

Explaining the Role of Government in Productive Sector Development: Comparisons between the Fish and the Dairy Sectors in Uganda

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This paper is based on ongoing research by the Elites Production and Poverty Research programme. It sets out to explain the puzzle as to why the dairy sector in Uganda has performed well while the fish sector, which was about to overtake coffee as Uganda's primary export commodity, has dwindled. Relating to the literature on political settlements, the paper grounds the analysis of policies and implementation arrangements related to dairy and fish in a historical political economic context. The basic argument is that the cattle-owning elite were part of the political settlement in Uganda that was formed after the civil war ended in 1986. In contrast, the fish sector has been largely neglected for the reason that the fish industry did not form part of the political settlement as most of the owners of fish processing factories were from outside Uganda.

The paper will critically engage with the literature on neo-patrimonialism, arguing that even though patrimonial relations do play a role in explaining government policy, they are far from sufficient. Developmentalism and the creation of "pockets of efficiency" occur as a result of a complex mix of factors. Some of these are bargaining and lobbying on the part of various agents including economic interest groups, the administrative elite, and donor pressure. Understanding the evolving political settlement is crucial in order to shed more light on this complex mix of processes.