

Rationale and Recommended Response for Differentiating Products: branding and certification

Markets for differentiated products generally require compliance with private food quality and safety standards. Indeed for many products compliance with at least one such standard has become a de-facto prerequisite for exporting. And compliance means certification for producers within a well coordinated supply chain.

Many certification schemes exist. Each has its own product standards and distinct approach to achieving product differentiation. For the majority of these schemes, it is the process of production, not the product that is certified. As such, it entails the coordination of the entire food chain, with good agricultural practices adopted at the farm level and good hygienic and manufacturing practices used after the farm gate to ensure that the product is high quality and safe for consumers. The cost of acquiring certification, and maintaining compliance, is therefore high.

While the public sector should not be a main driver behind any voluntary certification scheme, it has an important role to play when it comes to ensuring that the small-scale producer responds to the opportunities and challenges such schemes present.

Focus of the Debate

What voluntary certification schemes are most relevant to the small-scale farmer and agro-processors in differentiated product markets? What lessons can be drawn from the success of small-scale producers in other countries who participate in these schemes?