



Targeting social protection and agricultural interventions: The potential for synergies



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ABSTRACT

Social protection programmes and agricultural interventions for family farmers tend to operate in isolation from each other. This paper shows how coherent targeting mechanisms can help to coordinate both policy areas and create synergies. We argue that target groups and targeting methods used in both areas are often very similar or potentially complementary, which constitutes a promising basis for better coordination. Moreover, the paper describes relevant cases to illustrate how targeting is already being used to foster synergies between the two areas. We conclude based on these case studies that targeting coordination and overall coherence are indispensable tools to generate positive synergies between social protection and agricultural interventions – a potential basis for addressing food security more effectively in the future.

1. Introduction

There is a growing consensus that the joint implementation of social protection programmes and agricultural interventions, particularly for family farmers, in a coordinated and coherent manner can potentially lead to the emergence of positive synergies (Gavrilovic et al., 2016). The latter implies that the impact of the joint implementation can be larger than the sum of the impacts of each individual sectoral intervention. Well-designed and coherent targeting mechanisms play a crucial role for the promotion of synergies. In particular, the conscious creation of an overlap between different sectoral interventions at the individual/household level or at least at the geographical level are necessary requirements for synergies to emerge.

The discussion around targeting and synergies can be understood as part of the general efforts to foster ‘coherence’ between social protection and agriculture. Following the definition laid out in the FAO’s “Framework for Analysis and Action for strengthening coherence between social protection and agriculture”, coherence is understood as “a systematic promotion of complementary and consistent policies and programmes across sectors, thereby creating synergies to combat rural poverty and food insecurity more effectively” (Gavrilovic et al., 2016, p.1). Coherence between social protection and agricultural interventions is considered desirable for a number of reasons:

- Although often having similar objectives, the activities of social protection programmes and agricultural interventions targeted at

family farmers can potentially affect each other negatively (e.g. public work programmes could divert efforts from agricultural activities, social protection programmes might increase reservation wages in the agricultural sector and make it harder for the better-off smallholders to find wage labourers). (See Veras Soares et al., 2016 for more detailed examples)

- Nevertheless, social protection and agricultural support programmes do have the potential to mutually reinforce each other: social protection programmes can for example alleviate credit constraints and thereby facilitate productive investments into agricultural production or help farmers to protect themselves against external shocks. Moreover, agriculture interventions can have a social protection function when fostering incomes of family farmers either directly or indirectly, by tackling structural factors that prevents their access to credit, insurance, technology, markets, among other factors (see e.g. Tirivayi et al. (2013) and Sabates-Wheeler et al. (2009)).

Targeting is a crucial tool in order to coordinate the implementation and promote the coherence between social protection programmes and agricultural interventions. Coordinated targeting shall be defined as a conscious effort to select the beneficiaries of agricultural interventions and social protection programmes in a way to increase the joint impact of both programmes. It is important to bear in mind that targeting is only one of many means to coordinate social protection programmes and agricultural interventions for family farmers. Other key elements

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are the coordination of the implementation details and timing of agricultural and social programmes in order to avoid any conflicting interests (e.g. avoid that public work programmes coincide in their timing with agricultural peak seasons), and the alignment of the overall objectives of policies from both areas. This paper will exclusively focus on targeting as a means of coordination – an overview of other dimensions of coordination between social protection and agriculture can be found in [Gavrilovic et al. \(2016\)](#).

Benefits from coherent targeting of agricultural interventions and social protection programmes can be expected to emerge in different ways which will be further explored in the subsequent sections, particularly in the case studies. Here we briefly highlight two different ways. First, the joint and/or coordinated collection and use of data on potential beneficiaries could generate an overall reduction of the targeting and operational costs and ensure that targeting objectives of overlapping geographical areas and/or individual/households are smoothly reached. Similarly, efforts to integrate databases from the two sectors can reach a similar purpose without compromising sector specific information and data needs that may require specific databases. Second, the coordinated selection of beneficiaries, particularly the identification of who should benefit from more than one intervention (or which areas) could positively affect people's living standards, their productive choices and their food security, leading to the emergence of synergies.

This paper illustrates based on a few case studies how targeting can be used to intentionally seek synergies between the two policy areas. Our paper builds on the work of [Gavrilovic et al. \(2016\)](#); [Tirivayi et al. \(2013\)](#) and [Sabates-Wheeler et al. \(2009\)](#) who provided an overview on how social protection and agricultural programmes can mutually reinforce their impacts in a virtuous manner. However, while most case studies discussed in these three papers refer to synergies that emerged 'by chance', this paper puts an emphasis on how synergies between both policy areas can be consciously triggered through coordinated targeting mechanisms.

The paper is organised as follows. [Section 2](#) includes a brief literature review on the evidence around the interaction between social protection policies and agricultural interventions. [Section 3](#) puts forward a simple conceptual framework on how targeting can be used to foster synergies between these two areas. [Section 4](#) presents a number of case studies and illustrates how some countries have already made conscious efforts to trigger synergies between social protection and agriculture.

2. Synergies between agricultural interventions and social protection

Synergies between social protection and agricultural interventions can potentially emerge at three different levels, namely, individual/household, local economy, and macroeconomic ([Tirivayi et al. 2013](#); [Sabates-Wheeler et al., 2009](#)). At the household level, social protection can alleviate liquidity constraints thereby allowing credit constrained farmers to invest in more inputs and in the adoption of new production technologies ([Gertler et al., 2012](#); [Harvey, 2007](#)). Besides, social protection can protect against negative shocks related to agricultural seasonalities ([Sabates-Wheeler et al., 2009](#)). Social protection can also act as an insurance mechanism against agricultural risks, thereby stimulating risk-taking behaviour among smallholder farmers and consequently increasing the expected returns on their agricultural activities ([Holzmann and Jorgensen, 1999](#); [Dercon, 2002](#)).

Agricultural interventions can reduce the vulnerabilities of poor households, thereby directly contributing to the main objective of social protection, namely, to reduce risk and vulnerabilities of poor households. It can also address structural factors, particularly when targeted and adapted to family farmers, so that to ensure their access to credit, insurance, technology and markets. Agricultural interventions usually aim at increasing agricultural productivity which implies higher house-

hold incomes, increased consumption and food security ([Tirivayi et al., 2013](#)). One could also expect that the increased income of smallholder farmers might lead to better nutritional outcomes, to facilitate access to health care and increase the demand for education, which, in the long term can foster the levels of human capital of current and future generations, further reducing risks and vulnerabilities, and thus contributing to the ultimate social protection objectives in a virtuous cycle. Despite, a large body of evidence of the short- to medium-term effects, the available evidence on the long term impacts is rather limited ([Tirivayi et al., 2013](#)).

At the local-economy level, synergies can be created through spillover effects between beneficiary and non-beneficiary households of social protection programmes or agricultural interventions. Cash transfers can, for example, increase the purchasing power of their beneficiaries, thereby also creating demand for the agricultural products of better-off households which do not directly benefit from social protection programmes. Food aid programmes or food for education programmes are also in a position to generate spillover effects if food is procured at the local level, thereby increasing the demand and boosting the prices of agricultural products. Lastly, [Sabates-Wheeler et al. \(2009\)](#) point out that synergies may also occur at a macroeconomic level, for example if agricultural interventions promote economic growth thereby increasing the fiscal base for the expansion of social protection programmes.

Despite the great potential for synergies between both policy areas, it should be noted that the joint implementation of social protection programmes and agricultural interventions is rare and can also lead to conflicts. At the macro-level, social protection programmes and agricultural interventions might compete for fiscal resources. At the local-economy level, food aid programmes can help local farmers if the foodstuff is purchased locally, but also may have a detrimental effect, as the private demand for local food would decrease. At the micro-level, Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) programmes might change the incentives for smallholder farmers and lead them to divert efforts from agricultural activities to the fulfilment of conditionalities (for a more comprehensive discussion on the potential conflicts between social protection and agricultural interventions see [Sabates-Wheeler et al., 2009](#); [Tirivayi et al., 2013](#)). These arguments underline the importance of coordinating the implementation modalities of social protection and agricultural interventions carefully and to go beyond the intentional creation of a pure overlap between beneficiaries.

3. Targeting to create synergies between agriculture and social protection – a conceptual framework

Building on the points summarised in the last section, this section puts forward a simple conceptual framework on how targeting coherence between social protection and agricultural interventions can be intentionally sought with a view to promote synergies that would improve the socioeconomic situation and the food security of vulnerable populations in rural areas. In practice, there are two different approaches to trigger synergies by means of targeting: Two different sectoral interventions can be jointly implemented (i) using the same database and/or targeting strategy with a view to reaching the same households/individuals, alternatively integrated databases could be used for the same purpose or (ii) selecting the same intervention areas, without necessarily targeting the same households within those areas. In order to decide which of both approaches to take, it is important to be clear whether synergies are expected to arise mostly at the household level, at the local economy level or at the macroeconomic level, as this has implications on the role of targeting in promoting synergies. [Fig. 1](#) depicts the relationship between the level of synergies, target groups and targeting methods. If the synergies are expected to arise at the individual/household level, an agricultural intervention should be targeted to the same individuals/households who are also benefiting from a social protection programme, possibly the same targeting tools

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