

## The Potential of Collective Behavior in Improving Sustainability of Seaweeds Value Chain in the Philippines

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### Abstract

Seaweed farming has been a major source of income for fisherfolks in the Philippines. The farms' generally small production volume essentially limits the value chain potential. The low output of the farmers confines them to marketing their seaweeds to the small traders who do not have minimum volume requirements despite lower buying prices compared to bigger traders and deductions imposed for farmers who borrowed capital for farm inputs. The emergence of collective behavior is, however, breaking through the traditional value chain of seaweeds. This paper thus capitalized on value chain analysis in an attempt to examine the potential of cooperativism in upgrading the seaweeds value chain in Agutaya, Palawan, and in Talibon, Bohol. Data were collected using rapid appraisal techniques within the value chain framework where market maps, value chain analysis, and upgrading strategies were developed. The study exhibits that with the collective behavior of farmers, the conventional, relatively long seaweeds value chain that passes through multiple traders from farmers to carrageenan processors has been transformed to a much straightforward chain of farmer groups to processors. Accordingly, the estimation of value added reveals that the distribution of value added across segments is more equitable in the new value chain structure. Cooperativism improves bargaining power. This offers an advantageous position for farmers, translating to significant adjustments in profits that enables them to repay debts and gain freedom to scout for other market options. Therefore, this signifies that cooperativism is promising for the sustainability of seaweeds value chain, particularly in the aspect of production.