



# Advancing Agribusiness through Systemic Approach: Linking Sectors, Resources, and Market Channels

Lovely Rose B. Caraele<sup>1\*</sup>, Abdani D. Bandera<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Plant Science, College of Agriculture, Mindanao State University-Main Campus, Marawi City, Philippines

<sup>2</sup>Department of Agribusiness Management, College of Agriculture, Mindanao State University-Main Campus, Marawi City, Philippines

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\*Correspondence: Lovely Rose B.

Caraele

Email:

[boiser.lovelyrose@s.msumain.edu.ph](mailto:boiser.lovelyrose@s.msumain.edu.ph)

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**Abstract:** This paper emphasizes that a systemic approach to agribusiness—integration of sectors (input supply, production, processing, logistics, finance, and services), utilizing resources (natural, financial, human, and technological), and coordinating market channels (local, regional, and global)—is essential for sustainable and inclusive growth. In addition, this paper reviewed and combined data from peer-reviewed journal articles and significant institutional reports from FAO, IFPRI, World Bank, ADB, ASEAN, and SEARCA, which illustrate how systemic coordination can enhance productivity, competitiveness, and resilience. Case studies from the Philippines, Vietnam, Thailand, and other developing countries highlight effective solutions such as contract farming, value chain integration, digital platforms, and cluster-based growth. The results show that systemic agribusiness strategies create value by connecting people and organizations vertically and horizontally, multi-stakeholder’s governance, and inclusive institutions. However, there are still challenges, including uneven power between huge firms and smallholders, limited access to technology and financing, risks from climate change, and unorganized policies. Furthermore, this paper asserts that for a systemic agribusiness model to operate in the Global South, there must be adequate and accessible infrastructure, inclusive institutions, data-based decision making, and regional cooperation and coordination. Recommendations focuses on strengthening sectors coordination, investing in utilization of resources, and promoting market connectivity making sure that the development of Agribusiness is fair and sustainable.

**Keywords:** Agribusiness; Systemic Approach; Value Chains; Sector Linkages; Market Channels; Resources; Global South; Southeast Asia; Philippines; Inclusive Development; Institutional Coordination; Rural Transformation.

## Introduction

Agribusiness is the backbone of the economy, food security, and rural economies in the Global South. Agriculture alone accounts for 10–30% of GDP in many developing countries and employs a large number of workers, especially in rural areas (World Bank, 2020). The agribusiness sector in Southeast Asia does not only supplies food and raw materials but also invigorates trade, agro-industrialization, and overall economic and social development (ASEAN, 2021). Approximately 22-25% of the total labor force in the Philippines works in the agriculture sector, which not only supports the domestic market but also acts as the backbone of value chains for manufacturing, services, and exports

(Philippine Statistics Authority [PSA], 2022). However, the conventional agricultural practices cannot meet the demands of globalization, sustainability, and inclusive growth. A systematic approach to agriculture is a must, one that connects all the different sectors, resources, and market channels into a single, efficient ecosystem. Recent systematic reviews have underscored that agribusiness models in emerging markets still exhibit significant structural gaps, where value-chain coordination, governance and resource mobilization remain under-examined (Bannor, 2024).

In the past, agribusiness was broadly defined to include only farming or production and all the other processes occurring before and after the farm gate were ignored. A systemic perspective recognizes that agribusiness consists not only of input suppliers, producers, and processors but also logistics providers, financial institutions, technology providers, and both formal and informal market participants (Goldsmith, 1985; Davis & Goldberg, 1957). Among these stakeholders, the bond is mutual and the whole value chain's performance is dependent on the strength of the link among them (Porter, 1985). In disconnected systems, gaps happen due to lack of coordination, not enough information flow, deficiencies in infrastructure, and inconsistent policies (FAO, 2017). In contrast, a systemic approach fosters collaboration, minimizes waste, and empowers people.

### Research Method

The research conducted was based on a narrative literature review method for the purpose of bringing together proof on the effectiveness of a holistic technique—integrating sectors, resources, and market channels—in boosting agribusiness development in underdeveloped countries, especially in Southeast Asia and the Philippines. The narrative review was selected because of its capability to combine various sources, theoretical models, empirical findings, and policy documents into one comprehensive understanding of complex systems (Snyder, 2019). The literature that mattered was critically collected from peer-reviewed journals, institutional databases, and organizational reports (for example, FAO, IFPRI, World Bank, ADB, ASEAN, SEARCA) using specific keywords related to agribusiness systems, integration, sustainability, and inclusive growth. Thematic analysis was then carried out to analyze the data, identifying ongoing ideas and connections among the studies to uncover shared patterns and shortages. Findings were interpreted through comparative synthesis, thus ensuring validity and reliability by cross-referencing data from several trustworthy sources and confirming consistency between the theoretical and empirical evidence.

### Result and Discussion

The narrative synthesis of peer-reviewed literature and institutional reports has indicated that a systemic approach to agribusiness—based on sectoral integration, resource mobilization, and coordinated marketing channels—could be a game changer in the agricultural sector of developing countries, especially in Southeast Asia and the Philippines. The thematic analysis was based on over forty sources, including academic publications and institutional reports from FAO, IFPRI, the World Bank, ADB, ASEAN, and SEARCA. The

analysis identified five themes: (1) sectoral linkages and integration, (2) resource mobilization and management, (3) market channel integration, (4) institutional and policy frameworks, and (5) regional dynamics and systemic transformation. Each theme corresponds to the interrelated elements of the agribusiness systems as discussed in the literature (Davis & Goldberg, 1957; Porter, 1985; FAO, 2018) and proves that through proper coordination among various sectors and actors, the system can be made more competitive, resilient, and inclusive.

### **Sectoral Linkages: Horizontal and Vertical Integration**

The results affirm that the connection of agricultural sectors - from input suppliers and producers to processors, marketers, and consumers - is the main reason for the efficiency of the agricultural sector, the creation of value, and the inclusivity of the economy. Barrett et al. (2012) and ASEAN (2019) are both in agreement that cooperatives, farmer clusters, and producer associations, which are some examples of horizontal linkages, not only help to attain but also contribute to the lowering of transaction costs and raising of collective bargaining power. The case of the Philippines' Agrarian Reform Community Connectivity and Economic Support Services (ARCESS) program is one of the best examples of how clustering and sharing of resources can lead to the access of credit, tractors, and training for farmers (Department of Agriculture [DA], 2021). On a similar note, Vietnam's rice cluster initiatives have also made an impact in terms of quality standards and market reach which are among the benefits accruing to the participating farmers (World Bank, 2018).

Notwithstanding, these achievements are often overshadowed by the institutional weaknesses like poor governance, lack of capacity, and limited trust which usually impede the sustainability of these practices (Banaszak, 2019; SEARCA, 2018). A case in point is the cooperative movement in the Philippines, where issues of transparency and leadership have led to a decline in the trust and participation of the members. Such findings are in line with those of Dorward et al. (2009) who maintained that the quality of governance and institutional trust are the primary determinants of the durability of collective actions in agribusiness systems.

On the contrary, vertical linkages create the possibility of coordinating the whole value chain from production up to the retail end. This kind of integration enables farmers and agribusiness firms (FAO, 2017; Swinnen & Maertens, 2007) to have a smooth and easy flow of information, resources, and also the sharing of risks. In Thailand, Charoen Pokphand's fully integrated poultry model connects contract growers with feed mills, processing plants, and distribution networks (Reardon & Timm, 2013).

### **Resource Mobilization and Management**

The second major theme emphasizes that the whole transformation of agribusiness system will take place only if the strategic use of natural, financial, human, and technology resources is accomplished (FAO, 2019). The latter will be the factors that finally decide whether the sector will be able to face the global challenges - climate change, market

instability, and resource shortage - or not. Hidayati, Garnevska, and Childerhouse (2021) suggest a maturity model of agrifood value-chain transformation for developing countries, where governance, sustainability, and value-addition are presented as the main dimensions.

### **Natural Resources**

The management of resources in a sustainable manner continues to be a major issue. The agricultural output in the Southeast Asian region is being more and more restricted by the degradation of land, the lack of water and the variations in climate (ADB, 2020; FAO, 2021). Activities like monocropping and deforestation contribute to soil erosion and loss of biodiversity, while the changing patterns of rainfall lead to instability in production and have a severe effect on the Philippines—one of the countries most vulnerable to climate change (World Bank, 2021). Some of the solutions that are being developed are the introduction of agroecological practices, climate-smart agriculture and the use of integrated water management systems (FAO, 2019). These methods, together with the use of digital monitoring tools (Rose et al., 2016), not only enhance the resilience of the environment but also increase the productivity of the crops.

### **Financial Resources**

Access to capital is still a major issue for small farmers in developing countries. According to IFAD (2021), only 15% of small farmers worldwide have access to formal credit. Agri-loans constitute less than 10% of the overall bank lending in the Philippines according to Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas [BSP] (2020), and a lot of farmers are getting their money from informal lenders who have really high-interest rates and therefore, miserable credit conditions is one of the main reasons why farmers do not modernize and invest in tech. To this point, blending of very different financing modalities like microfinance, value chain financing, and WBG (World Bank Group) mixed financing, have begun to emerge as a win-win option (World Bank, 2021). These mechanisms reduce risk and encourage participation from both financial institutions and small-scale producers. Lim (2022) provides evidence that participation in global agricultural value chains correlates with employment growth and improved financial inclusion, particularly where digital payment and credit mechanisms are used.

### **Human Capital and Skills Development**

The other major pillar of systemic agribusiness is human resource development. The studies reviewed indicate that lack of skills, old farmers, and ineffective extension systems are the main barriers of innovation (IFPRI, 2018; ILO, 2019). It is very important to provide a training program for the farmers covering such topics as entrepreneurship, management of the farm, and finance so that they become more capable of being the partners of the modern value chains. Macaumbao and Bandera (2025) point to good financial management practices—which in their view consists of planning, organizing, and controlling resources—as necessary for the success of any organization. Though the ATI and SEARCA are already working in addressing these problems through their training and digital extension services,

still the adoption is slow because of the issues related to connectivity and digital illiteracy.

### **Technology and Innovation**

Across Southeast Asia, technological innovation is changing the agribusiness systems. Mechanization, precision farming, and digital platforms have increased the efficiency and improved the access to markets (ASEAN, 2021). Thailand and Indonesia are at the forefront of the technology with the use of platforms like TaniHub and eFishery, while the Philippines has already introduced e-Kadiwa, Mayani, and Cropital to link farmers directly to buyers and investors. But, the World Bank (2021) warns that technology alone will not be able to eliminate the inefficiencies in the system unless institutional and policy measures are taken simultaneously. So, the deployment of sustainable innovation should be through public policy to make it inclusive and scalable. Chin et al. (2024) show that digital platforms and e-commerce models have been changing the food systems in Maritime Southeast Asia and Pacific small island developing states, thus indicating a broader regional application.

Collectively, the findings affirm that effective resource mobilization—spanning environmental stewardship, financial inclusion, skill development, and technological innovation—creates a foundation for sustainable agribusiness ecosystems.

### **Integration of Market Channels**

Market channel integration turned out to be a third fundamental theme. It is the coordinatory effort of local, regional, and global value chains for the sake of their efficiency, accessibility, and resilience (Reardon et al., 2019; Gereffi & Fernandez-Stark, 2016).

Informal markets like wet markets and “bagsakan” centers at the local level still play a major role in the rural economy and food security (FAO, 2017). Yet, alongside dealing with poor post-harvest facilities, weak logistics, and price fluctuations, farmers also find it difficult to make a profit (DA, 2020). The local trading systems are being modernized through cold storage, digital price information, and cooperative marketing, but the implementation is still uneven across the country.

The surge in modern retail and food service sectors such as supermarkets, fast-food chains, and e-commerce platforms is the major factor behind the transformation of Southeast Asia's food systems (Reardon & Timmer, 2014). In both Thailand and Vietnam, supermarket procurement has led to the establishment of contract farming and vertical coordination (Timmer, 2009). In the case of the Philippines, large retailers like SM, Robinsons, and Jollibee have included local farmers in their supply chains, yet smallholders still have limited access due to the high-quality standards and quantity requirements. According to Yeritsyan (2024), connecting local markets with regional logistics networks is an essential policy instrument to enhance the resilience of agribusiness in the Global South.

At the regional level, ASEAN's economic integration has significantly expanded cross-border agricultural trade (ASEAN, 2019). Harmonized logistics and food standards have enabled countries like Vietnam, Thailand, and Malaysia to dominate rice, fruit, and seafood exports. In contrast, the Philippines continues to lag because of high transaction costs, fragmented supply chains, and insufficient infrastructure (ADB, 2020).

Globally, countries that engage in Global Value Chains (GVCs) get competitive edge and the opportunity for technology transfer, but developing countries still find it very hard to access these benefits (Maertens & Swinnen, 2015). Török, Kovács, Jám bor, & Márk Maró (2025) look into what factors influence small-holder farmers' participation in the agri-food GVCs and report that grant of access to certification, digital devices, and multi-stakeholder governance can dramatically increase a farmer's chance of participating. The coffee and shrimp sectors of Vietnam, alongside the poultry industry of Thailand, are some of the examples of how government support, compliance with certification, and vertical coordination can lead to global success (FAO, 2020). Philippine companies Dole and Del Monte are also potentially great players in banana and pineapple exports with their similar strategies, however, the smallholders often lose their share (SEARCA, 2020).

The increasing significance of e-commerce, represented by the likes of Lazada, Shopee, and AgriDigital, also adds to the variety of marketing channels. Moreover, the aforementioned platforms acted as intermediaries between rural producers and consumers during the pandemic, thus increasing the former's income but at the same time posing additional logistical challenges (Philippine Statistics Authority [PSA], 2021).

Overall, integrated market channels promote connectivity across the entire system, yet they still need investments in logistics, policy harmonization, and digital infrastructure that are tailored to ensure that the participation is inclusive.

### **Institutional and Policy Frameworks**

Institutional and policy coherence was sure to be the most important reason behind the systemic agribusiness transformation. It is a dominating view in the literature that dispersed governance structures are a major obstacle to the coordination and implementation of policies (Llanto & Navarro, 2014; OECD, 2019).

According to the World Bank (2020), governments have the main responsibility for making the right conditions for agribusiness to thrive. The Thai government has done an excellent job of attracting investments into the agro-industrial sector and exports through incentives (World Bank, 2013); meanwhile, Vietnam's Doi Moi reforms opened up the economy and made it easier for the private sector to get involved (Nguyen, 2017). Whereas the Philippines deals with overlapping mandates among the Department of Agriculture (DA), Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), and local governments leading to inconsistency in policy and poor inter-agency coordination (SEARCA, 2018).

Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) were the means through which this gap was bridged. The Philippine Rural Development Project (PRDP) is one of the best examples of how PPPs can not only improve market access and infrastructure but also enable local businesses to be part of these changes (ADB, 2015; World Bank, 2017). But for PPPs to be successful, factors such as governance transparency, community participation, and political support must be present and maintained.

Moreover, collaborations with multiple stakeholders—like the Grow Asia Partnership and the Philippine Coffee Council—have been recognized as an effective way

to bring together Government, private sector, and civil society initiatives in the same direction and with the same goals (FAO, 2020). These models of participation lower the costs of transactions, make the flow of information easier, and enable monitoring of commitments. Zhou et al. (2023) examine the impacts of climate change on food security in East and Southeast Asia and argue that aligning trade, infrastructure, and standards policies is crucial for the resilience of the value chain.

### **Regional Dynamics and Systemic Transformation**

The combination of case studies across Southeast Asia indicates different levels of agribusiness system maturity. Thailand and Vietnam have really gone a long way with the help of the government, the strong private sector, and the integration of the value chain. The agrifood clusters of Thailand and the export-oriented poultry and fruit industries are good examples of successful vertical coordination (ASEAN, 2019). The contract farming and cooperative reform of Vietnam have shown how policy alignment can raise the global competitiveness of a country (Ha et al., 2015).

Digital agribusiness platforms in Indonesia such as TaniHub and eFishery signify an innovation-driven approach that directly links the farmer to the consumer, the financial institutions, and is inclusive. The export orientation and scale of Malaysia's palm oil clusters, on the other hand, slow down the efficiency of the system overall.

The Philippines, on the other hand, shows a mixture factor image. On the one hand, it has the leading players in agribusiness like San Miguel, Jollibee, Nestlé, Dole, and Del Monte, and on the other hand, its agribusiness ecosystem is fragmented overall (ADB, 2020; PSA, 2022). The PRDP and ARCESS programs are trying to promote value chain integration, but the infrastructure, governance, and market standardization challenges are rather persistent. The poultry contract farming, inclusive coffee partnerships, and the digital marketing platforms e-Kadiwa and Mayani are just a few examples of innovations that reflect the progress being made but they are still confined to certain areas.

What these findings reveal is that changes in the system can only be made with the unwavering commitment of institutions, the continuity of investments, and the adoption of inclusive policies. The comparative analysis highlights that countries which apply the combination of the above-mentioned elements are more likely to get less-problematic and more-accepting results in the agribusiness sector.

### **Conclusion**

In developing areas, agribusinesses, especially in Southeast Asia and the Philippines, have come to a point where they need a major change, very critical really. The intertwining requirements of globalization, sustainability and inclusive growth can no longer be met by the traditional and fragmented models. A systemic approach is found by this research to be the solution that brings about the integration of sectors, mobilization of resources, and coordination of market channels thus leading to the triumph of efficiency, competitiveness, and resilience (FAO, 2017; World Bank, 2018; Reardon & Timmer, 2014). Among the reinforced horizontal and vertical linkages, which include cooperatives, contract farming,

and public–private partnerships, are the means of coordination and value creation but need transparent governance to avoid smallholder exclusion (DA, 2021; Banaszak, 2019; SEARCA, 2020). The appropriate allocation of finances, technology, and human resources can also result in innovations and inclusiveness, but still access to credit, extension services, and building the digital infrastructure are challenges among the problems that are creating barriers (IFAD, 2021; ADB, 2020; IFPRI, 2018).

The present transition to modern, export-oriented, and digital sectors is full of both opportunities and challenges. Although digitalization and trade integration can increase access and add value, poor infrastructure and regulations that are not coordinated together still keep the growth down (Reardon et al., 2019; ASEAN, 2021). It will take a lot of investment over the long term to get logistics, digital communication, and trade standards harmonized before these constraints can be addressed.

Among the major facilitators of systemic transformation are the policy coherence and institutional coordination. The examples of Vietnam's modernization reforms and the Philippines' PRDP show that integrated governance can effectively connect agribusiness with the industry and services leading to growth that is fair and sustainable (World Bank, 2018; DA, 2022; FAO, 2019). It is thus essential for governments to strengthen inclusive value chains, encourage blended and digital financing, assure rural infrastructure investment, and align institutional policies. The private sector too has to enact responsible dealings with smallholders and practice sustainable sourcing.

Future research should be conducted, covering the areas of how the integration system affects the productivity, inclusivity, and environmental outcomes, and the part of youth, women, and digital innovation in agribusiness development. One can find Mattalitti (2024) appealing for more regionally-specific case studies of agribusiness transformation (like that of Southeast Sulawesi) to better our empirical understanding of the way systemic models operate at sub-national levels. The case of systemic agribusiness holds a dynamic, collaborative framework that integrates the market, institutions, and innovation thereby being indispensable for the realization of agricultural competitiveness and rural transformation in developing economies over the long term.

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