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Comparative Analysis of Agricultural Supply Chain Resilience and Adaptive Governance to Climate Shocks in Sierra Leone, 2000–2024

Samuel Bangura[1], **Ishmael Kamara**[2], **Kadiatu Sesay**[2]

Department of Research, Njala University | *Ernest Bai Koroma University of Science and Technology*

Correspondence: sbangura@yahoo.com

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ABSTRACT

Agricultural supply chains in West Africa are acutely vulnerable to climate shocks, yet comparative analyses of resilience and governance adaptations over extended periods are scarce. This study addresses a critical gap in understanding how different governance structures within these chains influence adaptive capacity. This study aims to compare the resilience of two dominant agricultural supply chain models—centralised cooperative-led and decentralised trader-led networks—and to analyse the evolution of their adaptive governance mechanisms in response to recurrent climate shocks. A longitudinal comparative case study design was employed, utilising mixed methods. Data were gathered through structured surveys with chain actors, semi-structured interviews with key informants, and analysis of archival records on production and market flows. Decentralised trader-led networks demonstrated significantly higher operational resilience, recovering 40% faster from major flood events than centralised cooperatives. A key theme was the critical role of informal, flexible credit arrangements in trader-led networks, which enabled rapid resource reallocation post-shock. Formal, centralised governance structures, while beneficial for scale, were less agile in crisis response compared to informal, relational governance. Resilience was fundamentally linked to the diversity of financial linkages and decision-making autonomy at node level. Policy should support hybrid governance models that integrate the formal reporting of cooperatives with the flexible, networked adaptation of trader systems. Financial product development must prioritise shock-responsive liquidity for all chain actors. adaptive governance, climate resilience, agricultural value chains, informal finance, Sierra Leone This paper provides a novel longitudinal dataset tracking governance adaptations across two distinct supply chain models, offering a granular analysis of the institutional mechanisms that underpin resilience.

Keywords: *Agricultural supply chains, Climate resilience, Adaptive governance, West Africa, Comparative analysis, Institutional adaptation*

Article Highlights

- Trader-led networks demonstrated 40% faster recovery from climate shocks than cooperative models.
- Informal, flexible credit was a key resilience mechanism in decentralised systems.
- Formal governance structures provided scale but lacked crisis agility.
- Resilience linked to financial linkage diversity and node-level autonomy.

Policy Implication

Support hybrid governance models that integrate formal cooperative structures with the flexible, networked adaptation of trader systems.

This analysis is based on a 24-year longitudinal dataset from Sierra Leone.