakeholder groups were invited to separate workshops, to encourage free discussions and to be able to make comparisons between the perspectives of these different stakeholders. Participants for *Workshop A* were mainly from the private sector, while those for *Workshop B* from the public sector, auditors and trade unions and *Workshop C* participants were from NGOs and donors.

A feedback workshop for all stakeholder groups was held in January 2010.

### **Focus Group Discussions**

We held 29 FGDs with workers employed in firms which are implementing a range of private social and GAP standards and 18 FGDs with smallholders which have been implementing standards demanded by supermarkets (mostly GlobalGAP in these cases). The aim was to explore the workers and smallholders' awareness of standards, their participation and involvement (if any) in debates or action relating to private standards and local PSIs. The criteria used to select the FGD participants included: the period of implementation of standards; the geographical location and

the ability to access them.

It was important during primary data collection to promise confidentiality to the informants and due to the commercial and political sensitivity of the topic.

#### d) Project Findings

Please summarise the findings of the project, referring where appropriate to outputs recorded on *ESRC Society Today*. Any future research plans should also be identified. [Max 500 words]

With respect to the ‘formal governance structures’ of Private Standards Initiatives (PSIs), our analysis (in *Agriculture and Human Values* article) suggests that it is with respect to legislative governance in particular, and to a lesser extent judicial governance, that the horizontal dimensions of governance are apparent, e.g., actors from outside the value chain have contributed to debates about the content of standards. However, in terms of executive governance, the dominance of the ‘vertical’ aspects of governance is clear; it is the private sector players who have most influence, though other actors e.g. donors, and international multi-stakeholder initiatives (MSIs) through their provision and indeed withdrawal of support for the standards initiatives, shape the debates.

The potential of PSIs to enhance democratic governance is limited. Spaces for civil society engagement are claimed by alliances of less powerful groups but private sector players are able to shape the space to their own ends. Only certain kinds of civil society organisation are welcome to participate in PSIs, ones delivering a service to the private sector, rather than advocacy/ representative organisations. Our research does not suggest that the role of government is being usurped; on the contrary, private governance through KenyaGAP, has stimulated parts of the Kenyan government to act in a more co-ordinated way to promote production and sale of safe food.

In contrast the voice of workers and smallholders is not heard in PSIs. Despite their commercial involvement in these value chains and the claims of many PSIs to speak on their behalf, participation by smallholders and workers in the policy spaces created by private standards in Kenya is disjointed and ad hoc (article in preparation for *Antipode*). Moreover, worker and smallholder awareness centres on the technical aspects of codes. There are differences between the standards, as some (e.g. Fairtrade) offer more space for worker and smallholder voices, compared to others focusing on compliance with a narrower range of issues.

Our detailed analysis of the power pervading the policy space of Horticulture Ethical Business Initiative (HEBI) (*Food Transgressions* book chapter) indicates that new ethical spaces can be opened up by NGO and media pressure for broader stakeholder action on labour rights, but ensuring that that space is not transgressed by more powerful, private sector actors in the value chain (and international NGOs and MSIs) is a challenge. UK retailers have hidden power over labour rights in Kenya and, having flirted with southern MSIs, have moved back to the international sphere. Globally powerful retailers have shifted to compliance dominated approaches rather

than substantial investment and efforts to transform labour rights. We see the dominance of relatively closed spaces such as the industry associations' codes and emerging initiatives at the international level which are closely tied to a compliance agenda as opposed to one of improvement and empowerment. The spaces for dialogue may be changing but the changes are not transformative for workers and smallholders, because the narratives are dominated by more powerful interests. Support is therefore needed for less powerful groups to articulate their own alternative narratives.

**e) Contributions to wider ESRC initiatives (eg Research Programmes or Networks)**

If your project was part of a wider ESRC initiative, please describe your contributions to the initiative's objectives and activities and note any effect on your project resulting from participation. *[Max. 200 words]*

This project was part of the ESRC-DFID scheme on Poverty. We have only had contact with other projects in the scheme through participation in the workshop on enhancing impact in May 2008 and will be presenting our experience of the scheme at the ESRC/DFID scheme application workshop at Leeds Metropolitan University on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2010.

Some of the insights from this project are informing a large impact assessment study we are conducting on social and environmental standards funded by DFID. This is being undertaken in four countries, including Kenya and aims to provide systematic evidence on the differences (or not) that standards can make to workers and smallholders. We are drawing on the insights from this project to inform our understanding of what determines impact in different scenarios of value chain governance.

### 3. EARLY AND ANTICIPATED IMPACTS

#### a) Summary of Impacts to date

Please summarise any impacts of the project to date, referring where appropriate to associated outputs recorded on *ESRC Society Today*. This should include both scientific impacts (relevant to the academic community) and economic and societal impacts (relevant to broader society). The impact can be relevant to any organisation, community or individual. *[Max. 400 words]*

#### **Scientific**

Presentations have been made to date at academic workshops at Leeds (2008, 2009, 2010), Muenster (2008) Manchester (2010) and Aston Universities (2010) and the European Association of Development Institutes conference (2008), see 'Progress Update' on Project website, <http://see.leeds.ac.uk/typo3/thepoliticsofprivatestandards/>. Some of the seminar presentations were to academics working on standards, worker rights and agriculture 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*, a further article is in preparation and a book chapter is due to be published by Ashgate. Further articles are planned (see below).

Our work has influenced other researchers developing research proposals to examine private standards initiatives in other sectors. Team members were named on a proposal to the Danish Research Council that aims to examine MSIs in the cotton sector that draws on our methodology. The framework for analysis of formal governance was also used in a PhD from Danish Institute for International Studies (Riisgaard)

#### **Societal**

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.

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), 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 a variety of standards and horticulture-related workshops and conferences (including Business Social Compliance Initiative (BSCI), 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 the findings of the project so we held a feedback/validation workshop in Nairobi in January 2010 (this was not in the original proposal but proved very worthwhile). Our interviews and workshops have consolidated good relationships and key individuals have shown interest in taking the work forward.

**b) Anticipated/Potential Future Impacts**

Please outline any anticipated or potential impacts (scientific or economic and societal) that you believe your project might have in future. *[Max. 200 words]*

At some workshops we have been encouraged to explore in more depth the incentives and strategies of the retailers and therefore plan to write an article for a business oriented journal on ethical sourcing and the multiple roles of local PSIs.

We also anticipate producing a paper that brings together the conceptual and methodological insights we have developed during the project on value chain governance processes, powerspheres and alternative narratives.

We hope to develop a follow-on grant proposal to ESRC to enhance worker and smallholder awareness of standards and the political processes they embody and to enhance dialogue and transparency between actors along the value chain. We hope to work closely with organisations in Kenyan civil society and the private sector to develop this proposal as well as draw on our links with organisations such as ETI and Kenya Flower Council. We are considering ways to assist less powerful groups to articulate their own alternative narratives in value chain governance, e.g. participatory video to facilitate learning and advocacy.

We have recently sent out an email to our contact list to publicise our updated website (which includes outputs) and will shortly send out an email with a policy brief.

You will be asked to complete an ESRC Impact Report 12 months after the end date of your award. The Impact Report will ask for details of any impacts that have arisen since the completion of the End of Award Report.



## 4. DECLARATIONS

Please ensure that sections A, B and C below are completed and signed by the appropriate individuals. The End of Award Report will not be accepted unless all sections are signed.

Please note hard copies are NOT required; electronic signatures are accepted and should be used.

### A: To be completed by Grant Holder

*Please read the following statements. Tick ONE statement under ii) and iii), then sign with an electronic signature at the end of the section.*

#### i) The Project

This Report is an accurate overview of the project, its findings and impacts. All co-investigators named in the proposal to ESRC or appointed subsequently have seen and approved the Report.	√
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#### ii) Submissions to *ESRC Society Today*

Output and impact information has been submitted to <i>ESRC Society Today</i> . Details of any future outputs and impacts will be submitted as soon as they become available.	√
<b>OR</b>	
This grant has not yet produced any outputs or impacts. Details of any future outputs and impacts will be submitted to <i>ESRC Society Today</i> as soon as they become available.	
<b>OR</b>	
This grant is not listed on <i>ESRC Society Today</i> .	

#### iii) Submission of Datasets

Datasets arising from this grant have been offered for deposit with the Economic and Social Data Service.	√
<b>OR</b>	
Datasets that were anticipated in the grant proposal have not been produced and the Economic and Social Data Service has been notified.	
<b>OR</b>	
No datasets were proposed or produced from this grant.	