Agricultural Value Chains and Their Role in Revitalizing the Rural Economy in Algeria

Les chaînes de valeur agricoles et leur rôle dans la revitalisation de l'économie rurale en Algérie

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Abstract:

The study highlights that activating agricultural value chains in Algeria is essential for sustainable rural development but is hindered by weak infrastructure, poor stakeholder coordination, limited access to finance and insurance, and low marketing capacities. It calls for infrastructure improvement, innovation in processing and marketing, stronger public–private partnerships, and an integrated national agricultural planning approach.

Keywords: *Value Chain; Agricultural Value Chains; Rural Economy.*

Jel Classification Codes : *Q13 ; R11 ; Q18.*

Résumé:

Cette étude montre que l'activation des chaînes de valeur agricoles en Algérie, levier du développement rural durable, demeure entravée par la faiblesse des infrastructures, le déficit de coordination entre les acteurs, l'accès limité au financement et à l'assurance, ainsi que par l'insuffisance des capacités de commercialisation. Elle préconise, dès lors, la modernisation des infrastructures, la promotion de l'innovation, le renforcement des partenariats public-privé et l'adoption d'une planification agricole nationale intégrée.

Mots-clés: *Chaîne de valeur; Chaînes de valeur agricoles; Économie rurale.*

Jel Classification Codes: *Q13; R11; Q18.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Rural development is considered one of the main pillars of any comprehensive development strategy, as it encompasses a large segment of the population and aims to achieve spatial and social equity by harnessing local potential and improving living conditions in rural areas. Agricultural activities play a vital role in shaping the economic and social structure of rural regions, as they represent the primary source of income and employment opportunities, in addition to contributing to national food security. However, the low added value generated by traditional farming activities, along with weak linkages between production, processing, and marketing stages, has made it necessary to seek new approaches to enhance the effectiveness of this sector and its role in stimulating the rural economy.

In modern approaches to economic development, the concept of agricultural value chains has emerged. This concept is based on analyzing all integrated stages of an agricultural product, from primary production to final consumption, in addition to identifying the actors involved, the relationships linking them, and the value added generated at each stage.

The importance of this concept lies in its ability to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of the agricultural sector and to help identify strengths and weaknesses, thereby guiding interventions and policies toward achieving the greatest possible economic and social returns in rural areas.

In Algeria, the development of agricultural value chains represents both a challenge and an opportunity. Despite the country's significant agricultural potential in terms of arable land, natural resources, and climatic diversity, the rural economy still suffers from weak integration between production, processing, and marketing stages, as well as limited investment in agro-processing industries, infrastructure, and logistical services. These imbalances reduce the competitiveness of national agricultural products and limit their capacity to generate local wealth.

Hence, the importance of studying the role of agricultural value chains in stimulating the rural economy in Algeria emerges through analyzing their operational mechanisms, identifying the main actors involved, and assessing their contribution to improving rural incomes,

creating employment opportunities, and valorizing local resources. This study also aims to highlight the current state of agricultural value chains in selected Algerian agricultural subsectors and to explore ways of activating them as a tool for achieving sustainable rural development.

Based on the above, the main research problem of the paper can be formulated as follows:

How can agricultural value chains contribute to stimulating the rural economy in Algeria?

The following sub-questions stem from this main question:

- What is meant by agricultural value chains and what are their main components?
- What is the current state of the rural economy and agricultural value chains in Algeria?
- What mechanisms can enable value chains to become a genuine driver of sustainable rural development?

The study is based on the hypothesis that developing agricultural value chains in an integrated and comprehensive manner would enhance local added value, support job creation, and contribute to building a more dynamic and sustainable rural economy.

In terms of methodology, the study adopts a descriptive-analytical approach through a review of economic literature as well as national and international reports, in addition to analyzing selected sectoral experiences within the Algerian agricultural field. The study is divided into two main sections:

- **First section:** The theoretical and conceptual framework of agricultural value chains.
- **Second section:** The role of agricultural value chains in stimulating the rural economy in Algeria.

2. The Theoretical and Conceptual Framework of Agricultural Value Chains:

The conceptual framework of the value chain can first be introduced, followed by the concepts related to the study variable, namely agricultural value chains

2.1 The Concept of the Value Chain

The idea of value chain analysis first emerged in 1985. Michael Porter is considered the first to use and develop the value chain analysis methodology as a way to present value creation for the final consumer, based on the sequence of activities responsible for producing goods and services. At that time, the value chain was described as the internal activities related to designing, producing, marketing, delivering, and supporting a product.

As the scope of operations addressed by the value chain concept expanded, it came to encompass a set of interrelated activities responsible for creating value, starting from sourcing raw materials from suppliers and ending with delivering products to the end user.

2.1.1 Definition of the Value Chain

Definitions of the value chain can be presented according to the perspectives from which they were approached, as follows:

"The value chain represents a connected set of value-creating activities. It is a method for understanding activities that extend from basic raw materials all the way to the final consumer." (Mohamed, 2020, p. 304)

"The value chain is defined as a method, approach, or analysis that requires studying all activities of the enterprise, whether internal or external, organizing and structuring these activities within an organizational framework, and selecting competent human resources capable of optimally utilizing those resources in a way that helps achieve the best possible return for the enterprise." (Youssef, 2009, p. 4)

2.2.2 Types of Value Chains

There are several types of value chains, which differ according to the criterion used, as follows:

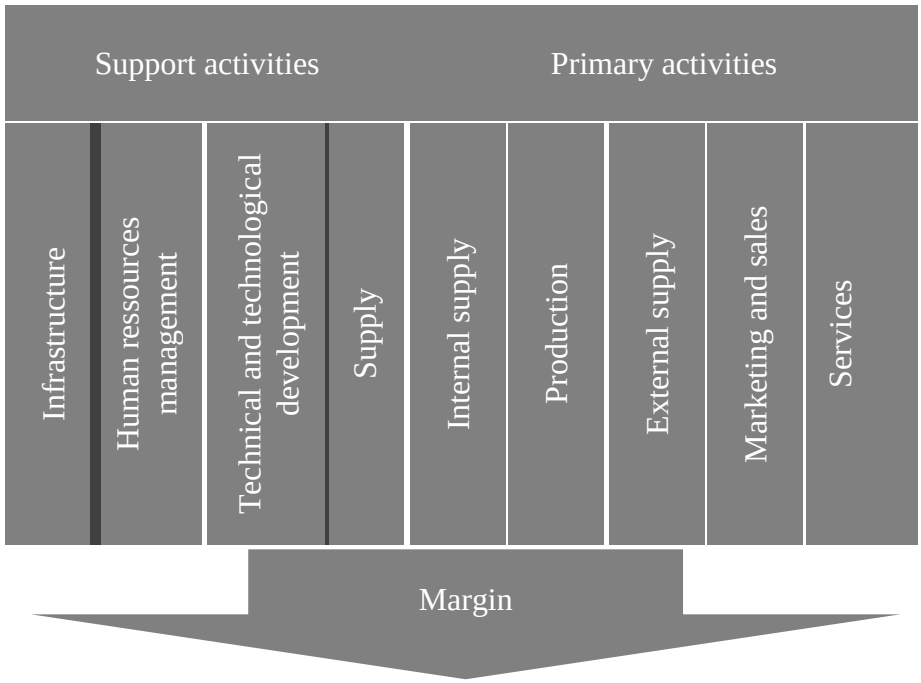
- **According to geographical scope**: value chains are classified into local value chains, regional value chains, and global value chains.
- **According to sector type:** they are classified into global industrial value chains, agricultural value chains (which will be the focus of the remainder of this research paper, as they constitute the subject of our study), and global service value chains.

– **According to length (distance):** they are divided into short global value chains and long global value chains.

2.2.3 Value Chain Activities

Michael Porter also presented a general model of the value chain, illustrating the margin achieved by the firm, which represents the difference between the revenue generated by activities and the cost of performing those activities. In addition, he identified nine core activities within the value chain model. These activities can be illustrated in the following diagram:

Fig N^{o} 1: The Value Chain Model According to Michael Porter



Source: Prepared by the researcher

From the figure, it is clear that Michael Porter, through the value chain model, seeks to illustrate the activities that are directly related to the production of a product up to the final stage, which is its delivery to the

customer and the provision of after-sales services. These activities are classified as primary activities.

As for the support activities, as their name indicates, they are the activities that assist and reinforce the primary activities, contributing to their efficiency and overall value creation.

2.2 The Concept of Agricultural Value Chains

Value chains in agricultural and food products are characterized by being more international than local in nature, especially in the case of small East Asian countries that participate in numerous global value chains.

2.2.1 Definition of Agricultural Value Chains

The value chain in the agricultural sector is defined as:

"An integrated set of activities and participants involved in moving agricultural products from input suppliers to farmers' fields and ultimately to consumers." (Miller & Linda Jones, 2013, p. 8)

"A sequence of value-adding activities that extends from the production stage to consumption, passing through processing and commercial marketing operations."

In general, the concept of the agricultural value chain encompasses the full range of activities and actors who contribute value through their inputs or services during the transformation of an agricultural product to meet consumers' needs and preferences.

2.2.2 Importance of the Agricultural Value Chain

The importance of the value chain lies in its role as a key tool for analyzing relationships among producers in order to identify solutions for economic growth and poverty reduction by enhancing the competitive position of producers in general.

Agricultural value chains also enable small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to compete at both local and global levels. This requires addressing challenges and seizing opportunities offered by the business environment in which these enterprises operate, through the combined efforts of the private sector, cooperatives, civil society, and governments to ensure a better future for local markets, in addition to the role of development service providers. (Majdoline, 2015, p. 80)

2.3 Components and Operating Mechanisms of Agricultural Value Chains

To identify the components and operating mechanisms of agricultural value chains, it is necessary to understand their main operational stages, then the key actors involved, and finally the indicators used to measure their performance.

2.3.1 Main Stages of Agricultural Value Chain Operations

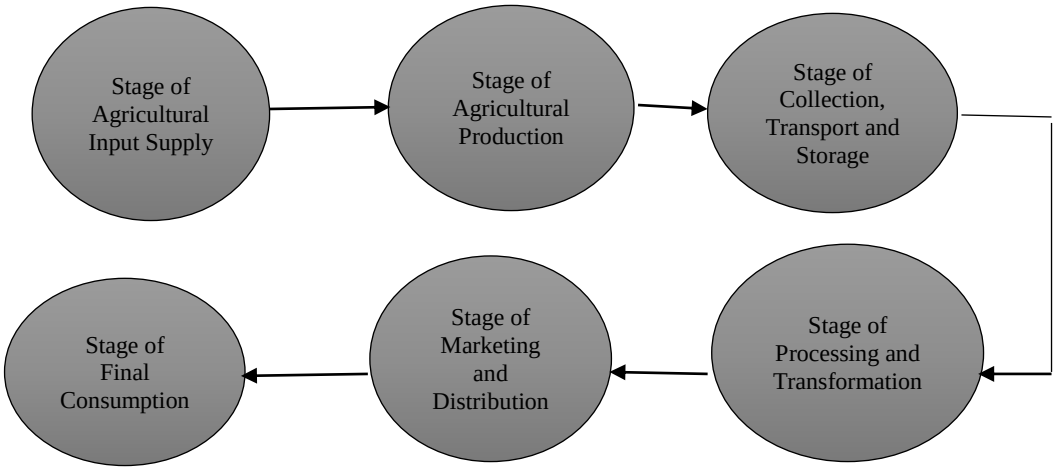
Agricultural value chains constitute an integrated system of sequential activities aimed at adding value to agricultural products at each stage of their movement from farm to final consumer. These chains include several interrelated stages as follows: (Rabah & Halimi Sara, 2025, p. 225)

- **Stage of Agricultural Input Supply:** This includes all activities related to providing essential production factors such as seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, agricultural equipment, as well as extension and financial services. This stage forms the foundation that determines the quality and quantity of subsequent agricultural production;
- **Stage of Agricultural Production**: This stage involves core farming operations such as plowing, sowing, irrigation, fertilization, pest control, and harvesting. Productivity and the quality of the primary product are determined at this stage;
- **Stage of Collection, Transport, and Storage**: After harvesting, products are collected from farmers and transported to collection, storage, or processing centers. The objective of this stage is to preserve product quality and reduce post-harvest losses;
- **Stage of Processing and Transformation**: At this stage, raw agricultural materials are transformed into processed or semi-processed products through operations such as sorting, drying, packaging, or food processing. This is considered one of the most important stages for adding economic value to the product;
- **Stage of Marketing and Distribution**: In this stage, products are introduced into local or international markets, using effective marketing strategies;

– **Stage of Final Consumption**: This is the last stage, where the product reaches the consumer. At this point, the quality of goods and their compliance with market preferences are evaluated. Through this stage, the sustainability and economic viability of the chain are ultimately determined.

The main stages of agricultural value chain operations can be illustrated in the following diagram:

Fig N^{o} 2: The Main Stages of Agricultural Value Chain Operations



Source: Prepared by the researcher

2.3.2 Main Actors in Agricultural Value Chains

The main actors in agricultural value chains form an interconnected network of stakeholders who contribute to adding value to agricultural products across the different core stages. At the forefront of these actors are agricultural producers, who represent the starting point by cultivating and producing raw materials. Agricultural input suppliers, who provide farmers with seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, equipment, as well as extension and technical services, follow them. Next come intermediaries and collectors, who gather products from farmers and transport them to storage facilities, processing units, or markets, processors and manufacturers then play a central role in transforming primary products into food or industrial goods with higher added value, thereby enhancing the competitiveness of the agricultural sector. This is followed by the marketing and distribution stage,

where marketers, distribution companies, and traders promote products locally and internationally to ensure their delivery to the final consumer. The consumer represents the last link in the chain and determines the volume and nature of market demand. In addition to these actors, governmental and supporting institutions provide the regulatory, financial, and technical environment necessary for sustaining these chains and improving their efficiency. The integration of the roles of all these actors is a decisive factor in the success of agricultural value chains and their contribution to rural economic development.

2.3.3 Indicators for Measuring the Performance of Agricultural Value Chains

Performance indicators of agricultural value chains are among the most important analytical tools used to evaluate their efficiency and effectiveness in achieving rural development objectives and enhancing agricultural competitiveness. These indicators help identify strengths and weaknesses across the different stages of the chain, from production to marketing, and guide policies toward improving performance and sustainability.

Performance indicators are distributed across several interrelated dimensions, as follows: (Thouria & Ouzal Abdelkader, 2020, adapted)

– **Economic Indicators**: These focus on measuring the economic efficiency of the chain and include indicators such as total agricultural value added, profitability ratio and return on investment, production, transport and processing costs, and the share of actors in the final product value. The growth rate of processed agricultural exports is also considered a key indicator of the chain's success in creating market-added value.

– **Productive and Technical Indicators**: These measure the efficiency of operations across the chain's stages, including agricultural productivity per hectare or per livestock unit, post-harvest loss rates, efficiency in resource use, and the degree of adoption of innovation and modern agricultural technologies.

– **Social Indicators**: These include the level of job creation in rural areas, the participation rate of women and youth in agricultural activities, the

chain's impact on improving the livelihoods of rural actors, and the fairness of income distribution among different actors in the chain.

– **Environmental Indicators:** These include the level of conservation of natural resources and biodiversity, as well as the volume of emissions resulting from production and transport operations. They are used to assess the chain's commitment to environmentally sustainable practices.

3. Agricultural Value Chains as a Lever for Stimulating the Rural Economy in Algeria

The rural economy in Algeria holds a dual significance: first, as a primary source of agricultural activity contributing to national food security, and second, as a space with developmental potential that should be harnessed beyond the hydrocarbon sector. However, this space has long faced structural challenges that have limited its ability to achieve a qualitative economic and social transformation.

3.1 The Reality of the Algerian Rural Economy

Historically, agriculture has dominated the rural economy due to the sociological nature of rural communities. In Algeria, rural economic activity varies across regions, including crop farming, livestock rearing, and poultry production. These activities flourish differently depending on natural conditions, as well as the human and technical capacities for modern agricultural practices (Mazari, 2017, p. 465). In some rural areas, villagers now practice agriculture using modern methods, improving their income and economic activity.

3.1.1 Analysis of the Current Rural Economy

The current rural economy in Algeria reflects a fragile balance between the importance of agriculture as a source of livelihood and employment on one side, and weak infrastructure and production capacity on the other. Approximately 25% of the population, or around 11.4 million people, live in rural areas (World Bank, 2024). The agricultural sector represents about 12–13% of GDP, with significant regional disparities in productivity and infrastructure between inland and coastal areas. According to ILO data (2023), about 9.3% of the workforce is employed in agriculture. Rural poverty rates remain significantly higher than urban areas, limiting the contribution of rural areas to overall development. These indicators

highlight ongoing structural challenges despite Algeria's agricultural and natural potential.

3.1.2 Characteristics of the Algerian Rural Economy

The rural economy in Algeria is a cornerstone of the national socio-economic structure, with a significant portion of the population relying on agriculture, livestock, and traditional crafts as primary income sources. The Algerian government has prioritized rural development within national strategies to achieve balanced development and reduce regional disparities, particularly since the launch of the Rural Renewal Program in the early 2000s. Key characteristics include (Ali, 2015, adapted):

– **Dual traditional and modern activity:** coexistence of traditional farming alongside efforts to adopt modern techniques;

– **Dependence on agriculture**: agriculture forms the backbone of rural economic activity and the basis for development programs;

– **Weak integration of value chains**: poor linkages between agricultural production and processing/value addition limit rural economic potential;

– **Weak infrastructure and services**: deficits in transport, electricity, water, and services constrain economic development;

– **Rural outmigration**: migration to urban areas reduces human capital and local economic capacity;

– **Partial reliance on government policies**: rural economy development has largely depended on government programs (e.g., Rural and Agricultural Renewal);

– **Significant geographic disparities**: differences in production, income, and infrastructure exist across hills, mountains, deserts, and proximity to urban areas;

– **Limited contribution to GDP and national development**: despite social and environmental importance, rural economy has yet to realize its full potential.

3.1.3 Government Programs and Policies for Rural Development

Rural development is a strategic priority for Algeria, given the rural population, natural and human resources, and the sector's role in food security and sustainable development. Since the early 2000s, Algeria has implemented integrated programs to improve rural living conditions, support farmers, and encourage rural entrepreneurship:

– **National Program for Rural and Agricultural Development (PNDAR):** launched in 2000 to improve agricultural productivity, diversify rural activities, stabilize populations, develop infrastructure, protect natural resources, and strengthen farmers' capacities. It emphasizes integrated development, combining agriculture, rural housing, and non-agricultural economic activities.

– **National Fund for Rural and Agricultural Development (FNDRA):** a complementary financial mechanism supporting agricultural projects with direct economic and social impact, including farm equipment, water wells, land protection, and livestock development. It also provides direct financial support to farmers and investors.

– **National Agency for Support and Development of Entrepreneurship (NESDA):** supports the creation and expansion of micro-enterprises in goods and services, offering training, financing, and administrative guidance. It forms part of Algeria's strategy to promote rural entrepreneurship and diversify income sources beyond hydrocarbons and traditional agriculture (NESDA, 2025).

– **Support for SMEs (Ministry of Industry)**: SMEs are considered drivers of economic development. Government programs aim to enhance their competitiveness, diversify the economy, create jobs, and reduce imports.

These overlapping programs aim to build an integrated and sustainable rural economy based on diversified economic activities, local resource utilization, and inclusion of actors in agricultural and rural value chains.

3.2 The Reality of Agricultural Value Chains in Algeria

Algerian agricultural value chains have significant production potential but face structural and organizational barriers that often prevent translating this potential into sustainable added value. Climatic diversity and arable land offer opportunities for specialized chains (e.g., dates, olive oil, milk, vegetables), yet integration across the chain stages (inputs, production, processing, marketing) is uneven, leading to disparities in benefits for farmers and rural areas.

Despite national programs and international initiatives to support value chains and improve local governance and capacity, challenges remain: fragmented land ownership, small farm sizes limiting economies of scale, weak processing industries, inadequate packaging and local value addition, logistical shortcomings, and intermediary capture of a large portion of value. These factors reduce smallholder profitability and limit their integration into profitable value chains (Bekkis & Amine Benmehaia, 2024, p. 51).

Some agricultural sectors have seen partial success, showing what is possible when actors are well-coordinated. For example, the date chain expanded production and exports with better packaging and marketing, the milk chain received support to boost local production and reduce imports, and the olive oil chain has competitive potential but is still limited by processing and marketing. However, these successes are small, concentrated in certain regions, and need wider integration across production, processing, and markets.

Overall, Algerian agricultural value chains are transitioning from a raw production model toward a more integrated, value-added model. Success requires expanding processing and storage capacity, improving logistical infrastructure, strengthening professional organization, and providing targeted financing. Achieving this will enhance agriculture's role in stimulating the rural economy and supporting food security and sustainable development.

3.3 Applied Models of Agricultural Value Chains in Algeria

3.3.1 Olive Oil Value Chain:

Algeria has substantial potential in olive cultivation, which has expanded into new regions. The olive oil sector faces technical weaknesses, limited export, and low value addition. Key stages include:

- **Agricultural production:** planting, care, harvesting.
- **Pressing and processing:** oil extraction, packaging.
- **Marketing and distribution:** domestic or export markets.
- **Consumption:** final consumer or export.

Despite its potential, the olive oil sector faces challenges like small, scattered farms, outdated equipment, lack of quality standards, and limited promotion abroad. Improvements are needed, such as forming processing and marketing cooperatives, boosting exports, and creating an integrated value chain connecting farmers, processors, distributors, and exporters.

3.3.2 Date Value Chain

Date palm cultivation and date production are among Algeria's oldest and most important agricultural activities, providing a primary source of income for thousands of families in desert and semi-desert regions. They play a strategic role in rural development and food security, with Algeria being one of the world's largest date producers, especially the high-quality Deglet Nour variety.

However, the sector's contribution to value creation remains below potential due to weak integration across the production chain, from planting to export, and the lack of a collaborative approach linking farmers, processors, and traders. Analyzing the date value chain is therefore essential to understand its strengths and weaknesses and identify ways to develop it sustainably in the rural regions where dates are produced.

The main stages of the date value chain can be identified as:

- **Production:** concentrated in Ouargla, Biskra, Adrar, and Oued Souf.
- **Sorting and packaging:** often in small units unsuitable for export.
- **Storage and transport:** weak cold chain and high logistics costs.
- **Export:** Algeria is the second-largest global producer (~1.3 million tons annually), yet only 15% of production is exported.

Integration gaps reduce the sector's value-added potential.

3.2.3 Industrial Tomato Value Chain

The industrial tomato value chain represents one of the most important agricultural value chains in Algeria due to its significant economic and nutritional role, as tomatoes are widely cultivated across various agricultural regions and are primarily used in the production of canned goods, tomato paste, sauces, and other processed products. This chain begins with the production of fresh tomatoes on farms, followed by harvesting, transportation, and storage, then industrial processing in drying and canning units, and finally distribution and marketing in local and international markets.

This chain involves multiple actors, including farmers, processors, and distributors, and is influenced by a range of technical, organizational, and economic factors, such as water availability, seed quality, government support mechanisms, and market prices.

Accordingly, developing the industrial tomato value chain is a fundamental pillar for enhancing added value in the Algerian agricultural sector and achieving more sustainable food and industrial security through improved productivity and increased efficiency in processing and marketing operations.

3.4 The Role of Agricultural Value Chains in Stimulating the Rural Economy in Algeria

One of the most prominent modern mechanisms for stimulating the rural economy in Algeria is agricultural value chains, which represent an integrated framework linking the stages of production, collection, processing, and distribution. This allows for the creation of local added value and the generation of sustainable employment opportunities. Applied studies in the industrial tomato, date, and olive oil sectors have shown that integrating small producers into organized production networks increases their incomes and improves the stability of agricultural activity in rural areas.

According to World Bank reports, developing value chains helps reduce the gap between producers and markets by improving agricultural

extension services, expanding financing mechanisms, and encouraging investment in processing industries.

Developing value chains also supports the emergence of complementary economic activities in transportation, storage, and packaging, which leads to the diversification of the rural economic fabric and strengthens the links between agriculture and industry.

These chains encourage innovation and the adoption of sustainable production practices that consider the efficient use of natural resources. Thus, it can be said that agricultural value chains represent a true lever for balanced rural development in Algeria, transforming agriculture from a traditional subsistence activity into a productive economic activity integrated into the market, contributing to wealth creation, reducing rural migration, and enhancing national food security.

4. CONCLUSION

Agricultural value chains represent a highly important analytical and practical framework for understanding how added value is created in agricultural activities and beyond. They go beyond the traditional approach to agricultural production, which focuses on quantity, toward a more comprehensive approach that integrates all stages, from inputs, production, processing, distribution, and marketing, along with related logistical, organizational, and financial services. In the Algerian context, characterized by abundant natural resources and diverse agricultural environments, value chains emerge as an effective tool for stimulating the rural economy and achieving sustainable development by integrating rural producers into national and international market dynamics.

The analysis results have shown that developing agricultural value chains contributes to increasing productivity and improving quality through technological innovation, enhanced agricultural practices, and diversification of rural income sources. It also demonstrated that linking the chain's stages through cooperatives, small and medium enterprises, and professional organizations strengthens local economic integration and reduces losses in production and marketing stages. Additionally, enhancing transparency in transactions and providing accurate market information

allows farmers and investors to make more effective decisions, positively impacting rural living standards.

The study confirmed that there are structural and institutional challenges limiting the activation of agricultural value chains in Algeria, including weak rural infrastructure (roads, cold storage, transport networks), the lack of effective coordination mechanisms among actors across the chain, limited access to finance and agricultural insurance, and weak marketing capacities among producers. Moreover, the multiplicity of stakeholders and scattered efforts among ministries and supporting institutions leads to weak institutional integration required for the success of these chains.

The study also reached a set of recommendations that can contribute to activating the role of agricultural value chains as a lever for rural economic development in Algeria, including:

– Strengthening the institutional and organizational framework of agricultural value chains by creating national and regional coordination mechanisms that bring together all actors (producers, processors, marketers, support and financing institutions);

– Developing rural infrastructure to ensure smooth operations across the chain, particularly regarding transport, storage, refrigeration, and logistics facilities;

– Empowering small producers by integrating them into cooperatives and participatory institutions, providing access to finance, training, and technology, thereby enhancing their contribution to added value;

– Encouraging agricultural and technological innovation in processing, packaging, and marketing, enabling the development of high-quality products with competitive value in domestic and international markets;

– Improving agricultural statistics and market information systems to provide accurate data on prices, costs, and demand, supporting knowledge-based decision-making;

– Strengthening public-private partnerships to support value chains through joint investment projects focusing on agricultural processing industries and local specialty products;

– Adopting a regional approach in agricultural planning that considers the characteristics of each rural area, allowing the development of specialized value chains (dates in the south, olive oil in the highlands, and industrial tomatoes in coastal areas).

Stimulating the rural economy in Algeria through agricultural value chains requires not only technical or financial reforms but also an integrated strategic vision that combines economic, social, and environmental dimensions within a new development model based on efficiency, innovation, and spatial equity. The more investment is made in value chains as an interconnected system for co-creating value, the more the Algerian countryside becomes a true economic actor and a sustainable source of food security and inclusive growth.

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