

Supply chain integrity: Addressing Ethical Concerns in Agricultural Supply Chains

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Abstract— Ethics has become a trending phenomenon in most disciplines as a result of the sustainability wave enshrined in the United Nations Sustainability Goals (SDGs). In business circles procurement ethics have become topical as a result of the rising malpractices whose ripple effects have far reaching economic, social and environmental consequences. In the agricultural supply chains procurement ethics have been called to question due to outcries from the tobacco contract farmers whose livelihoods are affected by supplier development washing in the form of exorbitantly priced contract farming inputs. The unethical practice of supplier development washing in the form of exorbitantly priced tobacco contract farming inputs has some ripple effects which this study sought to determine. Twenty-five contracted tobacco farmers were interviewed and the results indicated that farmers subjected to tobacco merchants' unethical conduct tend to practice contractor switching, side marketing, become insolvent, and indulge in unorthodox cost cutting measures. The study recommended that the regulatory authorities should intervene to bring sanity to the tobacco supply chains through enforcing contract farming mechanisms that reflect genuine supplier development.

Keywords—information and communication technology, supply chain efficiency, SMEs and material requirement planning

I. INTRODUCTION

Ethics is a philosophical perspective that focuses on determining what is regarded as morally right or wrong (Kagan, 2018; Conrad, 2018; Khalid, Eldakak & Loke, 2017), and basing decisions on moral principles (Kim & Loewenstein, 2021; Wittmer, 2019; Kem, 2016; Drumwright, Prentice & Biasucci, 2015) such as compassion, justice, fairness, honesty, credibility, integrity, and transparency (Wang, Liu, Yang, Guo, Wu & Liu, 2023; Schroeder et al., 2019; Chan & Ananthram, 2019; Sharma, Agrawal & Khandelwal, 2019). Ethics have found some applications in various business disciplines such as marketing (Hagenbuch & Mgrdichian, 2020; Lee & Jin, 2019) and procurement (Ahmaddien, 2021; Andika, Iravo & Ismael, 2021; Haron & Mahzan, 2019) due to their higher levels of interactions with external partners.

Procurement ethics refers to the application of moral principles to the procurement processes (Andika et al., 2021; Atkinson, 2020; Haron & Mahzan, 2019). Ethical procurement issues have recently received a widespread attention in the tobacco sourcing industry in Zimbabwe. In Zimbabwe tobacco is mainly grown by smallholder farmers who benefited from the Fast-Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) that dispossessed large commercial farmers in favour of the landless peasants (Shonhe, Scoones, Mutyasira & Murimbarimba, 2022; Mazwi, Chambati & Mudimu, 2020). The smallholder farmers generally lack the necessary inputs for tobacco farming (Chingosho et al., 2021). They, therefore, enter into contract farming arrangements (Mukucha, Tsekea, Jaravaza & Jaravaza, 2024) as part of supplier development (Mukucha & Chari, 2021) where the contracting tobacco merchants provide inputs in the form of seeds, fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides (Shonhe & Scoones, 2022; Chazovachii, Mawere & Chitongo, 2021; Shonhe, 2021). As a result of these lucrative input scheme packages almost 93% of all the tobacco traded in Zimbabwe is grown under the contract farming system. The contract farming system ensures supply chain resilience to the tobacco merchants (Mukucha & Chari, 2022).

However, there has been a widespread outcry among the tobacco farmers over what they alleged to be unfair trade practices by the tobacco merchants emanating from the unequal power relations, and supplier

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development washing. We coined the term supplier development washing to refer to an engagement in supplier development initiatives without some genuine commitment. This involves offering exorbitantly priced contract farming input packages (Ncube, 2020; Mazwi, Chemura, Mudimu & Chambati, 2019). These exorbitant prices tend to affect the contract farmers' operational sustainability and drive them into indulging in unsustainable practices as a way of maintaining their operational viability. This study therefore seeks to unpack the ripple effects of exorbitantly priced contract farming inputs from contract farmers' perspective. In seeking to achieve this objective the rest of the study is structured as follows; literature review shall immediately follow this introduction, and then a methodological outline, followed by a presentation of the results. The study shall conclude with a discussion of the results as well as proffering of some recommendations.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Supplier development

There are circumstances where available suppliers fail to meet the buyers' material requirements in terms of either quality, quantity or production costs (Tran, Gorton & Lemke, 2021; Hoque, 2021). In such cases merchants usually look for alternative suppliers beyond their surrounding markets (Lysons & Farrington, 2020). However, if no alternative supply markets are found, the merchants resort to dealing with the available incapacitated suppliers through supplier development initiatives (Rogers, Carter & Kwan, 2019). Supplier development is a concept that refers to the process of directly working with selected suppliers through increasing the suppliers' capabilities to meet the merchants' requirements (Norlyk Jørgensen, Ellegaard & Kragh, 2023). Supplier development initiatives are highly beneficial to the merchants in terms of developing secure supply chains, achieving shorter lead times, and attaining cost savings (Jia, Hendry & Stevenson, 2022). On the other hand, suppliers initiated into supplier development schemes are supposed to benefit through transparent supply chains, improved quality of their outputs, and access to modern technology (Sikombe & Phiri, 2022).

While supplier development initiatives have been found to have mutual benefits to both suppliers and buyers (Norlyk Jørgensen et al., 2023), there are circumstances where unethical buyers deceive suppliers into believing that they are being developed (Tran, 2022). We have termed this phenomenon 'supplier development washing' borrowing from the marketing side where they have green washing. We therefore define supplier development washing concept as a practice of creating an illusion of developing suppliers when in fact exploiting them. More specifically, supplier development washing concept in the agricultural supply chains takes various forms such as delayed (Chipenda, 2023) and exorbitantly priced inputs (Mazwi & Chambati, 2023; Ambetsa, Ndirangu & Mwangi, 2021), and delaying to pay what is due to farmers (Mango & Kugedera, 2022; Masocha, 2021).

Theoretical perspective

The theoretical foundation that underpins procurement ethics is made up of the normative ethical theory comprising of its universal principles that are namely deontology, utilitarianism, and virtues (Melé, 2024; Mijuskovic & Mijuskovic, 2022; Madayen, Seif-Farshad & Kheire, 2021). Normative ethics is a branch of philosophy that is concerned with the criteria for determining what is wrong and right (Indriati & Nugroho, 2022; Pedersen, 2019). In its application, normative ethics result in the devising of moral rules that prescribe the appropriate behaviours of human beings in various aspects of life (Pelletier & Bligh, 2006). Normative ethics have been applied in previous studies such as gender equality (.e.g. Marcu, 2023), and nursing (.e.g. Reed, 2023; Johnstone, 2022).

Deontology is an ethical theory that is often associated with the views of Immanuel Kant (Zoshak & Dew, 2021; Benlahcene, Zainuddin, Syakiran & Ismail, 2018). The deontology perspective posits that rightfulness

or wrongfulness of actions is evaluated against the adherence to the promulgated rules as opposed to the actions' consequences (Ansari, 2023; Da Silva, 2021; Baron & Goodwin, 2020). The adherence to the tenets of this theory results in a constraint to some of the actions that individuals may prefer to indulge in (Ekeli, 2021). This theory disregards an action's outcomes in favour of religious devotion to the set rules (Reynolds & Conway, 2018).

The utilitarian approach also referred to as the consequentialist approach (Sola, 2023; Bench-Capon, 2020), and was influenced by the ideas of Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill (Kolosov & Sigalov, 2020; Turner, 2019). Utilitarian theory places more prominence on pleasure attainment while minimising actions that induce pain (Häyry, 2021; Scarre, 2020; Ryder, 2017). The actions are deemed morally upright if they can elicit pleasure for the majority of the people (Victor, James & Dominic, 2024; Mill, 2022). However, the utilitarian approach to ethics has received some criticism on the basis that it disregards the violation of individual rights (Shestack, 2017; Raz, 2017; Regan, 2017), implying that it is inconsiderate of justice (Greenwood, 2002; Gustafson, 2013). This is particularly clear where actions that maximises the majority's accrued benefits trample the individuals' justice (Fremantle, 2016; Shrivastava, Jones, Selvarajah & Van Gramberg, 2016). The consideration of individuals' rights as well as freedoms is necessary in decision making (Sen, 2017; Forst, 2010). Rights theory delineates rights into moral and legal rights (Hart, 2017; Sangiovanni, 2017). Moral rights emanate from nature (Tănăsescu, 2020), while legal rights are a function of the legislative process (Merry, 2009).

The virtue approach to ethics whose roots are in the works of Aristotle relates to character traits of morality such as compassion, honesty, and fairness (Caldwell, 2017; Cohen & Morse, 2014). This theory emphasises on promoting a virtuous character (Zagzebski, 2010). Virtue ethics emphasises on character traits that are essential for human beings' prosperity (Annas, 2015). Virtues are found in two forms that are namely the intellectual and moral qualities (Langston, 2015; Carr, 2019; Baehr, 2016). Intellectual virtue is imparted through teaching and learning (Grimm, 2018; Baehr, 2015), while moral virtue is acquired through habits and practice (Frede, 2015).

Empirical evidence

There are several researches inclined to unethical procurement practices in several industries focusing on various issues. The unethical procurement practices take several research streams. The first research stream for unethical procurement focused on the outcomes of buyer deceitfulness. In a study by Bag, Gupta & Telukdarie (2018) that focused on the South African steel industry, it was found that buyer's unethical procurement practices hamper the effective attainment of sustainable product designs.

Another stream of research dwelt on the determinants of unethical procurement. This was succinctly revealed in a study by Ebekoziem (2019) which indicated that unethical procurement is a function of poor leadership, weak regulatory framework, as well as greediness. Unethical procurement was also found to thrive under supply chain disruption conditions (Oyedijo, 2024), and in the circumstances of public procurement where funds are substantially at the disposal of the procurement professionals (Okemwa & Ratemo, 2021), as well as limited supervision of both personnel and systems (Bernad, John, Ndekwa & Kipilimba, 2018).

Extant literature also profiled various forms of unethical procurement practices and their severity. A recent study by Chen, van Dalen & Wynstra (2024) profiled unethical procurement practices and its results indicated that these malpractices include, but not limited to, delayed payment, demand for reciprocal procurement, disparaging remarks directed towards suppliers, use of implicit evaluation criteria, lack of transparency, provision of incorrect information, ambiguous tender evaluation processes, and inconsistent scoring.

Another study by Shah & Alotaibi (2018) asserted that unethical procurement takes the form of accepting bribes, gifts, and failure to declare conflicts of interest.

A more prominent research stream sought to determine the methods of preventing unethical procurement practices. A recent study by Oyedijo (2024) suggested that unethical procurement practices can be combated through a formation of close buyer-supplier relationships, leveraging entire procurement cycle on technology, and training procurement personnel on the importance of ethical observance. Peer pressure was also found in a study by Amoah and Steyn (2023) to reduce the prevalence of unethical procurement practices. This can be effectively implemented through having an industry code of conduct.

A search through all the existing research streams related to ethical procurement indicated that there is no previous research that has ever attempted to seek the downstream ripple effects of unethical procurement practices in the form of supplier development washing. This research gap shall be filled in this study following the methodological outline presented in the section below.

III. METHODOLOGY

Research philosophy

The research epistemological position adopted in this study is an interpretivism philosophy. The interpretivism philosophy posits that reality is understood through socially constructed meanings (Otoo, 2020; Tamminen & Poucher, 2020; Bartmanski, 2018) based on individuals' subjective experiences and how those experiences are interpreted (William, 2024; Panya & Nyarwath, 2022; Bleiker, Morgan-Trimmer, Knapp & Hopkins, 2019). The interpretivism philosophy also assumes that human life is understood from different and unique perspectives, and social reality highly depends on human knowledge (Huang & Pu, 2024; Lawson, 2019). The interpretivism research approaches include hermeneutics, phenomenology, ethnomethodology, and symbolic interactionism (Carter & Montes Alvarado, 2019; Putnam & Banghart, 2017). In this study the approach adopted is the ethnomethodology which is described as how people make sense of their interactions (Firth, 2022; Koschmann, 2018). More specifically, in this study this relates to how the interaction between buyers and suppliers is interpreted with the context of procurement ethics.

The interpretivist research philosophy also asserts that qualitative research methods are the most ideal approaches to knowledge generation (Tracy, 2019; Thorne, 2016; Klenke, 2016). This entails the use of interviews, case studies, documentation and observation as the data collection methods (Brennen, 2021; Frechette, Bitzas, Aubry, Kilpatrick & Lavoie-Tremblay, 2020; Morgan, Pullon, Macdonald, McKinlay, & Gray, 2017). Thus, in line with this prescription, this study adopted the interviews as the research technique. The interviews were directed towards the tobacco contract farmers as the suppliers in the tobacco supply chain.

Research participants and data collection procedures

The research participants in this study were the tobacco farmers who grew tobacco on contract farming basis. The farmers were contacted at various tobacco auction floors dotted around the city of Harare. Tobacco merchants have their auction floors around the tobacco farming regions, but almost all of them have major floors headquartered in the city of Harare. The farmers were purposively and conveniently selected on the basis of their willingness partake in the study, and as part of the ethical considerations' participants were asked to offer their verbal consent to partake in the study. Further ethical considerations were instituted through preserving the anonymity of the respondents. The respondents were also assured that they could disengage from the study at any stage without facing any consequences.

Data analysis procedures

The data was analysed using thematic analysis technique. Thematic data analysis involves going through the data set searching for patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Morgan & Nica, 2020; Kiger & Varpio, 2020). More specifically, the data analysis process followed the procedure of familiarisation with the data set, coding, and generating themes, revising and naming the generated themes, as well as producing the results write up that shall be presented in the results section (Campbell, Orr, Durepos, Nguyen, Li, Whitmore & Jack, 2021; Lester, Cho & Lochmiller, 2020; Peel, 2020).

Validity and reliability

The validity and reliability of the research findings was assessed using the three-dimensional criteria that involves credibility, transferability and dependability (Singh, Benmamoun, Meyr, & Arikan, 2021; Nassaji, 2020; Gill, Gill & Roulet, 2018). Credibility in qualitative studies refers to the believability and trustworthiness of the research findings (FitzPatrick, 2019). Credibility was demonstrated through internal peer reviews prior to journal submission as well as anonymous peer reviews administered by the journal that evaluated this article for possible publication. Transferability refers to generalizability of the research findings (Amin, Nørgaard, Cavaco, Witry, Hillman, Cernasev & Desselle, 2020). Transferability was assessed through ensuring that the description of the methodology adopted, study context, and participants was clear enough to enable readers to determine the applicability of the findings to various contexts. Dependability was ensured through providing a detailed audit trail of the steps taken throughout the entire research process.

IV. RESULTS

Sample characteristics

The demographic characteristics of the studied sample comprised of mostly males (60%), while the females were (40%). This represent the gender disparities that is reflected in the Zimbabwean agrarian structures (Ossome & Naidu, 2021; Mazwi, Muchetu & Mudimu, 2021). Most of the farmers were adults that had gone past the age of youth. That means most of the interviewed farmers were above the age of 40 years (70%). The land ownership structure that dominated most of the farmers that partook in this study were communal farmers (56%), while smallholder farmers were only 44%.

Findings

The findings from this study are presented in this section based on the thematic format that emanated from the qualitative data analysis. The themes deduced are contractor switching, side marketing, insolvency, and unorthodox cost cutting measures.

Contractor switching

The respondents indicated that they indulge in contractor switching as a result of the unethical practices of overpricing inputs package schemes. The switching of contractors is motivated by the desire to find fair contractors with ethical trade terms who are inclined towards integrative approaches rather than distributive approaches. Respondent 15 stated that;

“Exorbitantly priced inputs package schemes render our farming businesses less lucrative. Therefore, we tend to switch from one contractor to another looking for fairer contractors”.

Respondent 16 added that;

“As long as contract merchants continue to behave opportunistically, we are hell bound to do the same”.

Side marketing

The farmers indicated that in bid to realise some profits from their farming activities they end up side-marketing some of their produce. The deliveries they make to the contractors barely cover the loaned amount of money in the form of inputs. This pushed them into indulging in an unethical practice of side marketing so as to realise some net revenue for survival. Respondent 8 remarked that;

“If we are to deliver all our produce to the contractors, we end up being pauperised as the debt from inputs is highly inflated to the extent that we make perennial losses. Therefore, we set aside some few produces for side-selling in order to earn some survival income”.

Respondent 9 added that;

“Side marketing has become the order of the day in our industry as a way of getting back to contracting merchants who fleece us through exorbitant inputs prices”.

Insolvency

There are some farmers who revealed that they have gone insolvent at one time in their farming history as a result of failing to repay their contract farming debts which had ballooned through controversial pricing of the inputs. Respondent 23 remarked that;

“I only resumed tobacco farming this year after I had quitted some few years ago as a result of failing to repay the contract farming debt which was controversially high”.

Respondent 25 indicated that;

“I had to negotiate to avoid a jail term after being sued for failing to repay my contract farming debts”

Unorthodox cost cutting measures

The results revealed that unethical pricing of contract farming inputs packages drive the farmers into unorthodox cost cutting measures such as inputs diversion, child labour, and deforestation. Inputs diversion relates to diverting some of the provided inputs into farming other crops such as cereals for household food security. The farmers also indulge in a criminal activity of child labour as a way of cutting production costs. Lastly, the farmers resort to cost free indigenous trees for tobacco curing instead of buying coal. The use of indigenous trees causes deforestation. Some of the respondents gave the following remarks.

“When tobacco farming is going on well, we normally utilise all our land for cash crops and then buy cereals for domestic consumption from the cash crops proceeds. However, considering the way tobacco contractors are exploiting us through exorbitantly priced inputs we can no longer afford to buy our cereals for domestic consumption from the tobacco farming proceeds. Therefore, we tend to divert some of the inputs such as fertilisers to grow our domestic consumption cereal crops” (Respondent 16).

“The decreasing profit margins in tobacco farming makes us illegally use cheap labour from the teenagers roaming around the community. These teenagers are usually cheap. However, we are aware that it is illegal and we risk getting prosecuted” (Respondent 13).

“We tend implement cost cutting measures in order to improve our profit margins through using the less costly firewood instead of expensive coal for tobacco curing. However, it seems our nearby forests are fast diminishing and very soon we risk running short of that cheap fuel source” (Respondent 9).

V. DISCUSSION

The results from this study indicated that unethical sourcing practices of exorbitantly pricing contract farming inputs packages have some ripple effects of begetting unethical practices on the part of farmers. Exorbitant pricing of contract farming inputs was found to trigger higher levels of contractor switching. Farmers tend to switch from one contractor to another either to evade full repayment of their debts with the previous contractor or in search of better trade terms. However, constant contractor switching affects the buyer-supplier relationships leading to less collaborative interactions (Shonhe, 2021). In fact, contract switching is associated with short termism that is amenable to transactional approach to doing business.

In this study it was also indicated that exorbitant prices of contract farming inputs drive farmers into side marketing. This creates a vicious cycle as side marketing tends to affect the viability of contract farming schemes (Mukucha, Jaravaza, Risiro, Chingwaru, Dangaiso & Mauchi, 2024). Side marketing affects tobacco merchants through creating tobacco supply chain disruptions, and negatively impacting on the tobacco merchants' anticipated returns (Shonhe, 2021).

The unethical procurement practices of the tobacco merchants have been attributed to the insolvency of most contract farmers. The farmers tend to incur higher production costs against depressed revenues that result in many farmers opting out of the contract farming system and eventually reverting to peasantry. However, due to the short-termism approach, tobacco merchants they tend to occasionally lure new farmers who would eventually suffer the same fate as their predecessors (Pangapanga-Phiri, Mungatana & Mhondoro, 2024), or alternatively they contract new opportunistic farmers whose objectives are simply to siphon contract farming resources. Having new farmers every agricultural season reduces the benefits that accrue as a result of buyer-supplier relationships. Short term buyer supplier relationships are associated with contractual disagreements (Bai, Sheng & Li, 2016; Johnson & Sohi, 2016), limited supplier commitment (Yang, Gao, Li, Shen & Zheng, 2017), and supplier instability (Sancha, Wong & Thomsen, 2016; Kim & Choi, 2015).

Lastly, the study revealed that unsustainable production costs induced by high inputs costs result in contract farmers indulging in unorthodox cost cutting measures such as substituting the use of expensive coal fuel with firewood from the local forests. These cost cutting measures have some negative ripple effects on environmental and social sustainability. The use of firewood for tobacco curing as a cost cutting measure leads to deforestation. In Zimbabwe there is massive deforestation with the bulk of it attributed to the tobacco curing (Zvobgo & Tsoka, 2021; Lawrence, Tapiwa, Lovemore & Michael, 2020; Nyambara & Nyandoro, 2019). Deforestation is associated with climate change, soil erosion, and failure to reduce carbon dioxide in the environment (Mugadza, 2022; Lawrence, Coe, Walker, Verchot & Vandecar, 2022; Wajim, 2020; Houghton & Nassikas, 2018).

The desire to cut costs as a result of the need to evade high production costs attributed to exorbitantly priced contract farming inputs retrogressively drive farmers into child labour practices. The child labour practice that is rampant in the growing of cash crops is attributed to shortages of affordable legitimate labour (Andre, Delesalle & Dumas, 2021; Luckstead, Tsiboe & Nalley, 2019). Farmers revert to child labour in order to curtail their labour costs (Adonteng-Kissi, 2018). However, the use of child labour is a criminal offense in Zimbabwe (Mwapaura, Chikoko, Nyabeze, Kabonga & Zvokuomba, 2022; Ndlovu & Tigere, 2022) since it exposes children to hazardous substances (Baten, Alam & Mostofa, 2024; Gidey, Teshager, Chofana, Shamemo, Zewde, Mengistu & Wolde, 2020; Srivastava, 2019) as well as preventing children from pursuing their education (Ravallion & Wodon, 2000).

VI. CONCLUSIONS

Strategic sourcing through contract farming is a special type of supplier development initiative that is meant to enhance the productivity of farmers in a sustainable manner. However, unethical practices in the form of supplier development washing such as exorbitant pricing of contract farming inputs ironically destroys the sustainability of farming operations leading to some ripple effects of unethical practices. In more precise terms, the unethical practices of contractors beget unsustainable practices on the part of farmers. Therefore, in order to address the unpleasant practices rampant in the cash crops farming such as side marketing, inputs diversion, child labor, and deforestation, tobacco merchants must ethically deal with the farmers and take an integrative approach instead of the prevailing distributive approach.

Theoretically, the study revealed that the ethical perspective adhered to by the tobacco merchants in dealing with their key suppliers who are tobacco contract farmers is highly questionable. The actions of the tobacco merchants failed on all the dimensions of the ethical test. For instance, deontologically, the actions of tobacco contract merchants are wrong. Pretending to conduct supplier development schemes when actually exploiting the vulnerable suppliers (contract farmers) is a wrongful act regardless of its consequences.

An assessment of exorbitantly priced contract farming inputs failed the utilitarian ethical test. Exorbitantly priced contract farming inputs have some dire consequences on the farmers. The consequences manifest in the form of retrogressive practices of the farmers who try to maintain their profit margins against unsustainable production costs induced by the exorbitantly priced contract farming inputs. These consequences negatively impact on environmental and social sustainability. Therefore, considering the retrogressive consequences of the tobacco merchants' supplier development washing activities, such practices fail on the utilitarian ethical assessment, since such actions do not result in the good for the majority.

Lastly, this study concluded by highlighting that this is the first study to coin the term supplier development washing that was already described in the main text as an act of creating a false illusion of developing incapacitated suppliers, while in actual fact it is a disguised form of exploiting peasant farmers striving to commercialize their farming activities.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Taking note that the tobacco industry contributes significantly to the nation's Gross domestic product (GDP) and is source of livelihoods for most rural people in Zimbabwe, the regulatory authority which is namely the Tobacco Industry and Marketing Board (TIMB) must make timely interventions and bring sanity to the industry. This may involve deregistering errand tobacco merchants whose activities are deviant to the sustainability tenets. The existing legal framework can also be amended to include clauses that criminalize the operations that are blatantly exploitative.

VIII. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The results of the study indicate that information and communications technology (hereafter: ICT) adoption in supply chain of manufacturing Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) results in reduced supply chain costs, improved delivery as well as improved agility. The study results contribute in assisting supply chain practitioners to measure efficiency levels and ascertain improvement measures. These practitioners will realize areas where ICT is needed to improve supply chain efficiency, hence action can be taken. An analysis into the findings can allow the management to improve their supply chain efficiency through ICT implementation. The study goes a long way in providing the government with significant information regarding the importance of ICT in manufacturing SMEs supply chains. The recommendations assist policy makers in articulating policies that are in line with enhancing ICT framework in SMEs supply chains.

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Celovitost dobavne verige: obravnavanje etičnih vprašanj v kmetijskih dobavnih verigah

Povzetek - Etika je postala trendovski pojav v večini disciplin zaradi vala trajnosti, ki je zapisan v trajnostnih ciljih Združenih narodov (SDG). V poslovnih krogih je etika javnega naročanja postala aktualna zaradi vse pogostejših zlorab, ki imajo daljnosežne gospodarske, družbene in okoljske posledice. V kmetijskih oskrbovalnih verigah je bila etika javnega naročanja postavljena pod vprašaj zaradi protestov pogodbenih pridelovalcev tobaka, katerih preživetje je bilo prizadeto zaradi dobaviteljev in previsokih cen vložkov za pogodbenega kmetovanja. Neetična praksa dobaviteljev v obliki pretirano dragih vložkov za pogodbeno kmetovanje s tobakom ima nekatere posledice, ki jih je poskušala ugotoviti ta študija. Intervjuvanih je bilo petindvajset pogodbenih pridelovalcev tobaka, rezultati pa so pokazali, da kmetje, ki so izpostavljeni neetičnemu ravnanju trgovcev s tobakom, pogosto menjavajo izvajalce, se poslužujejo stranskega trženja, postanejo plačilno nesposobni in se poslužujejo neobičajnih ukrepov za zmanjšanje stroškov. Študija je priporočila posredovanje regulativnih organov oskrbovalne verige tobaka in vnašanje ravnosti z uveljavljanjem mehanizmov pogodbenega kmetovanja, ki odražajo dejanski razvoj dobaviteljev.

Ključne besede - etika nabave, deontologija, kontaktno kmetovanje, razvoj dobaviteljev