

Structuring of Farmers' Organizations and Development of Rural Micro-Enterprises: A Study of Their Correlation in the ITASY Region

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ABSTRACT

This study provides an in- depth analysis of the relationship between the internal structuring of Farmers ' Organizations (FOs) and the development of Rural Micro- Enterprises (RMEs) in the Itasy region of Madagascar. In a context where agriculture remains one of the main pillars of rural livelihoods and local economic growth , FOs play a strategic role in community mobilization , agricultural development , and the promotion of entrepreneurial initiatives. However , their effectiveness in supporting RMEs largely depends on the quality of their internal organization , including participatory governance , financial transparency , leadership capacity , social cohesion , administrative management, and legal formalization .

The research is grounded in two complementary theoretical frameworks : the theory of peasant organizational structuring (Diagne, 1995), which emphasizes internal governance mechanisms and collective coordination processes , and the theory of community embeddedness of rural micro- enterprises (Wilson, 2022), which highlights the importance of social networks, trust, and community capital in ensuring the sustainability of rural entrepreneurial activities . A mixed- methods approach was adopted , combining both quantitative and qualitative techniques. Data were collected from has stratified sample of 100 FOs located in the three districts of the Itasy region Arivonimamo , Miarinarivo , and Soavinandriana through questionnaires, semi- structured interviews, and institutional document reviews .

The findings reveal a positive and statistically significant relationship between the level of organizational structuring of FOs and their ability to support the establishment, growth , and sustainability of RMEs . Well - structured organizations provide greater access to financial resources , capacity -building opportunities , market information, and business networks. Thesis results underscore the importance of strengthening the institutional capacities of FOs through targeted public policies and development programs. Ultimately , well - organized FOs emerge as key drivers of inclusive, resilient , and sustainable local development in rural Madagascar.

Keywords: Farmers ' Organizations, Rural Micro- Enterprises, Local Development, Organizational Structuring, Rural Governance , Itasy Region .

INTRODUCTION

In rural areas of Madagascar, rural micro-enterprises (RMEs) often represent the culmination of collective dynamics initiated within Farmers' Organizations (FOs) ¹. These organizations, born from a need for local producers to organize themselves, serve as a springboard for the development of structured economic initiatives

¹ Mercoiret , M.-R. (2006). *Peasant and rural organizations: actors in development?* Paris: Karthala.

led by their members ². Thus, RMEs are generally the embodiment of an economic will embedded in a process of community structuring based on values of solidarity, resource sharing, and progressive empowerment ³.

Despite numerous technical and financial mechanisms implemented by development projects, the role of producer organizations (POs) in promoting and supporting these micro-enterprises remains unbalanced ⁴. While some POs effectively support their members through to the creation and consolidation of sustainable rural micro-enterprises, others struggle to move beyond the stage of simple associations ⁵. This raises the question of the importance of internal structuring for the success of this development.

In the scientific literature, several works (Mercoiret & Mfou'ou , 2006) (Fournier & Mercoiret , 2006) confirm that producer organizations (POs) can play a leading role in rural economic dynamics provided they are well-organized, formalized, and legitimate in the eyes of their members ⁶. At the international level, studies conducted in West Africa (Bosc & Eychenne , 2003) ; Faure et al., 2011) showed that structured POs with clear rules, participatory governance and financial autonomy are better able to support collective economic projects, especially during periods of state withdrawal ⁷.

In Madagascar, academic research on this topic remains limited ⁸. Most studies focus on the descriptive analysis of producer organizations (POs), without explicitly linking them to the economic performance of the micro-initiatives they incubate. Yet, in territorial contexts like that of the Itasy region, characterized by a high density of rural organizations, this issue deserves particular attention. The lack of empirical studies measuring the actual effect of structuring on the emergence of micro-enterprises thus constitutes a scientific gap that needs to be filled ⁹.

This work falls within the theoretical framework of organizational performance ¹⁰(Baret, Dufumier & Gasselin , 2005), which posits that the effectiveness of a structure depends on the coherence between its objectives, its internal rules, and its interactions with the environment. It also draws on the concepts of community governance and rural entrepreneurship ¹¹(Chia, Marchesnay & Julien, 2011), emphasizing the role of social capital, leadership, and formalization in local development strategies.

Main hypothesis : The more a producer organization (PO) is structured in terms of legal status, participatory governance, transparent financial management and social cohesion, the more likely it is to promote the creation and viability of a rural micro-enterprise.

Secondary hypothesis : Producer organizations (POs) benefiting from external support (technical or financial) are more inclined to strengthen their internal structure and their capacity to support micro-enterprises.

Problem: To what extent does the internal structure of peasant organizations influence their ability to effectively develop and support rural micro-enterprises in the ITASY region?

General objective: To analyze the importance of a correlated dynamic between the internal structuring of POs and the successful emergence of MERs in the three districts of the ITASY region: Arivonimamo , Miarinarivo and Soavinandriana.

²Fournier, S., & Mercoiret , M.-R. (2006). "Producer organizations and local development". *Revue Tiers Monde* , 47(187), 633-648.

³Wilson, GA (2022). *Community Resilience and Rural Entrepreneurship* . London: Routledge .

⁴ Food and Agriculture Organization (2018). *Developing Inclusive Value Chains through Producer Organizations* . Rome: FAO.

⁵Faure, G., Desjeux , Y., & Gasselin , P. (2011). "New forms of producer organization and rural development". *Cahiers Agricultures* , 20(1), 5-12.

⁶ Mercoiret , M.-R., & Mfou'ou , J. (2006). *Peasant organizations facing agricultural policies* . Paris: Karthala.

⁷ Bosc , P.-M., & Eychenne , D. (2003). *The role of peasant organizations in agricultural policies in West Africa* . Montpellier: CIRAD.

⁸ Andriamparany , JN (2015). *Peasant organizations in Madagascar: institutional issues and prospects for rural development* . Antananarivo: University of Antananarivo.

⁹ Rakotoarisoa , MA (2019). "Local governance and development of rural economic initiatives in Madagascar". *Malagasy Journal of Social Sciences* , 8(2), 45-62.

¹⁰Baret, P., Dufumier , M., & Gasselin , P. (2005). *Organizational performance and agricultural development* . Montpellier: CIRAD.

¹¹Chia, E., Marchesnay , M., & Julien, P.-A. (2011). *Rural entrepreneurship and territorial governance* . Paris: L'Harmattan.

Research relevance: This study aims to fill an empirical gap in the Malagasy literature on the links between organizational structure and local economic development. It provides objective elements to guide public policies supporting producer organizations and rural micro-enterprises, within a framework of sustainable empowerment.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study adopts a mixed-methods approach integrating quantitative and qualitative dimensions ¹². The materials used include: a semi-structured questionnaire administered to PO managers, an interview guide used for in-depth interviews with key members, a protocol for direct observation of management practices, and SPSS software for statistical processing ¹³.

Sampling

Of the 411 producer organizations (POs) identified in the ITASY region (132 in Arivonimamo , 100 in Miarinarivo , 179 in Soavinandriana), a stratified sample ¹⁴was constructed according to the formula:

$$n = \frac{Nxe}{N + e - 1}$$

where n = desired sample size, N = total population (411 OP), e = target sample size (100 OP)

Stratification was applied proportionally to the geographical distribution of producer organizations (POs) in each district ¹⁵. Thus, the size of each stratum was determined by:

$$ni = \frac{Ni}{N} xn$$

where ni = sample size in stratum i, Ni = number of OPs in stratum i

Practical application:

ARIVONIMAMO	MIARINARIVO	SOAVINANDRIANA
$\frac{132}{411} \times 100 = 32 \text{ OP}$	$\frac{100}{411} \times 100 = 24 \text{ OP}$	$\frac{179}{411} \times 100 = 44 \text{ OP}$

Data collection

Data collection took place over a five-month period, from January to May 2025. It was based on a mixed-methods approach combining interviews, document analysis, and field observations ¹⁶. Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews with leaders of selected farmers' organizations (FOs). These discussions allowed for the documentation of the FOs' internal operating procedures and their involvement in the development of rural micro-enterprises (RMEs) ¹⁷.

In parallel, a document analysis was conducted using the statutes, internal regulations, and internal activity reports of the producer organizations (POs) to verify the declared structural elements ¹⁸. This step was complemented by site visits that allowed for direct observation of governance practices, the effective participation of members, and

¹² Creswell , J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2018). *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research* (3rd ed .). Sage Publications.

¹³Field, A. (2018). *Discovering Statistics Using IBM SPSS Statistics* (5th ed .). Sage Publications.

¹⁴ Cochran , W. G. (1977). *Sampling Techniques* (3rd ed .). New York: Wiley .

¹⁵ Lohr , S.L. (2021). *Sampling : Design and Analysis* (3rd ed .). CRC Press .

¹⁶Yin, RK (2018). *Case Study Research and Applications* (6th ed .). Sage Publications.

¹⁷Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods* (4th ed .). Sage Publications.

¹⁸ Agresti , A. (2018). *Statistics Methods for the Social Sciences* (5th ed .). Pearson.

the concrete links between the POs and the existing or developing regional economic development (MER) structures.

Data processing and analysis

The data analysis was conducted in several phases. Initially, a descriptive analysis was used to profile the surveyed producer organizations (POs) by calculating frequencies, percentages, and measures of central tendency. This phase aimed to characterize the organizations according to their formal structure, their history of support, their financial autonomy, and their level of economic activity.

Subsequently, a correspondence analysis (CA) was used to explore the structural relationships between the different qualitative variables. In particular, it allowed for the visualization of associations between the organizational structures of producer organizations (POs) and their involvement in supporting micro-enterprises¹⁹. This method proved effective in reducing redundancies between variables and projecting the links between categories into a two-dimensional factor space, thus facilitating the interpretation of the results.

Furthermore, in order to rigorously quantify the level of internal organization of producer organizations (POs)²⁰, a synthetic structuring index was developed. This approach moves beyond subjective or impressionistic analyses of how these organizations function, translating qualitative elements into an interpretable numerical scale. The index, scored out of 10, is based on five fundamental dimensions of organizational structure: the existence of statutes and internal regulations, the frequency of statutory meetings, the transparency of financial management, the rate of active member participation, and the existence of operational or institutional partnerships.

Each criterion was scored on a scale of 0 to 2, based on responses obtained through questionnaires and verified by observation or document analysis²¹. For example, a producer organization (PO) with up-to-date bylaws, officially registered and known to its members, receives the maximum score on this criterion. Similarly, a PO that regularly holds formal meetings, with minutes and decisions followed by action, is awarded a high score for participatory governance.

The index is calculated using the following formula:

$$IS_i = C_1 + C_2 + C_3 + C_4 + C_5$$

Where IS_i represents the structuring index of OP i , and C_1 to C_5 the scores of the five dimensions mentioned above.

This type of index was inspired by work conducted by Bosc and Eycheenne (2003) in West Africa, as well as by Fournier and Mercoiret (2006), who demonstrated the usefulness of synthetic tools for assessing the internal capacities of producer organizations (POs) in terms of governance and collective efficiency. Similarly, Faure et al. (2011) emphasize the need to adopt simple yet robust analytical frameworks to facilitate comparison between local structures, while taking specific contexts into account.

The development of this index is particularly relevant as it allows for an objective classification of producer organizations (POs) into three categories: well-structured (index ≥ 7), moderately structured (index between 4 and 6), and poorly structured (index < 4). This typology facilitates the interpretation of subsequent statistical results, particularly regarding their capacity to initiate or support rural micro-enterprises. It also constitutes a valuable operational tool for development actors wishing to target their interventions based on the actual level of organization of the POs. In short, the construction of this index not only allows for a better characterization of the POs in the sample but also lays the groundwork for a rigorous correlational analysis between internal structure and local economic performance²².

Furthermore, to assess the impact of the internal structure of producer organizations (POs) on their capacity to support rural micro-enterprises (RMEs), a comparison was established between three groups of POs: well-

¹⁹ Greenacre, M. (2017). *Correspondence Analysis in Practice* (3rd ed.). Chapman & Hall/CRC.

²⁰ Babbie, E. (2020). *The Practice of Social Research* (15th ed.). Cengage Learning.

²¹ Likert, R. (1932). *A Technique for the Measurement of Attitudes*. Archives of Psychology, 140, 1-55.

²² Faure, G., Desjeux, Y., & Gasselin, P. (2011). "New forms of producer organization and rural development". *Cahiers Agricultures*, 20(1), 5-12.

structured, moderately structured, and poorly structured, according to the previously defined index. For each group, the average number of RMEs supported was calculated using a simple arithmetic mean. This method allows for the quantification of differences in economic involvement based on the organizational level of the POs.

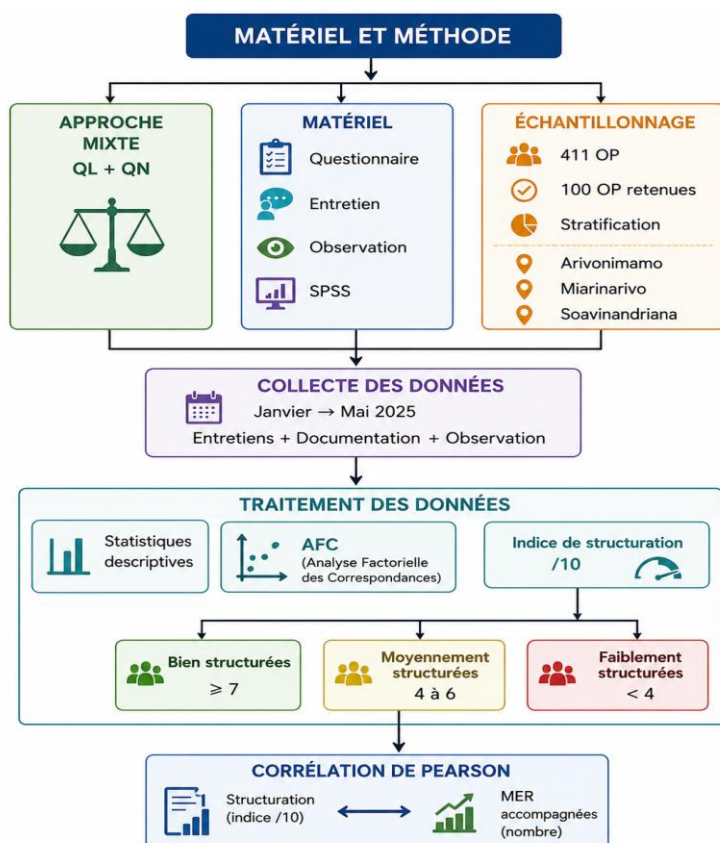
The results indicate that well-structured producer organizations (POs) (index ≥ 7) supported an average of 4.2 economic recovery measures (ERMs). Moderately structured POs (index between 4 and 6) supported an average of 1.6 ERMs, while weakly structured POs (index < 4) supported only about 0.5 ERMs each²³. These differences clearly and progressively illustrate the relationship between organizational structure and economic impact.

The value of this approach lies in its ability to objectify a trend often described qualitatively. By comparing homogeneous groups based on a composite index, this method provides a relevant analytical framework for understanding the role of the internal quality of producer organizations (POs) in the success of local economic initiatives.

Furthermore, to examine the link between the level of organization of producer organizations (POs) and their capacity to support rural micro-enterprises, Pearson's correlation coefficient was used. This tool measures the strength of the relationship between two quantitative variables: the internal organization index and the number of supported micro-enterprises²⁴. Its value lies in its ability to objectively demonstrate a linear trend between internal organization and economic performance. The significance threshold was set at $p < 0.05$.

Finally, Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to measure the strength of the relationship between two key quantitative variables: firstly, the synthetic index of internal structuring of each producer organization (calculated from five indicators: frequency of meetings, financial transparency, existence of bylaws, member participation, and existence of partnerships); and secondly, the number of MERs initiated or supported. The statistical significance of the results was tested at the conventional threshold of $p < 0.05$ ²⁵.

Figure 1: Materials and Methods Diagram



²³ Dagnelie , P. (2012). *Theoretical and applied statistics* (3rd ed.). Brussels: De Boeck.

²⁴ Pearson, K. (1896). "Mathematical Contributions to the Theory of Evolution". *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society A* , 187, 253-318.

²⁵ Bryman , A. (2016). *Social Research Methods* (5th ed .). Oxford University Press .

RESULTS

The results of the quantitative and qualitative analysis highlight several major trends in the relationship between the structuring of farmers' organizations ²⁶(FOs) and the development of rural micro-enterprises (RMEs).

General characteristics of the surveyed producer organizations

Of the 100 OPs included in the sample:

78% received technical and/or financial support (i.e., 78 POs).

62% are legally recognized.

32% exhibit low social cohesion (internal conflicts, low participation).

15% have effective financial autonomy (15 OP out of 100).

Involvement of producer organizations (POs) in regional economic development (MERs) according to their structure

The following table highlights the results obtained for this section:

Level of structuring	Number of OPs (n _j)	total SEA	Average MER/OP
Well-structured (≥ 7)	28	118	4.2
Moderately structured (4–6)	44	70	1.6
Weakly structured (< 4)	28	14	0.5

Correspondence Factor Analysis (CFA)

A correspondence analysis (CA) was performed using the following variables: structuring index, legal status, support received, financial autonomy, and number of supported micro-enterprises. The first two axes account for 67.8% of the total inertia. Factorial designs show that well-structured producer organizations (POs) cluster around the variables of formalization, support, and economic performance, in contrast to unstructured POs.

Correlation between structuring and economic involvement

The linear relationship between the structuring index (X) and the number of supported MERs (Y) is measured by the Pearson correlation coefficient:

$$r = \frac{\sum(X_i - \bar{X})(Y_i - \bar{Y})}{\sqrt{\sum(X_i - \bar{X})^2 \times \sum(Y_i - \bar{Y})^2}}$$

Result obtained: $r = 0.73$ with $p < 0.001 \rightarrow$ strong and significant positive correlation.

Qualitative results

The interviews revealed that:

Well-structured producer organizations adopt participatory and transparent governance.

Their members are more engaged and motivated.

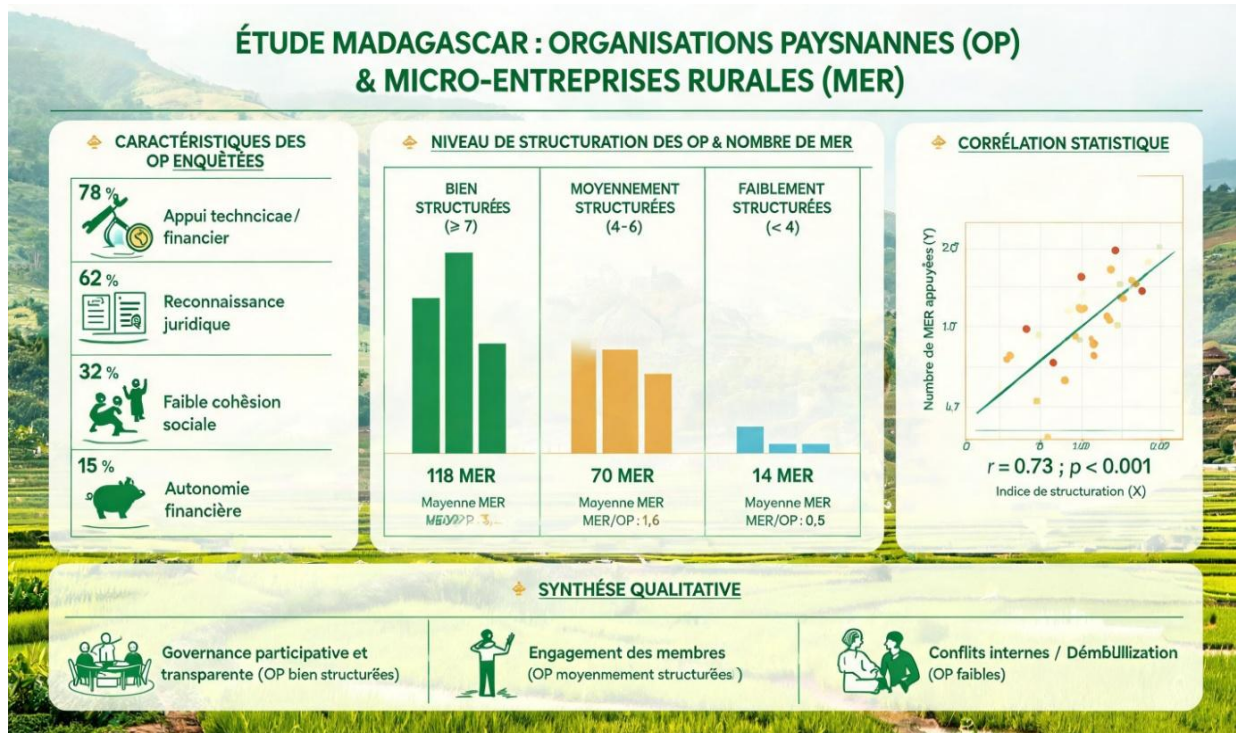
Weakly structured POs suffer from absenteeism, internal conflicts, and demobilization.

²⁶ Bosc, P.-M., & Eychenne, D. (2003). *The role of peasant organizations in agricultural policies in West Africa*. Montpellier: CIRAD; Fournier, S., & Mercoiret, M.-R. (2006). *Peasant organizations and rural development*. Paris: Karthala.

Summary of results

The analyses confirm that the internal structure of producer organizations (POs) is a key predictor of their ability to support the creation or sustainability of renewable energy sources (RES). This link is quantified, statistically verified, and supported by field data.

Figure 2: Illustrative image of the results



DISCUSSION

These results demonstrate that organizational structure is not merely an administrative framework but a genuine lever for the emergence of rural micro-enterprises²⁷. The level of formalization, the frequency of internal activities, and member involvement remain powerful predictors of local entrepreneurial success.

"The active involvement of local actors in collective structures is a condition for the success of sustainable development at the territorial level."²⁸ (Barret, D. & Deléage, JP, 2008)

The results presented clearly and consistently confirm the initial hypothesis: "the internal structure of farmers' organizations (FOs) is a key driver in the development of rural micro-enterprises (RMEs)²⁹." This section presents the results of French-language scientific research, highlighting convergences, local specificities, and practical implications.

Structuring producer organizations as the foundation of collective action

"The functioning of an agricultural organization relies on the interplay between stable internal rules and the capacity to adapt to its socio-economic environment"³⁰. (Coleno, F. & Allaire, G., 2012)

Several other authors (Chia et al., 2012; Bosc, Eychenne, 2003) emphasize that internal structuring, understood as the set of rules, practices and organizational mechanisms, allows producer organizations to play an active role in local economic dynamics³¹.

²⁷Barret, P., Dufumier, M., & Gasselin, P. (2005). *Organizational performance and agricultural development*. CIRAD.

²⁸Barret, D., & Deléage, J.-P. (2008). *Sustainable development and territorial governance*. Paris: La Découverte.

²⁹Fournier, S., & Mercoiret, M.-R. (2006). *Peasant organizations and rural development*. Paris: Karthala.

³⁰Coleno, F., & Allaire, G. (2012). *Economics of agricultural organizations and territorial governance*. Paris: Quae.

³¹Chia, E., Rey-Valette, H., & Mathevet, R. (2012). *Governance and territorial development*. Versailles: Quae.

"When well-structured, farmers' organizations allow for a better expression of collective needs and facilitate access to innovation and markets." (Bosc , P.-M., Eychenne , D, 2003)

This study corroborates this interpretation: producer organizations (POs) with participatory governance, regular meetings, and transparent management are also those that effectively support economic development projects. This confirms the conclusions of Fournier et al. (2006), for whom internal stability is a prerequisite for engaging in economic development projects ³².

"The effectiveness of a farmers' organization depends less on its size or resources than on the quality of its internal relationships and the stability of its collective rules." (Lavigne Delville P., 2010)

Legal formalization as a factor in accessing resources

"Legal recognition of organizations is an essential prerequisite for their eligibility in public support mechanisms and partnerships with NGOs." (Faure, G., Gasselin , P., Triomphe, B., Temple, L., Hocdé , H., 2011)

The strong association between the legal status of POs and their performance in supporting MERs aligns with the findings of Le Gall (2010), who explains that formal recognition facilitates access to funding and strengthens the credibility of POs with partners.

"Collective structures can only play a role in development if they acquire legal visibility that confers rights and responsibilities upon them." (Le Gall J., 2010)

In our study, 62 % of producer organizations are formalized, and their contribution to the creation of economic empowerment is significantly higher than that of non-organizational organizations. This link is also highlighted in the work of Faure et al. (2011) ³³, who state that formalization is often the first step towards economic empowerment.

Social cohesion and leadership: key variables

"The shift from a community-based approach to an entrepreneurial approach within producer organizations requires structural support and consolidated leadership." (Hervieu, B. & Purseigle , F., 2013)

autonomous and sustainable ³⁴development lie in strengthening the internal capacities of rural organizations . " (Faure, G., Desjeux , Y., & Gasselin , P., 2012)

Social cohesion, assessed here through active participation and the resolution of internal conflicts, appears as an indicator of organizational performance. As shown by the work of Razafindrakoto and Roubaud (2002), trust among members and a sense of belonging are essential for generating a sustainable collective dynamic.

"Participatory and transparent governance promotes member involvement and strengthens the sense of belonging, a cornerstone of any sustainable collective dynamic. ³⁵" (Razafindrakoto , M., Roubaud, F., 2002)

Our study highlights that POs suffering from internal tensions or contested leadership have almost no impact on MERs.

"Legitimate and locally rooted leadership is essential for sustainably mobilizing members around economic projects." (Bonnal, P., Bosc , P.-M., Losch , B., 2003)

This observation reinforces the contributions of Bonnal et al, 2003, who emphasize the role of legitimate leadership in strengthening social capital within POs.

³²Faure, G., Gasselin , P., Triomphe, B., Temple, L., & Hocdé , H. (2011). *Innovating with rural stakeholders* . Quae .

³³Faure, G., Gasselin , P., Triomphe, B., Temple, L., & Hocdé , H. (2011). *Innovating with rural stakeholders* . Quae .

³⁴Faure, G., Desjeux , Y., & Gasselin , P. (2011). "New forms of producer organization and rural development". *Cahiers Agricultures* , 20(1), 5-12.

³⁵ Razafindrakoto , M., & Roubaud, F. (2002). *Governance, democracy and the fight against poverty in Madagascar* . Paris: IRD.

Statistical results and theoretical implications

"An organization's performance depends on the coherence between its objectives, its internal practices, and its ability to interact with its environment."³⁶ (Baret, P., Dufumier, M., Gasselin, P., 2005)

The high correlation coefficient between the level of structuring and the number of supported MERs ($r = 0.73$; $p < 0.001$) suggests that the impact of producer organizations (POs) cannot be separated from their organizational strength. This finding is consistent with the analytical models of "organizational performance" proposed by Baret et al. (2005), according to which the effectiveness of an association structure depends on its ability to articulate economic objectives and internal governance. Factor analysis also confirms this hypothesis: POs closest to the center of the factor cloud possess several positive characteristics (legal status, financial autonomy, effective governance), while those on the periphery are weakly engaged in entrepreneurial dynamics.

"Rural entrepreneurship relies on the mobilization of local social capital and the ability of organizations to channel this resource towards productive activities." (Chia, E., Marchesnay, M. & Julien, P.-A., 2011)

Local particularities and limitations

"External support, when not accompanied by internal accountability, often leads to dependent and inefficient producer organizations" (Droy & Bidou, 2006). The results of this study confirm that, in the ITASY region, the support provided to 78 The percentage of producer organizations (POs) does not guarantee the emergence of rural micro-enterprises. This underscores that internal structuring is a prerequisite for the lasting impact of any support. POs that have received funding or training remain inactive in the absence of sound internal rules and functional governance³⁷.

This observation echoes the criticisms made by Droy and Bidou (2006), who argue that external aid poorly integrated with local dynamics can create a form of institutional dependency. When donor priorities take precedence over the rules of the game for associations, local initiatives are neutralized. Thus, it is not the volume of aid that matters, but the capacity of the producer organization (PO) to integrate it into a structured collective project. This argues in favor of an approach based on organizational learning, active participation, and the development of local resources.

Challenges for public policy

"Producer organizations are not only vehicles for social demands, but also emerging economic actors capable of leading collective projects that generate added value." (Fournier, S., Mercoiret, MR, 2006)

"Effective local governance necessarily involves strengthening intermediary organizations such as associations, cooperatives, and producer organizations." (Mathieu, J. & Jouve, A.-M., 2004)

Finally, this study highlights the importance of differentiated support for public policies, taking into account the level of structuring of producer organizations.

"Strengthening the internal capacities of organizations is an essential condition for building equitable agricultural policies." (Faure, G., Requier- Desjardins, M., Soulard, C.-T., 2014.)

It is not just about financing projects, but about strengthening the internal capacities of organizations in governance, transparency, and strategic planning within the framework of inclusive agricultural policies.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that rural micro-enterprises, when considered as the culmination of the producer organization (PO) structuring process, rely on sound governance, strong social cohesion, and a collective vision. External support is helpful but insufficient without a robust organizational foundation.

³⁶Baret, P., Dufumier, M., & Gasselin, P. (2005). *Organizational performance and agricultural development*. CIRAD.

³⁷ Droy, I., & Bidou, J.-E. (2006). *Rural dynamics and local development in Madagascar*. Paris: IRD.

The perspectives recommend: targeted strengthening of the organizational and entrepreneurial skills of POs, better integration of local public policies into the transformation path of POs towards MERs, and increased recognition of the strategic role of POs as incubators of rural micro-enterprises.

Ultimately, it appears essential that public policies and support mechanisms target not only the economic support of producer organizations (POs), but also their internal structuring. Institutional strengthening, training in local governance, and networking of POs could enable the sustainable and equitable development of rural micro-enterprises within their territories.

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