



VALUE CHAINS FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN BURMA

The **USAID-funded** Value Chains for Rural Development project, implemented by Winrock International, integrates smallholders and poor rural households into competitive commercial value chains to increase productivity and achieve inclusive agricultural growth. (A “value chain” is the process or activities that add value to a product, including production, marketing and provision of post-sale services.) The five-year project supports the coffee, soybean, ginger, melon and sesame value chains. It is part of **Feed the Future**, the U.S. Government’s global food security initiative.

Building on the **USAID-funded Asia Farmer-to-Farmer** (F2F) program in Burma, Value Chains engages international experts and volunteers who work with experienced local staff and community-based trainers to support smallholder producer groups, innovative entrepreneurs, agribusinesses and others. The goals are to improve smallholder farmer productivity and profitability, diversify production and processing and improve food security and nutrition. The project also facilitates market linkages and increased trade opportunities through private sector engagement, and provides grant funding to local innovators in the agriculture sector.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

The Value Chains project has two primary objectives:

- **Improved agricultural productivity** and profitability of small farm production systems; and
- **Market access and trade increased** through enhanced private sector engagement.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES:

- Developing competitiveness strategies in targeted value chains;
- Enhancing availability, affordability, and accessibility of agricultural inputs;
- Strengthening community-based producer organizations;
- Introducing productivity-enhancing practices and technologies;
- Improving local agriculture extension and farm advisory services;
- Building private sector alliances; and
- Small grants to support innovative programs for value chain strengthening.

PROJECT IMPACTS: AN OVERVIEW

The Value Chains project works in Southern Shan and the Dry Zone. Both regions support a diverse range of agricultural products and crops that offer opportunities for smallholders to participate in commercial value chains. Some project impacts so far include:

- Provided 25,283 people with short-term agriculture **productivity/food security training**;
- Assisted 55 community-based agriculture groups, private enterprises, and/or trade associations;

- Formed 14 **new public-private partnerships** in the agriculture sector;
- Supported 17,887 rural households directly through project interventions;
- Facilitated \$1.4 million in **new private sector investment** in the agriculture sector;
- Transferred 47 **new agriculture technologies** and/or management practices;
- Supported 32 lead firms with **value chain upgrading**.

SOMETHING GOOD IS BREWING

In 2013, when Winrock’s F2F program coordinated an assignment with a global specialty coffee expert, few people around the world knew that Arabica coffee was grown in Burma. That’s all changed, thanks to the hard work of Burma’s smallholder coffee farmers, assisted by Value Chains agronomists and market specialists. After adopting improved production and post-harvest practices including selective harvesting, use of drying racks, and sun-dried natural processing techniques, in 2016, the first two shipping containers of high-quality Arabica — including 10 tons grown by smallholders from Southern Shan — shipped from Rangoon and arrived at ports on the East and West coasts of the USA, with seven specialty coffee roasters and one major supermarket chain among the buyers.

Burma’s specialty coffee is now squarely on the map, drawing quality premiums and profits are one to two times higher than previously, helping smallholders penetrate lucrative new markets, increase incomes and inclusively drive economic growth.

PLANTING SEEDS FOR SUCCESS

Soybeans are a nutritious, protein-packed food source native to Asia; smallholders have grown the important legume for generations in Burma. Yet producers have historically struggled to produce high-quality soybean here, because they lacked access to new seed varieties and the difficulty of drying/saving good seed in a monsoon climate. To address these challenges, Value Chains successfully introduced new, locally adapted seed types that provide farmers with greater flexibility to plant either later or earlier, depending on erratic weather patterns. The project also facilitated increased access to Rhizobium fertilizer, hand-held seeding machines, flat-bed grain dryers (fueled by rice husks) and affordable, airtight storage bags to help with production, drying and storage.

Introduction of these technologies has sparked high demand for improved seed and equipment, new purchases of seeders and dryers, and drawn attention from soy processors who are placing new orders for soy — and investing in factory upgrades to handle increased volume. These changes are strengthening the soy value chain, contributing to inclusive agricultural growth.

