

The potential of farmers' markets: the Uganda case

Uganda's
farmers'
markets
potential

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Abstract

Purpose – In Uganda, smallholder farmers produce about 70% of the food but receive very low prices on the sales channels they use. To improve farmers' livelihoods, other innovative sales channels such as farmers' markets (FMs) have to be explored. Therefore, the study aimed to determine the potential of establishing farmers' markets in Uganda, focusing on Kampala district.

Design/methodology/approach – A qualitative methodology was used to understand farmers' perceptions and the factors that could influence the success of the farmers' markets. In addition, the potential of FMs has been analyzed through the components of the Localized Agri-Food System (LAFS).

Findings – The respondents had a positive perception of the farmers' markets, and farmers have an urgent need for other sales channels that could be profitable for them. Factors that could influence the success of the FMs were highlighted, including infrastructure in the marketplace, transportation and taxation by the government.

Research limitations/implications – The study had a limited sample size of the farmers, and it was carried out in 3 divisions of Kampala district, an urban area; thus, the findings cannot be generalized to fit the other regions of Uganda.

Originality/value – The LAFS showed that the foundation for establishing FMs is available; however, it has to be strengthened through the coordination of different stakeholders that work with the farmers.

Keywords Farmers' markets, Uganda, Smallholder farmers, Perception, Localized agri-food system

Paper type Case study

1. Introduction

In recent years, several studies have emphasized the vital role of smallholder agriculture can play in reducing poverty in developing countries (Hazell *et al.*, 2010; Juma Ismail, 2022). However, the household incomes of smallholder farmers in Uganda have remained low, earning less than 416,000 shillings (\$115), an average Ugandan's monthly income in 2016/2017 (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2018). These failures can be traced to the importance of economies of scale in procuring inputs and marketing products (Hazell *et al.*, 2010). In the

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current commercial world, success in the marketplace is becoming increasingly crucial for livelihood development (Ferris *et al.*, 2006). Many recent initiatives linking smallholder farmers to markets in Uganda have focused on export markets, as they are considered important sources of economic growth (Fowler and Rauschendorfer, 2019; Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2015). However, many of these approaches tend to be top-down and ignore effective community learning and empowerment processes. Although studies have documented impressive results in linking farmers to export markets (Van Campenhout *et al.*, 2019) it has been argued that smallholder farmers rarely benefit from these initiatives. These niche markets tend to be highly competitive and specialized, with rigorous quality standards, which can be challenging for many smallholder farmers (Diao and Hazell, 2004). However, domestic markets still represent a growing market offering real opportunities for smallholder farmers. New market opportunities arising from the rapid expansion of urban areas and changing food habits have provided a path for creating new market establishments. Developing an institutional platform that facilitates market exchanges for smallholder farmers in such a context is critically important. In the context of local food systems (LFS), several studies (Griffin and Frongillo, 2003; Myers, 2021) have highlighted the importance of farmers' markets (FMs) in revitalizing local agricultural communities through farmers earning between 40 and 70% more for their products at the FMs than when selling through wholesale outlets and re-emphasizing the relationships between consumers and producers. Farmer markets are those where farmers bring their produce for sale directly to consumers (Enthoven and Van den Broeck, 2021; McCormack *et al.*, 2010), whereas Jett and Hendrickson (2006) defined them as fixed placements where several farmers gather to sell their products at recurring times (Berruto and Busato, 2009). FMs are trading venues for small-volume food producers to retain a part of the value of the output lost in conventional food systems. Furthermore FMs, as direct marketing opportunities, support the sustainability of small farms and are important for rebuilding local and regional food systems (Gillespie *et al.*, 2008; Lyson *et al.*, 1995). Farmers' markets are part of the alternative food networks (AFN) and thus are born as an alternative to modern distribution channels. Short food supply chains have become crucial worldwide; therefore, reconfiguring agri-food systems through processes of relocalization of production and consumption (Cicatiello, 2020; Marino, 2016). Recently, consumers have become more interested in the AFNs or short food supply chains, such as farmers' markets, than in industrial systems, because they provide fresh produce, transparency, high-quality foods, build trust, interactions and the ability to build local economies (Garner and Ayala, 2018). They are often located in the middle of cities and towns. Some markets are open seasonally, while others are available daily or on weekends, especially in large cities (Jett and Hendrickson, 2006).

FMs engage farmers directly with consumers and eliminate intermediaries; thus, farmers obtain higher prices for their produce. This can represent a positive aspect for farmers, but a challenge for consumers for the high transaction costs due to the absence of a strong market's infrastructure and a limited access to credit (Lyson *et al.*, 1995). On the other hand, before entering the system, farmers have to carefully check the market and to make a cost analysis to ensure that they can sustain their selling at a market (Wood, 2015). Most importantly, producers with small volumes can sell in these markets, providing room for innovation and launch of new products (Tozer, 2013), but there are no guarantees that they will succeed in selling all the products (Wood, 2015). According to the World Farmers Market Coalition, farmers' markets provide the perfect opportunity for producers to sell their products and share their regional and cultural knowledge, such as recipes or stories about products, to establish relationships with producers. FMs are also crucial for stimulating local farming economies and notions of places and communities in rapidly suburbanizing areas. Studies have shown that farmers' markets offer several benefits to producers (Conner *et al.*, 2010). However, these studies mainly focused on

FMs in developed countries in North America and Europe (Page, 2011; Francis and Griffith, 2011; Oths *et al.*, 2019; Campbell, 2014; Tsai *et al.*, 2019).

What is also emerging in the literature on FMs are socio-economic problems at a larger scale (Warsaw *et al.*, 2021). From an economic perspective, the high economic activity of the FMs leads to a slowdown in the sales of other local food retailers selling similar products, which could see FMs as competitors (Hughes *et al.*, 2008). Other weaknesses of this food system include its potential to increase food security among vulnerable populations. Some studies have focused on the categorization of FMs consumers and have highlighted that typical consumers are mainly people from the middle and upper classes (Alkon and Mares, 2012; Guthman, 2008) and are often white, female, affluent and well-educated, even in areas where white non-Hispanics are the minority (Byker *et al.*, 2012; Pilgeram, 2012; Rice, 2015). FMs can represent a challenge for farmers for other reasons (Holtway, 2010), such as a possible competition among farmers in the same market in the case market manager allows too many vendors selling the same categories of products with price differences, this can create tensions and competition in the market (Wood, 2015).

FMs can encourage innovation that is not simply driven by economics; however, with the support of market associations, these market spaces can become active sites of progressive learning for both vendors and consumers (Hinrichs *et al.*, 2004). Moreover, social aspects make FMs the key institutions for generating collective knowledge (Hergesheimer and Kennedy, 2011).

In Uganda, farmers mostly sell their produce in spot markets at the time of harvest. Therefore, by selling unprocessed products to traders at the farm gate, this choice of sales outlet represents the highest net price for a farmer, which is usually low, given the small amounts sold and the fixed costs inherent to transporting and processing their output. Despite considerable competition in the market, it is perceived that farmers have little bargaining power over the price when they make their sales. This is because farmers are usually isolated from markets and thus have limited selling alternatives apart from intermediaries; thus, they are typically obliged to accept the price offered by the buyers (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 2015). Therefore, this study investigates the potential of establishing farmers' markets in Uganda.

2. Farmers markets as a Localized Agri-Food System (LAFS)

The farmers' market phenomena can be analyzed through the lens of the Localized Agri-Food Systems (LAFS). LAFS emerged in the mid-1990s as a concept referring to the geographical concentrations of specialized farms, food-processing units, distribution networks and private and public entities in a determined place (Arfini *et al.*, 2012; Feldmann and Hamm, 2015; Mundler and Laughrea, 2016). This model was inspired by the Localized Productive System (LPS), which was developed by various French authors (Courlet, 2022) following the reaffirmation of the importance of the local dimension in the works of Italian authors in Industrial Districts (Becattini, 1992). It was represented in French literature as *Systèmes agro-alimentaires localisés* (SYAL). The concept of a Local Agri-Food System (LAFS) was developed to analyze the dynamics of the local production systems in agriculture and food processing (Muchnik *et al.*, 2007; Sanz-Cañada and Muchnik, 2016). The LAFS, which is defined as a model of territorial development based on the valuation of local resources, respect for the environment and the diversity and quality of agricultural and food products, is preoccupied with the dynamics of local development and the new challenges of the rural world (Muchnik, 2006; Requier-Desjardins *et al.*, 2003). It scrutinizes the link between small local agri-food systems and community development.

More recently, this concept has been linked to people, institutions, local product characteristics and social relationships that associate food and place. Visionary LAFS is characterized by cooperation and competition among local production units, resulting from a

strong local institutional device, multiple proximities and a territorial anchorage (Muchnik, 2009). These interactions and relations that the LAFS actors can establish with the outside allow for collective efficiency and the capacity for innovation (Mantino and Forcina, 2018).

Four distinctive features characterize LAFS: place (dynamics of knowledge and competencies), product (qualification of product), social relationships (collective action and coordination between stakeholders) and the management of natural resources (Muchnik, 2009; Muchnik and De Sainte-Marie, 2010). The specificity of LAFS lies in the spatial features of the product, people, institutions and social relations embedded in food production. Social relationships are related to trust and cooperation between actors and institutions. LAFS allows the synergy and complementarity among heterogeneous actors to promote territorial resources. Institutions are private and public liaisons that promote actions regulated by formal and informal rules (Giacomini and Mancini, 2015). The implementation of governance arrangements, such as producer associations, aims to gather territorial issues, support and secure a framework for collective action. The determining factor in LAFS seems to be the social network that develops the links between food and territories. LAFS can provide an answer for sustainable development in rural areas by creating an opportunity to add value to local resources. Similarly, they can satisfy the demand for safer and fresher food and preserve their territorial identity.

Based on the theoretical considerations of LAFS, we conceptualize our study through its dimensions. Considering that the farmer market is a LAFS, its components are essential in building or showing the direction in setting up farmer's markets. The potential for establishing farmer's markets in Uganda can be gauged or understood by the components of the LAFS (Muchnik, 2009) (Figure 1). The results are presented based on each component of the LAFS to

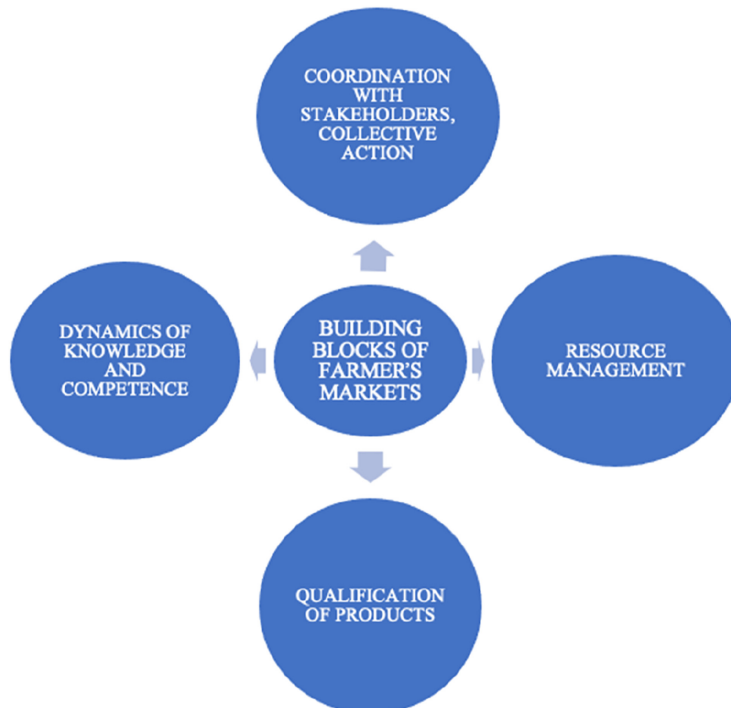


Figure 1.
The components of the LAFS

Source(s): Elaboration from the authors

provide an understanding of farmers' perspectives and the available potential for FMs to be established in Uganda.

3. Materials and methods

This study uses a qualitative research approach to understand the potential for establishing farmers' markets in Uganda. This qualitative approach is competent for subject matters in which little is known and the theory is not yet well defined (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018; Maxwell, 2013; Patton, 2015). It relies on emergent processes that allow researchers to apply this framework to a specific context by investigating the topic from the perspectives of those who participate in the phenomenon under study. The use of qualitative methods also allows participants to express their ideas fully, which can provide useful insights for research.

3.1 Case study

The study data were collected from farmers and stakeholders in the Kampala District, central Uganda. In terms of territory, the Kampala District (Figure 2) is divided into five divisions: Kampala Central, Kawempe, Makindye, Rubaga and Nakawa. Kampala has a land area of 189.3 km² (Kampala Capital City Authority, 2019) with an estimated population of 1.6 million in 2019 and a population growth rate of 4.02% per annum (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2020). It has been noted that urban and peri-urban agriculture in Kampala represents important economic activity within the city and significantly contributes to the food basket (Sabiiti *et al.*, 2014; Prain *et al.*, 2010; Bryld, 2003). Unlike in the past, when urban farmers belonged to low-earning groups, they now belong to low-to high-earning households for various reasons and

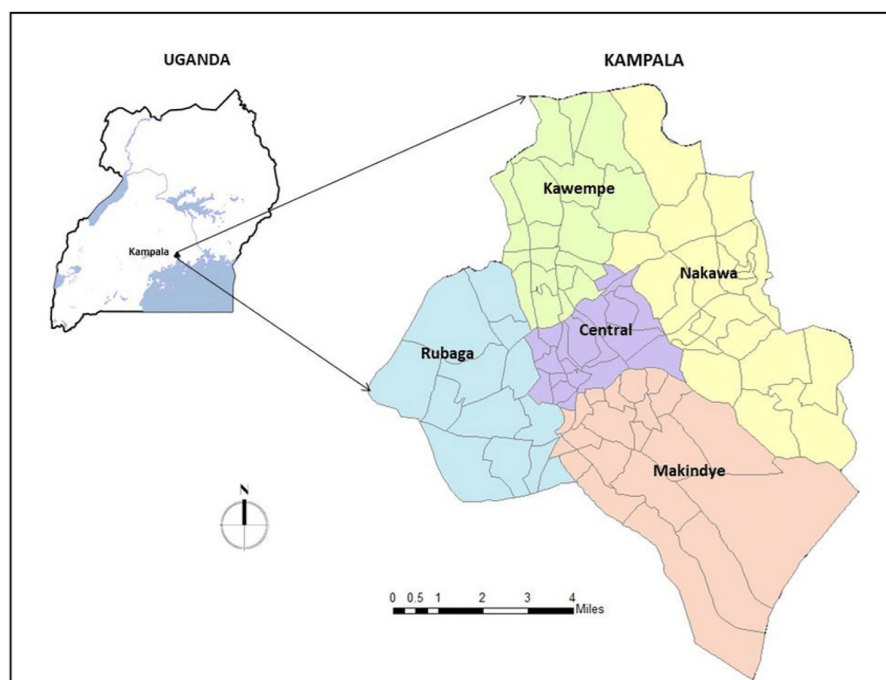


Figure 2.
Map of Kampala
showing the five
divisions

Source(s): Matovu *et al.* (2021)

strategies. Larger plots are available for cultivation in the peri-urban areas of Kampala. In contrast, agriculture is carried out closer to the city center in backyards, public land and around buildings (Bryld, 2003). Vegetable production and livestock keeping, primarily poultry, dairy cattle and pigs, are the dominant components of urban agriculture. However, the Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA), the city's governing body, considers it illegal for farmers and vendors to trade their products or fruits on pavements and roadsides (Sabiiti *et al.*, 2014). Kampala was selected as a study area because farmer markets have been observed to be popular in urban areas.

3.2 Data collection

The data used in this study were collected from thirty (30) farmers and two (2) stakeholders in May 2022 through semi-structured interviews. Qualitative interviews are one of the most widely used forms of social inquiry. Miles and Huberman stated that there is a specific value gained from using in-depth interviews since they focus on particular, naturally occurring situations, thereby providing rich and holistic descriptions that relate to real life (Huberman and Miles, 1994).

The stakeholders involved in this study were agricultural advisory personnel who provided advisory services to farmers. One stakeholder was an agronomist for a private food and vegetable export company, and the other was an agribusiness officer at KCCA. Farmers were selected from three of the five divisions of Kampala: Kawempe, Makindye and Rubaga. The study's sample size was determined using the concept of saturation by Glaser and Strauss when the new data collection did not shed any further light on the issue under investigation (Glaser and Strauss, 1999). A typical recommendation for in-depth interviews is to have a sample size of 20–30 respondents (Mason, 2010). Farmers were selected using both purposive sampling and snowballing. The initial plan was to select farmers solely using purposive sampling and a list of farmers with their telephone numbers was provided by an agricultural officer of the KCCA. However, only 10 farmers were selected using this method, and later, the snowball method was adopted because of incorrect phone numbers and difficulty in scheduling appointments with the farmers on the provided lists. The stakeholders who participated in the study were purposely selected, meaning that individuals known to have experience with the specific phenomenon being studied by the researcher were selected.

The interview questions were formulated based on previous research on farmers' markets in other countries and the components of the LAFS (Muchnik *et al.*, 2007; Muchnik and Sautier, 1988). The interview questions were structured as follows:

- (1) The socio-demographic profile of the respondent: characteristics of the respondents.
- (2) Coordination with stakeholders/collective action (Figure 3): this gauges collective action through farmers' participation in groups or their willingness to participate in groups or group activities.
- (3) Resource management explores the management of natural resources, environmentally friendly practices carried out by farmers and the possession of local or rare varieties/breeds.
- (4) Knowledge and competence explore how producers relate to their customers and the value that farmers place on producer-consumer relationships. How information is shared among the actors and places farmers obtain support and knowledge about their farming.
- (5) Qualification of products: examined farmers' attitudes toward rules and regulations and their notion of the quality of the products they produce.

6. Have you collaborated with a group/organization before and what has been your experience?
7. If not, are you willing to work with other people to achieve the projected goal?
8. What leaders/organizations/people in your area do you think you can collaborate with to build farmers' markets?
9. Which people/authority do you think should oversee these markets?
10. Which people/organizations are key in advising or helping you to elevate your farming?
11. What relationship do you think should exist between the producer (farmer) and consumer (omuguzii)?
12. Would you be willing to establish a relationship with your consumers?

Source(s): Author's own creation

Figure 3.
A section of the
questionnaire

The interviewers obtained consent from the respondents before conducting the interviews. The interviews were conducted in Luganda (the local language) and English, depending on which language was more convenient for the respondents. Each interview lasted approximately 30–45 min. Probing was performed by the interviewers, and the respondents were free to express additional views and comments. All discussions were audio recorded.

3.3 Data analysis

The researcher listened to and then transcribed interview recordings. Codes were developed from the transcripts through inductive coding using NVivo 2020 software and later reduced to eight broad themes that were analyzed using thematic content analysis. Thematic analysis refers to the identification, interpretation, or “extraction” of patterns of meaning in the data.

It moves beyond describing data to analyzing it and thus requires relatively more involvement from the researcher, including intellectual contribution (Staller, 2015). Clarke and Braun described thematic analysis as a method for identifying, analyzing and interpreting patterns of meaning or themes within qualitative data that can be applied across a range of theoretical perspectives (Clarke and Braun, 2017). NVivo automatically counts the number of times the files correspond to each category and subcategory. Each category had subcategories that were referenced differently by the respondents. Demographic data were analyzed using Microsoft Excel and descriptive statistics.

4. Results and discussions

4.1 Characteristics of the respondents

Of the 30 participants, 57% were females and 43% were males. The mean age of the respondents was 48 years, with the age group of more than 50 years being the most significant percentage (53.3%). Up to 63.3% of the respondents were married, 26.7% were single and 10% were widowed. All respondents attained a certain level of formal education, with most having attained lower education. 36.7% attained secondary education, 30% attained primary education, 10% obtained a diploma, 13.7% achieved a tertiary level and 10% earned a bachelor's degree. Male respondents had significantly higher educational levels than their female counterparts. The respondents' mean household size was 6.3 people. Of all the respondents, 83.3% farmed on their land, whereas 16.7% used rented land.

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The average size of the land on which the enterprises were located was 0.22 acres. Of the respondents, 43.3% had more than ten years of farming experience, 36.7% had 5–10 years of experience and 10% had 1–4 years of experience. Mushrooms and poultry were the most common enterprises practiced by farmers, followed by other types of production, as shown in [Table 1](#).

60% of farmers depend on farming as their primary source of income, whereas 40% have occupations other than farming, such as teaching and businesses. Of the farmers, 73.3% identified themselves as organic farmers and 26.7% used both organic and conventional farming methods.

Most farmers use at least two marketing channels to sell their produce. Farmers mainly sell their produce at the farm gate to the final consumers (19 of 30) or to traders who are intermediaries (18 of 30). A few farmers (10 out of 30) transported their produce to the market in search of buyers. Males (70%) transported their produce more to the market than females (30%). Despite extensive participation in these marketing channels, farmers highlighted that they face various challenges as shown in [Table 2](#).

4.2 The LAFS' components in explaining the potential of farmers' markets in Uganda

(1) Dynamics of knowledge and competencies

Farmers were asked how they perceived the relationship between producers and consumers ([Table 3](#)) and which channels they used to obtain knowledge or advice to improve their farming ([Table 4](#)). Of these 30 farmers, 26 (86.7%) were willing to establish relationships with consumers or buyers. Interestingly, the majority of respondents explained a good relationship between consumers and producers as one where both parties provide fair prices to each other and customers pay their dues to the producer in time. Others emphasized good customer care in terms of good language, providing bonuses, doing follow-up activities and provision of quality products to the consumers by the producer.

Table 1.
Type of productions
led by the farmers

Type of production	N/30
Mushrooms	13
Poultry	13
Piggery	9
Vegetables	4
Goats	2
Bananas	2
Rabbits	1
Cattle	1

Source(s): Elaboration from the authors

Table 2.
Challenges faced by
farmers in the
marketing
channels used

Challenges faced in the marketing channels	N/30
Low and unfair prices	15
High transport costs to the market	9
Dishonest traders	5
Inability of buyers to buy in bulk from farmers	3
Time consuming to balance between the farm and market	3
Limited number of buyers	1

Source(s): Elaboration from the authors

Farmers revealed that the relationship between a producer and consumer is essential and valuable because the consumers are the farmers' customers; thus, there is a need for a good relationship for the business to thrive. Many farmers highlighted that a good relationship between a producer and consumer is one where both parties provide fair prices to each other; that is, the consumer pays an excellent price to the farmer at which the farmer makes a profit, and the producer sells the products at an affordable price that the consumer can manage. Farmers found fair prices between producers and consumers as the most important relationship because many are still constrained by the unfair and low prices they receive, as reported by farmer A: *"I think the relationship should be that the customer should not overburden the farmer by offering low prices because the farmer goes through a lot to ensure they produce quality food. The farmer should not overcharge the customer: it should be a balance."*

However, Lanfranchi and Giannetto (2014) mentioned that farmers' markets are not characterized simply by sales from producers to consumers but require a much deeper relationship between the two parties, creating knowledge about products and confidence in the producer, which are essential elements for the consumer. This knowledge is usually assimilated into contextualized learning, drawing on local experiences to be transmitted to consumers.

The results show that farmers sought and obtained knowledge about their farming enterprises mostly from their fellow farmers (farmer B *"Another way is, I get it from my fellow farmers and not necessarily an organization. We do not have any organizations coming to teach farmers"*) as compared to other channels, such as government or private institutions. Farmers highlighted that they did not receive frequent support from the government or private organizations to elevate their farming.

(2) Qualification of products

Farmers were asked which people in their areas they would be willing to collaborate with to establish and oversee the operation of FMs (Table 5). This represents the institutional framework. A common view among the respondents was that it would be best for the local leaders in the areas where the FMs would be based on being in charge, especially the local council leaders (LCLs) and the women leaders in the area. As mentioned by Farmer A, *"Local councils can help us, and women or women groups, they care a lot and have been engaged in*

Relationship between producers and consumers	Files	References
Fair prices should be observed between the two parties	20	20
Provide customer care	11	12
Provide quality produce to the consumers	10	10

Source(s): Elaboration from the authors

Table 3.
Farmers' perception of
the relationship
between producers and
consumers

Channels farmers use to attain knowledge	Files	References
Fellow farmers	13	13
Government institutions	10	10
Private institutions	9	9
Own self	8	8
Mass media	5	5

Source(s): Elaboration from the authors

Table 4.
Channels used by
farmers to obtain
knowledge

activities to develop/grow themselves.” Farmers emphasized how local leaders knew them on a personal level and that they would easily understand their needs. In addition, Farmer C mentioned *“how local leaders could easily reach out to the people in the area to encourage them to participate in the farmer’s markets.”*

Surprisingly, farmers were unsure when asked which government organizations were involved in setting up FMs. Farmers had to think a lot before finding an answer; some were simply doing guesswork. The most mentioned government institutions were the KCCA and the National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS). These two government institutions have collaborated to extend extension services to farmers in Kampala, and they provide start-up inputs for farming enterprises such as poultry, mushrooms and piggery. Furthermore, the respondents mentioned the need for themselves as farmers to be at the forefront of setting up, running and overseeing farmers’ markets as they understand themselves best compared to the leaders or authorities.

Additionally, the farmers were asked if they were willing to abide by the rules and regulations set for the FMs, especially regarding products’ quality. 27 out of 30 farmers highlighted how they were willing to follow set rules and regulations and how important they regarded quality in their production processes. Farmers related the quality of products to the ease with which they can easily purchase and receive higher prices in the market.

To the question *“Would it be possible for you to maintain your product quality and produce based on the rules and regulations of the FM?”* Farmer D answered *“Yes, because if you do not have good quality, you will not have customers. Some mushrooms go to supermarkets, and local consumers too need quality ones. If the mushroom stays brown, it is no longer quality”*, and Farmer E answered *“Yes, I would follow. An important aspect I put forward is quality/standards. I discovered the quality people want, for example, milk without any water dilution, and not selling animal/bird products that have just received drugs.”*

Farmers’ markets are used to assess food quality in particular areas, and it is often assumed that food from FMs is of high quality. Therefore, it is important to maintain and to observe quality (Smithers *et al.*, 2008). However, quality is defined differently in various farmers’ markets; some refer to produce as being qualified in terms of being organic, local, sustainably produced, fresh, healthy and in terms of better animal welfare (Gomiero *et al.*, 2011; Marino *et al.*, 2013; McNeill and Hale, 2016; Reisch *et al.*, 2013). One of the farmers mentioned that a product is of high quality if it is clean, free from contaminants and placed on a clean surface for sale. Farmers highlighted that they would need proper training and guidance on how to achieve the desired quality, while others mentioned that they would have to invest more in their enterprises by buying the required inputs and infrastructure needed to produce the desired quality. Some farmers resorted to stopping investing in specific inputs for their enterprises as they received very low prices on their harvest; therefore, they were unable to get a return on their investment. However, with farmers’ markets providing a stable market and better prices, farmers feel that they can easily invest in producing quality products.

Additionally, the farmers highlighted some limitations that might hinder them from achieving the proposed quality required for the FMs. These included, as stated by Farmer F

Table 5.
Groups of people whom farmers are willing to collaborate with to build farmers’ markets

Stakeholder groups	Files	References
Local leaders in the area	25	29
Government institutions	17	19
Farmers	15	18
Other groups like media, NGOs, private institutions	2	2

Source(s): Elaboration from the authors

“Yes, I can maintain the quality as long as I have been well trained”) and Farmer G (“Yes, I would be able to follow, but producing quality food requires putting up good facilities that need much money, which is not available”), limited funds to buy infrastructure or inputs needed to produce quality products, lack of training to meet the required quality and ineffective implementation of the set standards in the market.

(3) Management of resources.

Farmers mentioned practices implemented to protect the environment and manage natural resources (Table 6). The farmers acknowledged the use of organic practices in their farming and said that they did not like to engage in activities that harmed the environment. The use of animal waste or crop residues as fertilizers and pesticides was the leading practice used by farmers to conserve the environment. Some farmers mentioned how confident and proud they were of using these environmentally friendly practices, as they made their products unique to other producers. Other farmers who could not use crop/animal residues sold them or freely gave them to neighboring farmers or customers. Very few farmers used local varieties or breeds in their commercial enterprises. Local varieties and breeds were found to have been grown or reared for home consumption.

As many farmers are concerned about not harming the environment and ensuring the provision of quality products (in terms of safety) to consumers, the few in the study who used conventional methods stated that they used them at very minimal rates. These findings are compared with the standards of FMs that have been known to provide consumers with products that are organic, healthy, local, or sustainably produced (Brookman, 2009; Singleton *et al.*, 2015). In terms of species diversity, many farmers did not produce using local varieties and lacked diversity in the types or species they grew and reared. Farmers focused on growing varieties or breeds that maximized resources and gave high yields to the small spaces in which they farmed.

(4) Coordination between stakeholders and collective action

Collective actions are activated by the mediating role of social capital. Social capital enables actors and allows them to act in a better-coordinated manner (Van der Ploeg *et al.*, 2008) by stimulating coordination and networking between stakeholders, which is a pivotal factor in strengthening FMs. According to Snider *et al.*, (2014), social capital can be divided into bridging social capital, which refers to networks of kin and closed-knit groups and bonding social capital, which refers to vertical networks across many groups. A balance between high bridging and high bonding social capital is required to cultivate progressive participation in determining community priorities and shared resources. When both types of social capital are low, communities are plagued by extreme individualism and opportunistic exploitation of shared resources. In Uganda, social capital for farmers is usually observed through farmers' participation in farmers' or collective groups (USAID, 2019). These groups can take the form of cooperatives, village-saving groups and youth and women training groups.

Practices carried out	Files	References
Use of animal or crop wastes as fertilizers in crop garden	22	22
Soil conservation	2	3
Reuse of materials	2	2
Tree planting	2	2
No practices	6	6

Source(s): Elaboration from the authors

Table 6.
Practices used by
farmers to conserve the
environment

Farmers were asked about their willingness to coordinate, create networks, or work with others to achieve a projected goal. It was found that 24 of the 30 farmers had participated in a group before, and 6 of the 30 farmers had not been in a group before but were interested in joining or engaging in group collaborations. Several farmers mentioned having engaged in money savings groups, specifically youth and women-saving groups. Farmers highlighted how important and valuable it was to be involved in groups or to collaborate with others; for example, they could teach, learn and inspire each other. Farmer H mentioned, “*Yes, I am in a group right now. We save money and learn from each other. These groups have empowered us women from stay home mums with no income to starting to make our own money.*”

These findings reveal that farmers have high bridging capital and low bonding social capital; therefore, a balance is lacking to allow proper community prioritization and the use of shared resources among various actors. For this reason, farmers mentioned that they did not receive much support from government institutions to improve their farming. Farmers rely primarily on themselves and their colleagues (farmers) to share knowledge and advice about their enterprises. The respondents blamed government institutions for not collaborating with more private institutions or NGOs to assist farmers, as it was in the past. The KCCA and National Advisory Agricultural Services are two organizations that have collaborated to work with farmers in the city. However, these efforts are still small and limited. Therefore, coordination between farmers and other stakeholders is not very strong, and more effort is needed to integrate all actors.

Furthermore, farmers mentioned how good and necessary it was to collaborate and work together; however, they had both positive and negative experiences of collaborating with others. Although several farmers found being in a group instrumental, they faced challenges in these collaborations and some groups failed. As we can understand by the words of Farmer J “*Through my experience, I was in a group for youth farmers around Natetee (Great initiative for Youth empowerment). The objective was to acquire skills and knowledge about urban farming. The experience was that they were interested in the outcome, but the involvement was not easy. Even after receiving the skills and expertise, the tiniest percentage continued in the project.*” The main challenge was the difficulty in actively engaging all group members to participate and to carry out group assignments. The workload of the groups was left to the leaders. Poor leadership also strained the groups, as some leaders are not empathetic or available to their members.

5. Conclusions

The study aims to assess the potential of establishing farmers’ markets in Uganda by investigating farmers’ perceptions of and factors that could influence their success. The study data were obtained from smallholder farmers in the Kampala District in 2022. The study revealed that farmers have a positive perception of establishing FMs and that there is an urgency for smallholder producers in Kampala to access better markets. This was further affirmed by the stakeholders, who also positively perceived the FMs and called out to the government and other stakeholders to collaborate with the farmers to fulfill the goal. Farmers had different motivations for participating in FMs but firmly explained the factors that could limit the success of these markets.

Through the lens of the LAFS, the findings revealed the excellent potential for establishing FMs in Uganda. Although the foundation for establishing farmers’ markets is available; however, it should be strengthened to ensure the success of the FMs. This is achieved through policy reforms that encourage greater stakeholder collaboration with farmers to help them navigate market establishment by providing financial support, technical assistance and capacity-building programs. Infrastructural development should be prioritized to match the farmer and consumer needs by investing in transportation networks,

storage facilities and market infrastructure. This will enable farmers to transport their products efficiently and ensure that markets have the necessary amenities to attract consumers. Additionally, to provide distinctiveness and territoriality to the FMs, farmers should be encouraged to increase the local varieties or breeds in their enterprises through training. The enforcement and strict implementation of standards governing FMs ensures quality, transparency and trust. Finally, the involvement of community leaders in the establishment of FMs should be of paramount importance.

This study contributes to the existing literature. This research provides evidence and awareness of other innovative sales channels that farmers in Uganda can use to fulfill their objectives as well as to stakeholders that market barriers limiting farmers are still a threat to their livelihoods. These innovative channels can mitigate losses faced by farmers. However, we acknowledge that future research is needed to better understand the policies required to successfully embed these FMs initiatives. Simultaneously, it is necessary to identify models and practices to reduce barriers to access and to ensure an equitable distribution of the benefits that these types of markets provide to local communities. As shown in this study, it is also necessary to better analyze the motivations for producers to engage in FMs. FMs have the potential to create not only better incomes, but also safe access to markets and opportunities for value addition, which is key to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 2.

5.1 Limitations of the work

The study was carried out in three divisions of Kampala District, an urban area; therefore, the research findings cannot be generalized to fit other regions of Uganda, especially the rural areas. However, this study provides a platform for understanding farmers' perceptions on farmers' markets and the requirements for establishing FMs in Uganda. Furthermore, due to limitations of time and cost, the study had a limited sample size of farmers; this could be why no significant differences in perception in relation to socio-demographic characteristics like gender, age, education level and others were portrayed. Similarly, it had a minimal sample size of stakeholders because the study focused more on capturing farmers' opinions, and thus, the minor involvement of the stakeholders. However, this study recommends that further research be conducted with a focus on stakeholders because, as [Hultine et al., \(2007\)](#) mention, LAFS (FM) is a multi-actor case in which farmers are only one component, but the other leading role can be played within the supply chain or civil society; therefore, stakeholders are essential parties.

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