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**Evaluating the Effectiveness of the Value Chain Approach as a means of Improving the Competitiveness of Honey: A Case Study of Rwenzori Region**

In recent years, the value chain approach has gradually gained ground and is now used by technicians, researchers, government officials, teachers and students in many countries. This has made the value chain approach a topical issue, and a number of institutions strongly advocate the idea of working in value chains. Hence, nowadays, many people talk about the “value chain approach” but interpretations of what this approach entails, the principles upon which it is based and how these principles are applied through analysis, project design and implementation vary. Additionally, despite, several years of using the value chain approach to improve competitiveness of firms within the honey value chain by several stakeholders in the Rwenzori region, there were still a number of constraints in the whole value chain that needed to be addressed. 107

Therefore, the purpose of the study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the value chain approach as a means of improving the competitiveness of honey in Rwenzori region. In terms of geographical scope, the study covered the districts of Kabalore, Kyenjojo, Kamwenge, Bundibugyo and Kasese in the Rwenzori region and in terms of content scope, the study looked at the business enabling environment, the governance structures and the market activities and their effect on improving the competitiveness of the honey value chain in the Rwenzori region. The time scope was the period 2005-2009. The study design was a case study that employed mainly qualitative methods of data collection and analysis. This design was found the most suitable because it would promote greater understanding of not just the way things are, but also why they are the way they are (Amin, 2005: p.42). Besides, it would enable the researcher to capture the views of the respondents in their own words and from their own perspective. However, limited quantitative methods of data collection and analysis were also employed. The findings have indicated that the use of the value chain approach to promote the competitiveness of honey from the Rwenzori region is ineffective because the prerequisites for the approach to succeed are not in place. Therefore, honey from the Rwenzori region cannot favourably compete in national, regional, and international markets because of issues of quality, standards, price, and unreliability of honey suppliers from the region. Based on the above findings it has been recommended among others that government must put in place adequate and updated laws/regulations to guide the development of the honey value chain and strictly implement these to maintain quality and standards. There is also critical need to finalise the National Apiculture Policy that has remained in draft form since 2004. Lastly, historically, certification services to meet national honey standards have been expensively provided by third-party actors, namely private companies or national standards agencies. There is, therefore, need for developing a low-cost, producer-driven quality assurance mechanism to support small-holder bee farmers to meet the quality standards.

**Key Words:** Evaluating, Effectiveness, Chain Approach, Competitiveness, Honey, Rwenzori Region