

Rationale and Recommended Response for Understanding markets: market research and intelligence

Market information is the key to commercial success in the agro-industrial sector where products can be highly perishable and transaction periods are short; where demand and supply are highly price sensitive, where existing markets are becoming increasingly differentiated and entirely new markets are emerging; where product specifications and buyer requirements are becoming increasingly complex; and where there is increasing competition in both domestic and export markets.

With new information and communications technologies, comprehensive market information is now accessible on a "real time" basis, permitting rapid, fully-informed planning and decision-making by both buyers and sellers. Expectations have risen accordingly. Buyers now expect prospective suppliers to meet more exacting demands more quickly and to adjust their business practices accordingly.

Some developing country suppliers have taken up the challenge and established their own research and information acquisition capacities. New, specialized private sector information services have also come "online". However, marketing information is often regarded as a 'public good' that should be provided by the public sector at no charge, with the consequence that public services are under resourced, slow and in many cases 'not fit for the purpose'.

There are, however, examples of effective public and private sector response to the opportunities and challenges confronting information acquisition and dissemination in the agro-industrial sector. They involve complementing private sector initiative within the context of an informal public-private sector partnership in information provision.

Focus of the debate

Do you agree with the proposition statement? Please discuss.