



RSM2SNF

Research Supporting African MSMEs
To Provide Safe and Nutritious Food

Overview

African agrifood systems are growing and transforming. This dynamism is driven by the many micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) that operate all along agrifood value chains. However, little research has thus far been focused on these relatively small businesses, even though they play an important role in the availability of affordable, safe, and nutritious foods in African markets.

This new project, Research Supporting African MSMEs to Provide Safe and Nutritious Food (RSM2SNF), will dive deep into the wholesale, logistics, processing, and retail segments of the value chains of several products, such as fish and tomato. **The goal is to understand the midstream of these food value chains with a focus on MSMEs, and to inform policies and interventions to support MSMEs in providing safe and nutritious foods at affordable prices.** This five-year project (2022–2026) will be led by Michigan State University (MSU) working with partners in Nigeria and Tanzania.

Capacity strengthening is built into many aspects of the project. The research will be wholly collaborative, with the aim of building connections and capacities that will endure even after the project is completed. RSM2SNF will be comprised of an interdisciplinary team of faculty and students at MSU and Nigerian and Tanzanian institutions of higher learning and will work closely with partners in government, the private sector, and civil society. A National Advisory Committee in each country will provide high-level guidance.

This project will go beyond traditional research to co-create solutions to the challenges faced by MSMEs. Findings will be shared with stakeholders at all levels. The end goal of this work is to improve value chain outcomes for the farmers upstream, traders and processors midstream, and consumers downstream.

Key Terms

Micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs): Micro-sized enterprises engage up to four workers (most often family members); small enterprises engage 5–49 workers; and medium enterprises engage 50–99 workers.

Agrifood value chain: A set of interlinked value chains for a food product, including those that supply inputs for agricultural production, those that process the food and move it to consumers, and the supply chains for labor, logistics, and other materials that feed into the input and output supply chains.

Macro, meso, and micro: Macro-level aspects of the business environment include broad forces at the level of industries and governments. Meso-level refers to aspects of local markets physical structures and governance, while micro-level refers to the characteristics of firms.



Objectives

1. Government, development partners, and other policymakers will be equipped with knowledge and tools to support MSMEs in delivering affordable, safe, and nutritious foods to low-income consumers.
2. Key stakeholders will have greater capacity to design and implement policies and interventions that improve the availability, affordability, and safety of nutritious foods offered by MSMEs.
3. Researchers will have greater capacity to conduct and share research to shape policy on the midstream and downstream of food value chains.

Research Components

Research will begin in Nigeria in 2022 and roll out to Tanzania in 2023. It will start with a short rapid reconnaissance exercise (discussion with stakeholders and actors along food supply chains) to understand the landscape for agrifood value chains. Researchers will then embark on market- and meso-level studies, employing field visits and consultations to understand the local environment in which MSMEs operate.

The second half of the research phase will be dedicated to in-depth micro-level “stacked” surveys to capture a representative sample of actors all along the agrifood value chains. These surveys will collect data from individual MSMEs regarding MSME demographics, business operations, behaviors, business environment, and outcomes.

RSM2SNF goes beyond gathering and analyzing data, as researchers will also co-create an intervention designed to address a challenge faced by MSMEs, with a pilot implementation and evaluation. This intervention will be identified and designed in close collaboration with in-country partners.



Dissemination of Results

Once the research has been completed, getting the word out is crucial. In addition to presentations to the Nigerian and Tanzanian governments (and formal private sector) and technical publications in peer-reviewed journals, RSM2SNF will produce various non-technical pieces such as policy briefs, pamphlets, manuals, and short videos or radio programs. These will be accessible to a lay audience, available in digital and non-digital formats, and translated into local African languages, such as Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba and Kiswahili. The short videos, which can be disseminated freely via popular social media platforms, will be used to communicate key messages without a reliance on literacy.