

Fifty Cases of Successful Links between Small-Scale Producers and Markets¹

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Abstract

The overall objective of this study is to find out factors behind the successful links between small-scale producers and markets, and implications for poverty reduction. This study is not intended to provide neither overall picture of SMEs in Vietnam nor business environmental in the location covered by the study. Instead, it aims at understanding better the way and behavior of small producers in getting to the market, in adopting different business behavior and become successful in business. With these purposes, the research team has conducted field work, interviews and desk research and to generate a set of 50 actual case studies of successful links between small-scale producers and markets in a variety of geographic settings and covering a diverse range of agricultural and non-agricultural goods and services. Firms were selected for interview following criteria: (i) small size of businesses; (ii) success in doing business; (iii) the success can be sustained and replicated.

The entrepreneurs featured have various educational levels and work experience and have different motivations for starting their business activities. But from their position of disadvantage and poverty, they did not wait for assistance or help but accepted risk by exploring a new way to challenge their fates. In doing so, they have not only provided benefit for themselves and their families, but also generated many jobs and assisted their local communities.

The case studies revealed that as small producers, it is possible and feasible to establish them in the market, finding the way and get it done. Using knowledge for poverty reduction in general and for accessing market and operating in a market in particular is possible and necessary. Knowledge system one way or another is helpful, maybe informally to owners of small business. Learning in most cases is a key factor that help firms established, revitalized, grew and succeeded.

Having flexibility, dynamic and vigorous approaches and business behavior could help small producers access the market, establish themselves firmly in the market and thrive. To prepare for this, entrepreneurship is a must for firm owners. The entrepreneurship cannot

¹ This study is prepared by National Institute for Science and Technology Strategy and Policy (Ministry of Science and Technology). The research was undertaken in the framework of “Making Markets Work Better for the Poor” through a regional technical assistance project supported by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and cofinancing from the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID) and the Tokyo-based Asian Development Bank Institute. The research was implemented by researchers from National Institute for Science and Technology Strategy and Policy Studies (NISTPASS), National Economics University, Institute of Agricultural Economics, Central Institute for Economic Management.

be created, but can be identified, nurtured, and encouraged to grow from inside potential business owners.

Doing business in Vietnam in general is not easy, more even so for small producers with little resources, not very well prepared background, and lack of supportive environment. They need more support than anyone else in business and government policies should and could do better to provide these small producers with required incentives and support, first of all in learning. To multiply the cases in this study is not necessarily right thing to do, bearing in mind their uniqueness of each product, market and entrepreneurial owners. But it is reasonable to create better business environment for others to follow their business philosophy and culture.