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**A literature Stocktaking on the Contribution of Agrifood Marketing to Economic Development in Developing Economies**

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**ABSTRACT**

The research aimed at appraising, ascertaining and diagnosing agri-food marketing's contribution to economic development in developing economies, over the past 80 years (1945- 2025). The research provided for a stocktaking of literature, sources of secondary data and information and primary data and information found within, in a qualitative manner. The research, initially, identified 105 general marketing contributors to economic development and development more in general in developing economies. The research then identified 92 contributors of agrifood marketing to economic development and development more in general in developing economies. Such findings provided, with a good degree of confidence, that agrifood marketing is an important element, if not critical element, to economic development and development more at large. The stocktaking research also provided ample evidence of how agrifood marketing contributed to economic development and development more in general. The research also contributed to further augmenting and accumulating knowledge, know-how and practice on the role of agrifood marketing in economic development and development more in general over the past 80 years. Moreover, the research also provided ample evidence that can be of use for developing policies for agrifood marketing in specific, that can be incorporated, for example, into domestic economic and development policies more at large at all levels: the domestic micro, meso and macro policy levels as well as at the international and global policy levels.

**Keywords:** economic development, development, developing economies, marketing, agrifood, marketing

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**Introduction**

Poverty has always been a pandemical matter since the dawn of human history and most people in the world, currently, have been left out of economic progress (Achrol & Kotler, 2016). Poverty, historically, has been, as per Brady & Burton (2016), 'mired in paradoxes and puzzles, failures, complex social changes, and unsettling individual and group behaviours.' Poverty can be, for example, absolute and relative and can take different forms, for example, situational, transient, chronic, extreme, persistent, cyclical and generational (Sharif, 2019; Dalglish & Tonelli, 2017). Currently, in fact, poverty is changing in nature as a result of, for example, increasing uncertainty and volatility, climate change and conflicts (Holmqvist, 2025). Further, poverty, pending on different societies and cultures found around the world, is perceived in many different ways (Atkinson, 2019).

Poverty is caused by a great deal of interconnected and different root causes in differing parts of the world, but with similar general characteristics and impacts that can be provided to be 'universally devastating' (Sharif, 2019; Achrol & Kotler, 2016). Bhattacharyya (2016) considers root causes to poverty as being multiple, for example, geography, disease and colonial history, and such causes have, also like for Sharif (2019) played out differently in different parts of the world, signifying a clear economic connection to root causes of poverty, but also geographic, social, cultural and political causes. According to Morlock (2022), root causes of poverty can be attributed to problems with resources and

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access to such: resources intended as being clean water, education, healthy food, for example, that are all life supporting. Further, the World Bank (2015) attributes root causes of poverty to ‘a cognitive burden on individuals that makes it especially difficult for the poor to think deliberately and is in effect a ‘tax’ on an individual’s psychological and social resources, which can lead to economic decisions that perpetuate poverty.’ Moreover, Mullainathan & Shafir (2013), provide for what they term scarcity, not just in the traditional economic sense, but in how scarcity ‘captures’ the feelings, the thinking and ultimately the minds of individuals and how scarcity becomes over imposing.

The World Bank (2024a) reports that extreme poverty, people living on US\$2.15 per day, accounts for circa 692 million people, lifting the earning per day to US\$3.65 per day, which is more representative of lower and middle income country national poverty lines, accounts for circa 1.7 billion people living in poverty and still moving the earnings per day per person to US\$6.85, makes 43.6 percent of the world population living in poverty, this being an estimated 3.5 billion people. This all means that nearly 50 percent of the world population lives in poverty and this has not changed much since 1990 (World Bank, 2024). UNDP & OPHI (2024) report that 1.1 billion people (18.3 percent) live in acute multidimensional poverty and more in detail: globally 27.9 percent of children live in poverty; 83.7 percent of poor people live in rural areas; circa two-thirds of the poor live in middle income countries (749 million, 65.2 percent); as well as poor people lacking adequate sanitation (828 million), housing (886 million), cooking fuel (998 million), electricity (579 million), proper nourishment(637 million) and improved sources of drinking water (513 million) (UNDP & OPHI, 2024).

There are many economic, social and environmental forces that affect poverty, inequality and vulnerability,<sup>1</sup> which all have multidimensional connotations (UN DESA, 2020; Schaffner, 2014). In terms of inequality, for example, in income and wealth, both are on the rise. In terms of income inequality, where globally 50 percent of the world labour force are wage earners, inflation is above minimum wage levels, thus reducing purchasing power, for example (ILO, 2024). In terms of wealth inequality, the poorest possess two percent of global wealth, while 10 percent of the richest global population own 76 percent of global wealth (WIL, 2022). Oxfam (2024) and BCTI (2023) report that 21 percent of humanity lives in developed countries, but such countries and their populations are home to 69 percent of private wealth, and 74 percent of the world’s billionaire wealth.

Both wealth and income inequalities are tightly interconnected with environmental inequalities, where the top 10 percent emitters provide for 50 percent of emissions and the bottom 50 percent provide for 12 percent of emissions (Chancel *et al.*, 2023; WIL, 2022). In terms of agriculture, for example, agri-food marketing and food systems, are all weather-dependent, and as such are impacted by climate change and thus it can profoundly affect the incomes and more generally the livelihoods of people living in rural areas mostly, but also of people living in peri-urban and urban areas in low- and middle-income countries (FAO, 2024c). Further food commodity price increases have had short-term destabilizing impacts as well as adding to the import bills of food importing countries (UNCTAD, 2024b) leading to further inequalities. Indeed, economic inequality that is constant has large and deep human costs (Oxfam, 2025).

The World Bank (2024a) attributes such a multitude of matters as a result of what it terms ‘polycrisis:’ multiple crises that are overlapping, interconnected and occurring all at the same time. For example, climate change,<sup>2</sup> growing inequality, the COVID pandemic, slow economic growth, increased conflict and fragility, increased vulnerability, and insufficient progress on shared prosperity are all interconnected and have impacted the progress in reducing poverty (World Bank, 2024; IMF, 2022).

Indeed, and as still provided by the World Bank (2024a) ‘the risk of a polycrisis is growing and ties together diverse sectors and regions.’ UN DESA (2024) also provides that there has been an increased reversal in poverty reduction, including increases in income inequality, food prices, hunger, malnutrition, unemployment, draughts, and floods. Further, such shocks are far more intense and frequent and propagate far more as per the interconnectedness of economies and creates complex

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<sup>1</sup> Poverty, even though related, is distinct from inequality and vulnerability. Poverty is a lack of key capabilities, inequality considers distribution of, for example income across a population, and its unevenness, while vulnerability considers, for example, how shocks, like food price hikes, can impact a population (Houghton & Khandker, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> The World Bank (2024a) estimates that weather shocks will impact one in five people globally and such affected people will struggle to recover from such shocks.

challenges also to, for example, social development (UN DESA, 2024). As provided by UNDP & OPHI (2024) uncertainty derived from such shocks increases and multiplies their repetition.

Moreover, evidence provides that economies that demonstrate slow growth, tend to increase poverty and extreme poverty, as prosperity and welfare is not provided and shared among populations and thus also increasing inequality, which is commonly, but not always, based mainly on disparities in income, consumption and wealth (World Bank, 2024). For example, among the many inequalities there are personal inequalities, in terms of different natural abilities (Butler, 2022) that are related to opportunity inequality which is based around 'deep structural differences in people's prospects based on their personal characteristics and backgrounds – factors that are largely outside their control' (BCTI, 2023). Further in a survey on inequality, see Wike *et al.*, (2025), conducted in 36 nations, there is widespread public concern over inequalities in education, intergenerational inequalities and the intersection between wealth and politics.

However, development is far from a simple process: it is complex and characterised by many interconnected factors (World Bank, 2014). Indeed, development is concerned not only with physical and material needs, wants and desires, but also with well-being, quality of life and individual and political liberties (Elliot, 2014). But scarcity has always been present in human history and has co-existed with seemingly infinite human needs, wants and desires and as such poses enormous challenges on which goods and services to produce which may give the most satisfaction (Baker, 2010).

Indeed, economic organization is based on the utilization of scarce resources to attempt to provide maximization of satisfaction and as such, and by its very nature, marketing is an activity that facilitates and enables such an objective (Baker, 2010). This is done, not only via developing and stimulating exchange activities which form the basis of marketing, but also with the development, for example, of markets, transport and distribution systems.

### **Research aim<sup>3</sup>**

The research was based on a stocktaking of the past 80 years (1945-2025) of literature, sources of secondary data and information and primary data and information found within, on agrifood marketing's contribution to economic development. As such the main aim of the research was to attempt to appraise, ascertain and diagnose agri-food marketing's contribution to economic development in developing economies. The underlying objectives of the research sought to:

- appraise, ascertain, and diagnose how agri-food marketing contributed to the economic development of developing economies both directly and indirectly;
- ascertain the accumulation of knowledge, know-how and practice that developed over the past eight decades in terms of agrifood marketing's contribution to economic development and development more in general;
- and how such an accumulation of knowledge can provide to be an important resource for developing policies that can enable, facilitate and support agri-food marketing's role in economic development and development more in general.

In the research, full consideration was taken to the fact that economic development is interconnected and has overlaps with other areas of development concern, such as social, cultural, political, natural environmental and climate matters, for example, and thus these were also taken into account in the research. For example, agrifood marketing's contribution to such matters as institutional development and its implications, natural resource usage and its development, cultural and social change and development, etc. Clearly in the research consideration was also given to marketing, in its more generic meaning, and also its contribution to economic development.

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<sup>3</sup> This research derived and grew out of Hilmi (2022c) which also considered agri-food marketing and its contribution to economic development. This, in fact, at the time, spurred the beginning of this research that sought to stocktake, via literature, agri-food marketing's contribution to economic development over a defined time period of eight decades.

*A note on the term developing economy or economies in this research*

In this research the term developing economy or economies was used to indicate countries that were and are in low and lower middle income brackets.<sup>4</sup> There were several reasons for this. The primary reasons for this is that the term developing economy or economies provides for the many factors that focus on economic systems over and above a country's political and geographical boundaries, as economic systems do traverse such socially and static constructed borders. Secondly, developing economy or economies most often than not, reflects better the economic realities on the ground, for example, at the local level, and how local economies often do traverse national borders and how such are interconnected. Thirdly, developing economy or economies was used as it covers and gives more inclusivity to economies that are developing and are emerging and are 'home' to many, but not all, of the global poor. Developing economy or economies, further, as per Todaro & Smtih (2015), provides a better picture of economic activities, such as for example, trade, labour markets and industrialization processes. Developing economy or economies also provides a better picture of economies that in fact are interconnected, globalized and part of global networks and not isolated, for example, global value chains and international finance (Rodrik, 2011) and also better reflect agri-food marketing systems at the global, international, and national macro, meso and micro levels. Developing economy or economies also better reflects the multidimensional and interconnected matters related to development, for example such as human capital and infrastructure, and enables a more profound and in-depth exploration of such varied development factors (Sachs, 2015). Developing economy or economies reflects better the diversity, cycles, transformations, fluxes and the more general dynamic nature of economies which are far from static (Sen, 1999). In this regard, and further, developing economy or economies does have some similarities with emerging economies, but is different as emerging economies commonly, as per Mardiros & Dicu (2014), are somewhere in between developed economies and developing economies. Emerging economies are commonly characterised by, for example: large populations situated in large territories; growth, expansive and fast paced economic policies which are a priority as are increased trade and investments; and a focus on middle class growth via expansion of consumption and production along with concerns over tolerance, social stability and living standards (Mardiros & Dicu, 2014). Further, 'economy' is a 'neutral' term that is more objective and scientific (Gereffi, 2018) and is more inclusive as it allows for education, health care and other social and cultural factors, for example, to be considered. Moreover, it also enables a broader range of countries to be classified based on their economic characteristics rather than their political status, and it also avoids overgeneralizing or simplifying the development challenges of different nations, recognizing the wide variation in levels of development across regions, and enables easier comparisons to be made (UNDP, 2020; Gereffi, 2018).

## **Methods**

The research provided for an initial qualitative exploratory research to ascertain key search terms related to the aim and objective of the research. Five online databases were used: AGORA (reasearch4life), Agricola, Agris, FAO Knowledge Repository and the World Bank Open Knowledge Repository. This initial exploratory research generated the following 50 key search terms:

1. Marketing and economic development
2. Marketing's contribution to development
3. Marketing's contribution to local development
4. Marketing's contribution to regional development
5. Marketing's contribution to national development
6. Marketing's contribution to international development
7. Marketing's contribution to global development
8. Marketing's contribution to economic development
9. Marketing's contribution to social development

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<sup>4</sup> This income classification of countries, as per the World Bank, and as provided by Fantom & Serajuddin (2016), is mainly used for analytical reasons, and as such may not reflect the specific development status of a country.

10. Marketing's contribution to cultural development
11. Marketing's contribution to political development
12. Marketing's contribution to institutional development
13. Marketing's contribution to equality
14. Marketing's contribution to inequality
15. Agricultural marketing's contribution to economic development
16. Food marketing's contribution to economic development
17. Agri-food marketing's contribution to economic development
18. Agri-food marketing's contribution to social development
19. Agri-food marketing's contribution to cultural development
20. Agri-food marketing's contribution to political development
21. Agri-food marketing's contribution to institutional development
22. Agri-food marketing's contribution to equality
23. Agri-food marketing's contribution to inequality
24. Agri-food marketing's contribution to local development
25. Agri-food marketing's contribution to regional development
26. Agri-food marketing's contribution to national development
27. Agri-food marketing's contribution to international development
28. Agri-food marketing's contribution to global development
29. Macromarketing's contribution to economic development
30. Micromarketing's contribution to economic development
31. Mesomarketing's contribution to economic development
32. Digital marketing's contribution to economic development
33. Rural marketing's contribution to economic development
34. Urban marketing's contribution to economic development
35. How does marketing contribute to development
36. How does marketing contribute to local development
37. How does marketing contribute to regional development
38. How does marketing contribute to national development
39. How does marketing contribute to international development
40. How does marketing contribute to global development
41. How does marketing contribute to economic development
42. How does agricultural marketing contribute to economic development
43. How does food marketing contribute to economic development
44. How does agri-food marketing contribute to economic development
45. How does agri-food marketing contribute to social development
46. How does agri-food marketing contribute to cultural development
47. How does agri-food marketing contribute to political development
48. How does agri-food marketing contribute to institutional development
49. How does agri-food marketing contribute to equality
50. How does agri-food marketing contribute to inequality

Following on from the initial exploratory research, the research then provided for a longitudinal in-depth research and review of literature, and sources of secondary data and information including primary data and information found within. The research was qualitative and abductive in nature, and was systematic, exploratory, historical and descriptive. The research, as provided by Sekaran & Bougie (2016), referred to the characteristics of: purposiveness, rigor, testability, replicability, precision, confidence, objectivity, generalizability and parsimony. The research involved using all the identified 50 key research terms<sup>5</sup> and used 12 online data bases: AGORA (reasearch4life); Agricola; Agris; BASE; CORE; EBSCO; FAO Knowledge Repository; Google Scholar; Semantic Scholar; Social Science Research Network (SSRN); UNU-WIDER; and the World Bank Open Knowledge Repository.

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<sup>5</sup> Fifteen of the key search terms were also researched by Amanda Malekazari (MSc.) (psychologist, independent researcher). This provided for a 'double check' on literature, sources of secondary data and information, including primary data and information found within, and also on the research process being conducted.

For each key research term, it was attempted to find at least 30 references that derived from literature, sources of secondary data and information and primary data and information found within. The references found were mainly journal articles, books, book chapters, and scientific papers. The selection to review the references found were based on the following criteria: the direct and indirect relevance to the research aim, objectives and related subject matters; value (methodological rigour, quality of the reasoning or arguments, references, etc.); research evidence in terms of either or both primary source-based (credibility; reliability; ecological validity) and secondary source –based information; derived from an identified and reliable source (author(s), scientific journal publisher, reputation of publisher, etc.); date of publication (not older than 150 years); references used; and peer review conducted (Saunders *et al.*, 2016; Adams *et al.*, 2014; Fisher, 2010).

The findings from literature, and sources of secondary data and information including primary data and information found within, were then analysed using thematic analysis. As the results were coming in, they were analysed and this allowed for iteration and guidance in the research. The themes (contributors) that derived from the analysis were compared and frequency was sought for each emerging contributor. If the contributor was found at least three times (triangulation) this would be provided as being valid and reliable. The findings, so as to assess for research quality, reliability and validity, were provided via a qualitative stance, hence trustworthiness (truth value, applicability, consistency, neutrality) and credibility (good research practice, peer review of findings) criteria were used (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

The initial draft findings were then shared with three subject matter specialists<sup>6</sup> for peer review. The feedback on the draft findings from the subject matter specialists were compared (triangulation). The findings were deemed as being reliable and valid. However, it was also advised to conduct a second in-depth research and review of literature, sources of secondary data and information and primary data and information found within. This was advised so as to further corroborate the findings from the first research and review of literature, sources of secondary data and information and primary data and information found within.

The second longitudinal in-depth research and review followed the same research process as that found in the first in-depth research and review. The analysis of the findings was carried out still using thematic analysis. The findings from the second in-depth research and review were compared to the findings of the first research and review. This resulted in a set of findings that derived from two in-depth research and reviews of literature, sources of secondary data and information and primary data and information found within and the inherent comparison of findings. The findings were shared with a subject matter specialist<sup>7</sup> for review and feedback. This was then followed by the first draft of the research article to be peer reviewed still by one subject matter specialist.<sup>8</sup> A final and last peer review was conducted on the final draft of the article by a subject matter specialist.<sup>9</sup>

## **Background**

### *Development and economic development*

Development is fundamentally a social and cultural construct, set in defined and embedded practices and meanings that change over time (Schech, 2014). Development, in its widest sense, concerns sustainable human well-being and improving quality of life, increasing individuals' self-esteem and freedoms as well as material needs and physical needs of society which provide required 'assets' to fulfil such (Todaro & Smith, 2015; Elliot, 2014; Schaffner, 2014). The overall assets provided, in terms of types, quality, quantity, value and their distribution are often determined by a nation state's socioeconomic system (Schaffner, 2014). A socioeconomic system conjugates together

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<sup>6</sup> One peer reviewer was from academia, while two peer reviewers were field practitioners. The peer review process was conducted over a three month period from September to November 2022.

<sup>7</sup> The peer reviewer was from academia. The peer review was conducted over a four month period from July to October 2023.

<sup>8</sup> The peer reviewer was from academia. The peer review was conducted over a two month period from October to November 2024.

<sup>9</sup> The peer reviewer was a field practitioner. The peer review was conducted in January 2025.

an economic system and a social system, where there is an interdependence between economic and non-economic factors (Todaro & Smith, 2015). Schaffner (2014) defines, such a socioeconomic system as encompassing ‘the many activities of its people, who seek the best for themselves and their families and who interact with each other in many market and nonmarket forums.’ This clearly implying not only an important productive basis to such a system, but also an important basis and role for distribution (marketing). It also implies that development and in particular economic development should encompass also, for example, cultural, social and political matters, which can thus enable structural and institutional transformations for societies at large (Todaro & Smith, 2015). Thus, there is a private sector role, but also an important public sector role to development and as such the political economy of development and its related transformations (Todaro & Smith, 2015).

Choices made in developing an economy can be, for example, that of a market economy, a free market economy, primary sector development, and heavy industry development (Kotler *et al.*, 1997). Such choices though will be guided by a nation state’s culture, attitudes, and values, but will be based on, inevitably, the initial conditions of economies which matter a great deal for economic development (World Bank, 2014). However, whichever pathway is chosen for economic development, will typically concern the upgrading in natural, human, social, cultural<sup>10</sup> and physical capitals as well as, for example, the distribution of good and services (marketing), private investments (both domestic and foreign), and public sector spending, all done in attempts to provide for a healthier economy, via, for example, economic growth,<sup>11</sup> but also so as to foster international competitiveness of such economies (Kotler *et al.*, 1997). The World Bank (2014) provides that ‘economic development is an extremely complex process and that its determinants are many in number and deeply interconnected.’ In fact, Adelman (2000) provides that economic development is multidimensional, nonlinear and uneven, and choices in institutions and policies and their related sequencing and how such occur are all equally important.

However, socioeconomic systems have provided more in certain geographical regions and less in others,<sup>12</sup> this seemingly being based on ‘decisions, markets, and institutions that together determine what assets are created and who benefits from their creation’ (Schaffner, 2014). Interestingly though, some societies, even though they may be provided with rich information flows, formal command channels, coordination, organization, centralized decision making, and resource pooling may provide to be ineffective, inefficient and immobile in the face of some of the major deficiencies that may hamper, for example, their productive capabilities (Diamond, 2005).

Such inabilities may derive from a multitude of reasons, for example, simply ignoring the deficiency, being unaware of it, a failure to understand its inherent risks and lack of capacity to provide appropriate solutions (Diamond, 2005). One example, of such a capability deficiency is that of the natural environment and climate resource base of a society, which forms the foundation of any society. In fact, not attending to the conservation of natural environmental resources and their proper use as that of the climate, will inevitably erode productivity capacity, but also provide enormous costs in the long run, these not only environmental and climate costs, but also economic, social, cultural and political costs. Further Chancel *et al.*, (2023) provide that in fact climate change and its relative crises have effectively and severally eroded the foundations of social organization and livelihood within, this for example, as per the increase in temperature, water scarcity, lower agricultural productivity, and more general deprivations that are both economic and material. Moreover, climate change can affect

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<sup>10</sup> Most interestingly the World Bank (2014) places culture also as a ‘capital’ in that ‘if culture consists of values, beliefs, attitudes, practices, symbols, and human relationships, and it is expressed through religion, language, institutions, and history, then it is intrinsically no different than a nation’s genetic endowment.’

<sup>11</sup> Even though growth is seemingly a necessity condition for economic development, for example, increases in income, it alone is not sufficient, for economic development to occur, as a multidimensional approach is required (Thirlwall, 2014). In fact, for example, Yusuf *et al.*, (2023) also provide that economic growth alone may not end poverty as it requires also redistribution, in other words, there is a need for economic growth and redistribution together to tackle poverty effectively. However, Leigh & Blakely (2017) go as far as claiming that ‘the blind pursuit of economic growth can destroy the foundation for economic development.’

<sup>12</sup> For example, in some territories there may be subsistence economies found, where production is mainly devoted to personal consumption and mostly yields meagre basic necessities of food, shelter and clothing (Todaro & Smith, 2015).

economic development in itself on three fundamental matters: ‘a reappraisal of the causes of and prospects for development, the rebirth of the economics of transition, and a reformulation of the problem development is trying to solve’ (Chandy, 2023). In fact, inaction by societies on such matters can seriously undermine such, and provide for the erosion, for example, of formal and informal societal institutions. Indeed, prosperity, as provided by Raj (N.D.), should be the ultimate goal of development for people, but such prosperity needs to be widespread and evenly distributed, but with equity. Indeed, such prosperity, should also mean, for example, prosperity for societal, cultural, economic and political institutions, systems and processes as well as for, and importantly, natural environmental and climate resources.

Indeed, development, and more in specific economic development, is the main objective of many economies in the world (Ray, 1989). This, recognises, the need for high material well-being that is equally accessible to all and thus can foster other advancements (Ray, 1998). As per Adelman (2000) economic development combines ‘self-sustaining growth; structural change in patterns of production; technological upgrading; social, political and institutional modernization; and widespread improvement in the human condition.’ One aspect, for example, is that of industrialization, in particular manufacturing, which has important impacts on not just economic development, but also, for example, on society, the natural environment and climate. But industrialization requires, at priori, specific policies, coordination, a pool of labour skills, technologies, investments as well as sustainability considerations in terms of the natural and climate environments (UNIDO, 2024).

The rise in international trade, as per ongoing globalization, has led to some economies becoming more developed and sustainable overtime than others,<sup>13</sup> but some economies have not benefited particularly from the acceleration in international trade over the past 30 years (WTO, 2024). Trade, globally, has raised well-being and reduced poverty, in the aggregate, but has had varying impacts on individuals, for example, in some cases the benefits of trade have been distributed unevenly, there have been job losses, a reduction in job quality and lower incomes, these all being further aggravated by climate change, digitalization and conflicts (WTO, 2024). A further example is that of what is termed precariousness, which is nothing new as humans have been living precariously for millennia (Lee & Leong, 2023), but what is new in precariousness is its increased uncertainty, frequency and intensity. Moreover, there is a considerable increase in discontent, as a result of higher consumer prices and credit costs, for example, in many economies, which is impacting already meagre household disposable income (UNCTAD, 2024b).

However, even though most developing economies are highly diverse, they do have some general common characteristics: ‘a high percentage of production and labour force in agriculture; low savings rates and technology; relatively rapid population growth; relatively low literacy and skills; varying forms of political systems; and poorly developed institutions’ (Nafziger, 2006). Indeed, development goals are commonly focused on reducing poverty and this can be done by income redistribution and/or economic growth (Bigsten & Levin, 2004). However, some developing economies fail to provide for economic growth. This also provides for some further and common characteristics among diverse developing economies, for example, as per their physical geography,<sup>14</sup> geopolitics, governance failures, lack in innovation, cultural barriers, and fiscal and poverty traps (Sachs, 2005). Also, and most often, developing economies have a dual economic system: one based on traditional characteristics, like agriculture, for example, that is producing mainly for individual, family and local community subsistence, while the other economy is market focused, somewhat innovative and hires labour on a

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<sup>13</sup> Indeed, trade has provided better living standards to billions of people as it has enabled greater productivity and competition, higher incomes, lower prices and better general well-being (World Bank, 2020b).

<sup>14</sup> The matter of place remains a central matter to developing economies as three aspects are of importance: agglomeration economies, labour migration, and connectivity. These three elements influence the geographical economy and spatial development of countries in both positive and negative ways (Grover *et al.*, 2022). For example, the concentration of skilled labour is positive for economies, while income inequalities as a result of lack of spatial connectivity can provide for a negative to economies (Grover *et al.*, 2022). Interestingly, technology has changed considerably the traditional notion of physical location for development as, for example, enterprises are not tied to a location as they used to be, as they are substituting natural resources with ‘more mobile resource of knowledge as their critical input’ (Leigh & Blakely, 2017)



commercial basis (Nafziger, 2006). However, there is also a third economic system commonly found in developing economies: the informal economy. The informal economy, according to UN (2024), employs circa half of the world's labour force, provides for low wages, underemployment, low productivity, vulnerability and poverty.

Further, economic development is set at differing levels: global, macro-regional, national, sub-national, regional, local, neighbourhood, community and household (Pike *et al.*, 2006). In fact, there is growing evidence, to suggest that, local and regional development, for example, need to move out of focusing on economic development alone, and including, for example social aspects to development, as for example, there is evidence to suggest that local community based initiatives have been successful (Cochrane, 2011). On this matter, and further, Leigh & Blakely (2017) provide that when communities are developed, both from a human and physical point of view, based on sustainability and equity, then local economic development has been achieved. Further, such a process of local economic development is not a one off intervention, but an ongoing cyclical process, where matters of development are resolved, but not solved, as solutions to current development matters, provide for new problems (Malizia *et al.*, 2021).

### *Distribution*

As provided above, one of the main pillars of economic development is in fact distribution. This not only on how the outcomes of productive capacity are provided to populations, but, also, for example, as per Redding (2024), in terms of the uneven distribution of economic activity across geographic places and spaces, in urban, peri-urban and rural areas. Edgeworth (1904) defines distribution more formally as a type of 'exchange by which produce is divided between the parties who have contributed to its production.' Distribution is somewhat like networks that cover geographical places, space, distances, time and flows, including the digital aspects of such.

At the enterprise level, distribution is all about placing products and services, for example, in the hands of consumers: who will be involved in such distribution, how will such a distribution system work, in terms of people and processes, and how will it be managed (Hilmi, 2022c). At community level, distribution is concerned, for example, with how the community and social economy serves such in its distributional functions: the composition of the aggregate products and services, and their availability, accessibility, affordability and acceptability (Hilmi, 2022c). At the national level, distribution, provides how the national economy serves the overall population with the outcome of productive activities and how such distribution systems, for example, are better implemented with improved roads, bridges and communications, and how such distribution systems affect the economy and how the national economy affects the distribution systems (Hilmi, 2022c).

Indeed, one of the major components of marketing is in effect distribution, at the micro, meso and macromarketing levels within an economy (Hilmi, 2022c). This implies that effectively marketing is a critical component of economies, and as such also a critical component of economic development and development more in general. Commonly, marketing in developing economies is seen mainly as a distribution function, this most often in terms of basic commodities marketing, like unprocessed rice, maize and wheat, for example. However, marketing, as will be seen below, is also, and importantly, a 'multiplier of development' as it contributes to mobilizing latent economic energy, enables economic integration, and resource and asset utilization to capacity' (Drucker, 1958). Further, marketing also 'enables the matching of heterogeneous demand and supply via the allocation of scarce resources' (Wooliscroft & Ganglmair-Wooliscroft, 2018) and as such provides consumer utilities, develops risk-takes (entrepreneurs), and overall fosters economic facilitation activities (Wood & Vitell, 1986).

## **Findings**

### *Marketing and its contribution to economic development*

One of the basics of organizing economic activities is to attempt to achieve and generate satisfying utility via the use of scarce resources (Baker, 2010). In attempts to achieve this, a critical role is played by marketing: the facilitation and development of exchange and the creation of markets are important

as preconditions to economic take-off (Baker, 2010), and are just a few of the contributions that marketing can provide for (Baker, 2010). Indeed, marketing and its related exchange, was a form of contact between primordial societies, commonly bound to local areas (Diamond, 2012), where, for example, tools, food and seeds were exchanged via social networks (FAO, 2024b). Indeed, marketing exists and has existed in societies that are and were involved in exchange (Kinsey, 1988).

Indeed, in the poorest of contexts, the bottom of the pyramid-subsistence markets, in developing economies, for example, exchange is a mainstay. As per Venugopal & Viswanathan (2017) and Viswanathan (2016), exchange is based on providing for livelihoods and survival. As such, exchange is not only commercial in poverty settings, but also based on empathy and relations, for example. Exchange usually involves two parties, but there is also an invisible third party to such exchanges, the contractual enforcer, that enables and facilitates such exchanges to take place (Ray, N.D.). Unfortunately, in many developing economies, institutions that should foster the creation, maintenance and sustainability overtime for exchange are usually non-existent and thus market failures are frequent (Prabhu *et al.*, 2017). Often in traditional societies that are based mainly on family and friend relations and of power exchanges provided by landlords, for example, there is little chance of two strangers to provide for voluntary exchanges as exchanges are commonly highly relational and commanded (Ray, N.D.). However, in societies that are less bonded in such tight relational exchanges, contractual exchanges can occur between strangers, thus fostering institutional arrangements (Ray, N.D.). Markets and governance of such, for example, are examples, of such institutional arrangements, but such progress requires unique institutions and culture for growth, as market emergence cannot be considered to be unidirectional and progress is not natural (Ray, N.D.). Further there is a need for standardization of market practices that reduce discrimination, like entry barriers, for example, and enhances competition, while at the same time keeping in check enterprises that seek to make markets oligopolies or monopiles (Ray, N.D.).

Further, relying on production alone to foster economic development and development more in general is not sufficient as also marketing is required to achieve the aims and objectives of economic development and more generally development (Oudan, 2008). In this regard, the research identified 105 marketing 'contributions' to economic development and development more in general as provided in Table 1 below.

**Table 1:** Marketing's contribution to economic development and to development more in general

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**Marketing contributions**

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- Collects, organizes and distributes information
- Enables and facilitates information networks
- Enables information matching systems for exchange
- Fosters and enables voluntary exchange, be it market, power, gift, and sharing-based exchange
- Fosters and supports exchange of meaning
- Reduces risks in exchange
- Lowers transaction and exchange costs
- Fosters and supports domestic trade
- Fosters and supports international trade
- Fosters and supports global trade
- Enables and facilitates the mobilization of scarce resources
- Enables efficient and effective use of scarce resources
- Enables and facilitates increased productivity of scarce resources
- Guides productive efforts
- Enables better organization, coordination and management of economic activities
- Can help synchronize the development of production and consumption
- Can be a source of resilience
- Stimulates economies of scale
- Fosters and supports the development and expansion of markets
- Can reduce market failures
- Can help and support the development of enterprises
- Segmentation allows for better targeting of productive outcomes
- Facilitates the identification of the most pressing needs in society

Bridges production and consumption efficiently and effectively  
Via understanding human needs, wants and desires integrates the economy more efficiently and effectively into society  
Mobilizes consumption via affecting perceptions and attitudes  
Provides value to production outputs  
Fosters and supports the development of pricing systems  
Can support managing inflation  
Fosters and supports the development of institutions  
Creates opportunities  
Fosters and supports increases in employment  
Fosters and supports increases in income  
Fosters and supports consumer spending  
Fosters and supports industrialization  
Fosters and supports economic growth  
Supports and promotes entrepreneurial activities  
Enables and facilitates managerial activities  
Supports and facilitates private sector economic activities  
Facilitates and enables distribution  
Supports the growth of distribution  
Lowers the costs of distribution  
Facilitates and enables redistribution  
Enables and facilitates the development of intermediaries between production and consumption  
Fosters the development of financial systems  
Is a growth multiplier  
Fosters and supports societal goals and objectives  
Can foster and support individual, community and societal well-being, quality of life and standards of living  
Can help in the reduction of inequality  
Can help reduce various forms of discrimination  
Can foster and support distribution of products and services across cultures  
Enables and facilitates cross-cultural understanding  
Fosters and supports cultural heritage  
Can support grassroot mobilization and empowerment  
Can support collective action  
Can support the diffusion of ideas  
Can break down cultural and social barriers and challenges to change  
Can foster and support innovative solutions for social problems  
Can transform culture and society  
Can foster and support socially responsible behaviours and rewards such  
Can support and facilitate the development of social capital  
Stimulates, fosters and supports the development of infrastructure  
Stimulates, fosters and supports the development of storage systems  
Supports and fosters employment  
Fosters and supports improvements, progress and modernization  
Digital marketing facilitates distribution  
Fosters technological change  
Fosters technology transfer  
Fosters technology distribution  
Fosters technology adoption  
Fosters technological innovations  
Can develop agreements among parties  
Can develop long term relations  
Develops trust in the economy and in consumption  
Fosters specialization  
Facilitates investments both domestic and foreign

Can be a change facilitator  
Rewards innovations  
Develops ranges of diverse product and services assortments  
Develops new products and services continuously  
Enables and fosters the development of standards  
Enables, fosters and promotes quality in products and services  
Is adaptable and versatile as it changes with cultural, societal and economic changes and developments  
Fosters domestic local, community, regional and national economic development  
Enables and fosters access to markets  
Is inclusive as focuses on all members of society and commonly finds consumption solutions for many  
Can help in transforming a subsistence economy  
Fosters and supports the integration of rural areas into the economy  
Fosters and supports the transformation and integration of the informal economy into the formal economy  
Can influence and impact private sector and public sector economies  
Enables and facilitates affordable consumption options for the poor as well as the acceptability, availability and accessibility of such  
Supports and facilitates educating people to become consumers  
Analyses individual, community and societal behaviours in consumption and not only  
Supports the development of infrastructure  
Supports the development of health institutions  
Supports public assistance to those in need  
Supports the protection of the natural environment and climate  
Promotes and supports philanthropy  
Promotes and supports sustainability  
Promotes and supports causes  
Can help influence public policy  
Enables and supports feedback from consumption activities  
Fosters and supports geographical locations  
Fosters and supports national economic competitiveness  
Fosters and supports national image and reputation

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(Sources: Moyer, 1972; Drucker, 1958; Kinsey, 1982; Dholakia, 1984; Etamad, 1984; Kindra, 1984; Klein, 1985; Van Wood & Vitell, 1986; Kaynak, 1986; Kaynak & Hudanah, 1987; Holsey & Wee, 1988; Kinsey, 1988; Tharp & Scott, 1990; Reddy & Campbell, 1994; Manu & Sriram, 1995; Wilkie & Moore, 1999; Cannon & Yaprak, 2001; Dholakia & Dholakia, 2001; Klein & Nason, 2001; Bharadwaj *et al.*, 2005; Ifezue, 2005; Páramo Morales, 2005; Usunier & Lee, 2005; Kotler *et al.*, 2006; Layton, 2007; Ritchie & Sridharan, 2007; Acemoglu & Robinson, 2008; Jocz & Quelch, 2008; Burton, 2009; Ingenbleek & Van Tilburg, 2009; Kotler & Lee, 2009; Donovan & Henley, 2010; Grønhaug & Kleppe, 2010; Kimmel, 2010; Lee & Shum, 2010; Varey, 2010; Head & Mayer, 2011; Momsen, 2011; Sirgy *et al.*, 2012; Herbig, 2013; Lefebvre, 2013; Hastings & Domegan, 2014; Marcel & Dragan, 2014; Schech, 2014; Cacciolatti & Lee, 2015; Carvalho & Mazzon, 2015; Egu & Akalazu, 2015; Kennedy, 2015; Saunders *et al.*, 2015; Achrol & Kotler, 2016; Dinnie, 2016; Kotler *et al.*, 2017; Cicek, 2018; Wooliscroft & Ganglmair-Wooliscroft, 2018; Lee & Kotler, 2020; World Bank, 2020b; Böhmer & Griese, 2021; Kotler *et al.*, 2021; Shultz & Wilkie, 2021; Chatterjee *et al.*, 2022; Helm & Little, 2022; Vegheş, 2022; Ansar, 2023; Hastings & Domegan, 2023; TTI, 2023; Ashik *et al.*, 2024; Belén *et al.*, 2024; Chen *et al.*, 2025)

### *Agri-food marketing and its contribution to economic development*

The agricultural and food sectors, and related rural economy, play an important role in economic development and development more in general (Todaro & Smith, 2015). According to El Weriemmi & Bakari (2024), FAO (2024b), Praburaj (2018), Mellor (2017), FAO (2012), Jhingan (2011), World Bank (2007), and Sarris (2001) the agricultural sector contributes to economic development by: providing sustenance; providing food; providing for food security; reducing hunger and malnutrition; creating effective demand; increasing demand for agricultural related industrial products, thus fostering industrialization; increasing productivity; increasing investments; fostering infrastructure

development; providing for foreign exchange earnings; fostering private sector and public sector development; fostering the development of markets; reducing poverty; increasing rural incomes; helping in reducing inequality; contributing to improved livelihoods; providing for productive employment; and increasing rural welfare. Indeed, the agricultural sector can, along with other sectors, work together to provide for increased economic growth, poverty reduction and natural environment and climate sustainability (World Bank, 2007). In terms of economic growth, for example, there exists, a long term relationship with the agricultural sector (Awokuse & Xie, 2015) as economic productivity has been increasing since the 1950s, even though labour is moving out of the agricultural sector (Fisher-Post, 2025).<sup>15</sup>

Agricultural production systems are an integral part of agricultural and food systems, which basically move food from farm to table, but do also include ‘non-food products that constitute livelihoods and all of the people, as well as the activities, investments and choices, that play a part in getting these food and agricultural products’ (FAO, 2023). However, as result of failures, which are institutional, policy related and market-based, for example, provide for natural environment resource degradation, emissions that effect climate,<sup>16</sup> lack of access to, and affordability of, healthy diets, power imbalances, inequities, and lower standards of living and quality of life (FAO, 2024a; FAO, 2023; WHO 2023). Trade is a fundamental element of agrifood systems, and as such not only enables economic development and growth, but also, for example, increases incomes, increases food distribution, provides for a greater availability of diverse foods and contributes to food security (FAO, 2025b; FAO, 2024b; UNCTAD, 2024a). Further agrifood trade has increased threefold between 1995 and 2020, with an increased participation of developing economies involved in such trade (FAO, 2025b). Moreover, agrifood systems provide employment for an estimated 1.23 billion people on a global basis (FAO, 2024a).

Inherent to agrifood systems are agrifood marketing systems. Generically a marketing system can be defined as ‘a network of individuals, groups and entities, embedded in a societal context, linked directly or indirectly through sequential or shared participation in economic exchange, which jointly and/or collectively creates economic value with and for customers, through the offer of, assortments of products, services, experiences and ideas, that emerge in response to or anticipation of customer demand’ (Layton & Duan, 2015). Marketing systems are ‘complex social networks of individuals and groups linked through shared participation in the creation and delivery of economic value through exchange’ (Layton, 2015) and are ‘a sub-system of the economic system, which in turn is a sub-system of the overall social system of a society’ (Dixon & Wilkinson, 1982). Fundamentally the marketing system is an ‘allocating mechanism that facilitates the rational allocation of resources in production and of products among users’ (Jones, 1970).

In specific to the agrifood sector, an agri-food marketing system ‘comprises all of the functions, and agencies who perform activities, that are necessary in order to profitably exploit opportunities in the marketplace and each of the components are independent of one another, but a change in any one of them impacts on the others as well as upon the system as a whole’ (FAO, 1997a). The agri-food marketing system has three major activities ‘physical handling, exchange and price setting processes’ (Kohls & Uhl, 2015). Agri-food marketing systems evolve within the confines of social, economic, cultural, legal, political, technological, institutional, customary, demographic, natural environment, institutional, policy and climate elements particular to countries (Kaynack, 1999; Farris, 1998). In fact, and in this regard, each economy has diverse agri-food marketing systems, for example, that ‘move

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<sup>15</sup> However, Hårsmar (2022), does, and interestingly, raise the question ‘whether growth in the agricultural sector remains the best option to sustainably reduce poverty in low-income countries?’ This is raised seeing the current ‘preconditions for economic growth and for national economic development have changed. Trade, transportation, and technological progress, together with shifting international rules for trade and investment, have both opened for, and forced new ways of economic integration at regional and global levels’ (Hårsmar, 2022). Anderson *et al.*, (2010) provide that over the past decades farmers’ earnings have been depressed. Further FAO (2019b) provides that in efforts to reduce food insecurity, economic growth alone is not sufficient. Moreover, Harari (2014) provides an enticing discourse on the agricultural sector itself, whereby its very nature of being, has created far more uncertainty and risks, including, for example, demographic steep increases overtime.

<sup>16</sup> Indeed, climate change can impact agrifood systems negatively, for example, as per it effects on agricultural production systems, livelihoods, various vulnerabilities, incomes and equality (FAO, 2024c).

and transform products from producers to consumers' (Kohls & Uhl, 2015) that are specific, and based on elements found that are particular to each and every economy.

Agrifood marketing systems are composed of elements of both agricultural marketing and food marketing. Agricultural marketing is defined by Purcell (1995) 'as all the economic activities that are required to put the farm product in the hands of the consumer.' It basically facilitates the transfer of unprocessed products (commodities) or semi process products from producers to consumers, creating value in terms of time, place, form, and possession (Kandi *et al.*, 2025). Food marketing is defined as all the 'activities needed at all stages in the food system to facilitate the exchange of food products and services which satisfy the needs and wants of individual consumers and organizations' (Schaffner *et al.*, 1998). The coming together of agricultural marketing and food marketing is termed agrifood marketing and refers to 'the series of services involved in moving a product (or commodity) from the point of production to the point of consumption' (FAO, 1997a) and can be defined as the 'buying and selling, the economic incentive structure, and goods handling system for food, from point of production through processing and distribution to the final sales to consumers' (Padberg, 1997). It includes both agricultural marketing and the application 'of mainstream marketing management' (Ritson, 1997), in other words the marketing concept.

In terms of agrifood marketing and its contribution to economic development and development more in general, the research identified 92 agrifood marketing contributions to economic development and development more in general<sup>17</sup> as can be seen in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Agrifood Marketing's contribution to economic development and to development more in general

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**Agri- food marketing contributions**

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- Enables and facilitates exchange in agrifood products
- Enables and facilitates voluntary exchange in agrifood products
- Enables and facilitates long term exchanges in agrifood products
- Supports and fosters commercial and non-commercial exchanges
- Enables and facilitates the development of market and marketing information systems
- Provides market and marketing information systems
- Supports the creation of agrifood pricing systems
- Supports and provides transparency in the agrifood pricing system
- Supports agrifood product price stability
- Enables and facilitates bargaining power of stakeholders
- Enables and facilitates the more optimum utilization of agricultural resources
- Enables and facilitates commercial production
- Fosters and supports local, community and societal development
- Enables and facilitates the better matching of supply and demand
- Facilitates and enables identification of food demand at the individual, household, community and societal level
- Enables and facilities the better synchronization of supply and demand for fresh produce
- Supports and enables customization
- Enables and fosters segmentation for better targeting
- Supports knowledge and capacity building in consumption
- Enables and facilitates the development of consumer literacy
- Enables and facilitates community and social consumption
- Develops the basis for employment opportunities
- Develops the basis for industrialization
- Supports and enables investments, both domestic and foreign
- Supports the development of infrastructure
- Supports the development of food grading systems, safety standards and quality standards
- Contributes to better nutrition

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<sup>17</sup> Consideration has to be given that the 92 contributions identified are not exhaustive. This is because of the research boundaries implied as per the research methods used, and the limitations that such can provide for.

Contributes to public health  
Enables and facilitates market access  
Develops agrifood markets  
Facilitates the better functioning of agrifood markets  
Supports the development and expansion of consumption  
Supports the development of other sectors  
Enables and facilitates domestic trade  
Enables and facilitates international trade  
Is a source of national revenue  
Reduces trade risks  
Reduces transaction and exchange costs  
Enables and facilitates agrifood distribution  
Enables and facilitates cost reductions in agrifood distribution  
Facilitates and enables new technology development, adoption and adaptation in distribution  
Enables and facilitates diversity of distribution for diverse agrifood products  
Supports and enables the further development of food distribution from rural to urban areas, rural to rural areas and urban to rural areas  
Supports and fosters the development of peri-urban and urban agricultural production and per-urban and urban agrifood product distribution  
Enables better organization, coordination and management of agrifood product distribution  
Fosters and supports the further development of community agrifood product distribution  
Fosters and supports the further development of social agrifood product distribution  
Fosters and supports the development of intermediaries  
Digital agrifood marketing supports the access to agrifood products and their distribution  
Is adaptive and versatile  
Enables and facilitates the reduction in agrifood waste and loss  
Enables and facilitates value addition to agrifood products  
Enables and facilitates the reduction of seasonality in consumption  
Supports societal well-being, standards of living and quality of life  
Enables and facilitates the development of rural areas  
Supports an increase in rural incomes  
Fosters agrifood entrepreneurship and agrifood enterprise development  
Supports and fosters the organization and coordination of producer and enterprise partnerships, associations and clusters  
Facilitates and enables the integration of rural areas into the economy  
Facilitates and enables the integration of rural economies with urban economies  
Fosters and supports the transition from informal exchanges to formal exchanges  
Supports the development of urban growth  
Fosters the development of institutions  
Facilitates the development of societies  
Facilitates the development of culture  
Facilitates getting over social and cultural barriers for development  
Supports and enables the development of social capital  
Enables and fosters trust and long term relationships in the economy  
Facilitates and enables loyalty development  
Supports the further development of economic and social networks  
Supports the reduction of discrimination  
Enables and facilitates inclusivity  
Supports and enables the reduction of marginalization  
Facilitates and enables the reduction of inequality  
Enables and facilitates the development of the financial system  
Enables and facilitates the development of credit products  
Supports economic growth  
Fosters technology adoption  
Fosters technology adaptation

Fosters innovation  
Fosters new product development  
Facilitates and enables co-value creation  
Expands the assortment of available, accessible and affordable food products  
Fosters and enables the further development of community and social agrifood products  
Fosters food security  
Supports sustainability  
Supports public policy  
Supports political activism  
Supports national competitiveness  
Supports national image and reputation  
Supports and fosters agrifood product cultural heritage  
Supports and fosters national territories and localization

(Sources: Abbot, 1962; Abbot, 1967; Rao & Tagat, 1985; Abbot 1986; Abbot, 1993; FAO, 1984; Barker, 1989; Meissner, 1989; Purcell, 1995; FAO, 1997a; Farris, 1997; Meulenberg, 1997; Padberg, 1997; Ritson, 1997; Schaffner *et al.*, 1998; Barrett & Mutambatsere, 2005; Hayami & Godo, 2005; Nafziger, 2006; World Bank, 2008; Kaynak, 2009; DeSouceya, 2010; Ingenbleek, 2010; Norton *et al.*, 2010; Tollens, 2010; Belk, 2012; Rhea, 2012; Chapple-Sokol, 2013; Herring, 2015; Khols & Uhl, 2015; Stanley & Stanley, 2015; Newman, 2013; Mahoney, 2015; Luša & Jakešević, 2017; Redmond, 2018; Kanimozhi & Jothimani, 2019; Leach *et al.*, 2020; Rockower, 2020; Dehkili, 2021; Hilmi, 2021a; FAO, 2022b; Hilmi, 2022b; Hilmi, 2022c; Hilmi, 2023b; WTO, 2023a; Behera *et al.*, 2024; Hilmi, 2025)

## Discussion

From the findings, and as seen above, what emerged is that 105 marketing ‘contributions’ were identified for economic development and development more in general (see Table 1). This, over the time span considered in the research, provides some good evidence that in fact marketing, in its generic form, does contribute to economic development and development more in general. This also provides that over the past eight decades there has been a considerable accumulation of, for example, knowledge, know-how and practice in marketing’s role in economic development and wider development. This, though, occurring at all economic levels: the domestic economic micro-level, where customers, interact with enterprises; the domestic meso-level, where for example, distributive networks of assortments of products and services are found at community and regional levels; the domestic macro-level, where for example, national distribution systems and infrastructure provide for the spatial availability of products and services; at the international level, where for example, trade between countries is amply facilitated by the exchange of products and services as a result of international marketing; and at the global level, where, for example, global distribution systems, facilitate global trade. However, and interestingly, national, international and global policies that focus on considering marketing as a main pillar for economic development and for wider development are somewhat scant. This lack of marketing policies, for example, tends to undermine a fundamental pillar of economic development and thus seemingly does not provide for the far more holistic policies that are required for economic development.

In terms of agrifood marketing’s contribution to economic development and development more in general, 92 contributors were identified (see Table 2). In comparing Table 1 and Table 2, there are evident similarities and overlaps between the two sets of contributors. For example, there are similarities in: fostering exchange; facilitating the matching of supply and demand; distributing marketing information; developing markets; reducing transaction costs; and facilitating both domestic and international trade. However, there are also differences, between Table 1 and Table 2, for example agrifood marketing provides for: better nutrition; supports cultural heritage via fostering unique food and culinary products; supports the integration of the rural economy into the national economy; and enables and facilitates the identification of food demand at individual, household, community and societal levels.

Such similarities and differences between Table 1 and Table 2 also reflects the similarity and differences between marketing and agrifood marketing. In terms of similarities, for example, both portray the understanding of customer needs, wants and desires; conducting marketing research; building relationships; and the creation of value. In terms of the differences, between marketing and agri-food marketing, for example, agrifood marketing faces a constant and rising demand as food is



required on a regular and daily basis; agrifood marketing target consumers are more specialized and specific as per differing and specific tastes in terms of foods and culinary habits; the overall agrifood market tends to be far larger as more people are involved in such markets as consumers, workers, entrepreneurs, etc., and in the distribution channels to supply agrifood products; agrifood product prices tend to oscillate more frequently as for seasonality, for example, of products; distribution channels are more complex and longer as per the perishability of products; and agrifood products tend to be seasonal, perishable, traceable and more prone to safety and quality regulations and standards. Also, agrifood marketing in developing economies tends to be traversed by various marketing typologies in a type of mix of: entrepreneurial marketing; social marketing; relationship marketing; service marketing; basic functional 'systems-oriented' marketing; survival and localization marketing; and rural and urban marketing (Hilmi, 2023b). This provides that agri-food marketing in developing economies tends to have localized, entrepreneurial, social, relational, service, system, survival, rural and urban orientations. Moreover, developing economies also provide that agrifood marketing by its nature tends to be localized, adaptable, innovative, flexible, variable, versatile, agile and relational, and focused on three levels: the micromarketing, mesomarketing and macromarketing levels (Hilmi, 2025; Hilmi, 2022c).

In specific to the 92 agrifood marketing 'contributions' identified by the stocktaking research each provides a direct or indirect contribution to economic development. Further agrifood marketing supports and facilitates economic development at the various economic levels of micro, meso, macro, international and global. Agri-food marketing also provides for social, cultural and political development, for example. Indeed, there are evident overlaps, as some of the identified agrifood marketing contributors can, for example, at the same time support both economic development and social development in unison.

In terms of economic development, some of the contributors identified, for example, were:

- At the very basic exchange level, agrifood marketing contributes to supporting and fostering repeated exchanges as per more price transparency that can render more confidence in exchange, and thus supporting local economic development;
- Digital agrifood marketing enables and facilitates exchange in the terms of availability of information: where agrifood products are most in demand, how and what kind of distribution needs to be set up and what margins can be made;
- Agrifood marketing enables, facilitates and supports the development of agrifood micro and small-scale enterprises, thus also here supporting the economy as well as social and cultural interactions that can be important to economic development and development more in general;
- Agrifood marketing does not only operate at the micromarketing level, for example, the enterprise level, but also operates at the macromarketing level, for example, improved national food distribution systems that are more effective and efficient as well as at the mesomarketing level, for example, improving market development and agrifood product assortments in rural and remote areas.

In terms of social development, some of the contributors identified, for example, were:

- Agrifood marketing does not only foster commercial exchanges, but also non-commercial exchanges, such as those, for example, based on empathy, thus this providing for forms of community-based exchanges and community development. Such types of exchanges fostering an agrifood social marketing orientation;
- Agrifood marketing enables and facilitates repeat exchanges, which overtime, foster relationships to be developed and trust among contracting parties, this contributing also to social binding and stability;
- Agrifood marketing also fosters and supports overall well-being, for example, via increased food security and nutrition, and in a sense furnishes products, for example, that have an inherent public benefit to them, not just individual benefits, thus also contributing to raising living standards and quality of life.

In terms of cultural development, some of the contributors identified, for example, were:

- Agrifood marketing supports agrifood product cultural heritage, for example, with promoting traditional food products and gastronomy. This not only contributing to cultural development, but fostering agrifood products which are unique;
- Agrifood marketing fosters cross cultural trade in agrifood products, for example, with the international marketing of agrifood products between nation states. This not only enables, for example, people to better understand the diversity of culture in the world, but also commence to have a better understanding of each culture via unique agrifood product and gastronomy;
- Agrifood marketing also helps develop cultures as per, for example, the inevitable cross cultural changes that international agrifood marketing brings.

In terms of political development, some of the contributors identified, for example, were:

- Agrifood marketing with its relational focus supports the formation, for example, of producer associations for marketing purposes and not only. Such institutional arrangements, for example, provide forums for discussions and dialogues, and thus can foster political development;
- Agrifood marketing with its support for integrating rural communities and economies into trade, also provide a platform, for example, for rural and remote communities, not only to participate in trade, but also to become more involved in political discourses;
- Agrifood marketing also supports and enables the reduction of marginalization, and thus supports the ‘voiceless’ not only in having more say in trade, but also in politics, thus also contributing to political development.

In terms of natural resource and climate development, some of the contributors identified, for example, were:

- Agrifood marketing facilitates and enables the more effective and efficient use of resources for agricultural production, for example. This provides that natural resources are used more efficiently and effectively and can also contribute to the development of new ways of using such, thus contributing to better natural resource use and emission reductions;
- Agrifood marketing facilitates and enables more efficiency and effectiveness in the resources used for the distribution of agrifood products. This provides, that for example, natural and climate resources are used more effectively and efficiently and can also contribute to the development of new ways of using distribution resources;
- Agrifood marketing can also support and promote, for example, more sustainable consumption, thus, also here contributing to more effective and efficient use of natural and climate resources.

As per the above, the 92 agri-food marketing contributors identified have a role in economic development and wider development, that range, for example, from fostering and facilitating improved market functioning and efficiency, to more effective and efficient agri-food product distribution, to improved consumer and societal well-being, and to institutional development. Clearly, and over the past eight decades, there has been a considerable accumulation of, for example, knowledge, know-how and practice in agrifood marketing’s role in economic development and wider development. However, and similar to the more generic marketing’s role in economic development, at policy level, agrifood marketing’s role in contributing to economic development and development more at large, has been somewhat underplayed. This not only, for example, in terms of local economic development initiatives, but also at national macro levels as well as in international and global levels. This is interesting, as for example, at the global level, agrifood trade has increased over the past three decades, but policies that specifically enhance agrifood marketing’s role and contribution to such international agrifood trade, have been somewhat scant.

## Conclusions

As per the above findings, 92 agrifood marketing contributors were identified. With such evidence from the stocktaking research it can be concluded, with a good degree of confidence, that agrifood marketing is an important element, if not critical element, to economic development and development more at large. The stocktaking research also provided ample evidence of 'how' agrifood marketing contributes to economic development and development more in general. Further, the research, as per its very nature, covered a stocktaking period over the past 80 years, thus also contributing to further augmenting and accumulating knowledge, know-how and practice on the role of agrifood marketing in economic development and development more in general. Moreover, the research also provided ample evidence that can be of use for developing policies for agrifood marketing, that can be incorporated, for example, into domestic economic and development policies more at large, at all levels: the domestic micro, meso and macro policy levels as well as at the international and global policy levels.

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