

Review

A Systematic Review of the Trends, Effects, and Deterrents of Collective Marketing Participation Among Smallholder Farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa

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Abstract: Smallholder farmers' participation in collective marketing is essential for the growth of smallholder farming businesses and the sustainability of their livelihoods. Collective marketing provides smallholder farmers with increased opportunities to scale up market access and participation. Given the challenges that the majority of smallholder farmers still face regarding market access and participation, this review was conducted to explore the trends and effects of collective marketing participation, as well as the barriers to participation among smallholder farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). The results show that collective marketing has a high potential to give smallholder farmers access to both formal and informal market participation, as well as recognition by public and private support structures. To improve collective marketing participation among SSA countries, more focused and content-specific strategies and interventions are needed to address the complex socio-economic and structural barriers that limit smallholder farmers' ability to fully benefit from collective marketing initiatives across the region.

Keywords: collective action; market participation; smallholder farmers



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1. Introduction

Globally, smallholder farming is integral to food security and poverty reduction and an important part of the rural economy [1]. There are approximately 500 million smallholder farms worldwide, each less than 5 hectares in size [2]. Fanzo [2] further indicates that although some farmers have access to irrigation schemes, most struggle to implement a proper irrigation system and therefore depend on rainfall for irrigation. Cairns et al. [3] report that due to their limited land size, most smallholder farmers produce cash crops, such as maize, rice, and vegetables, which are used for household consumption and market supply, while also enabling crop rotation. Smallholder farmers rely on these farms for sustainable measures to generate both food and income for their households [4], of which most have an average of seven persons each [5]. Most smallholder farmers utilize local markets to generate income, but success is not guaranteed due to factors such as market access, competition, and transaction costs [6]. Ariom et al. [7] indicate that, production fluctuates due to dependence on rainfall, affecting both the yield quality and quantity of crops, as well as the grazing of livestock. This, in turn, impacts the participation of smallholder farmers in the market. Nwafor and van der Westhuizen [8] report that only 40% of smallholder farmers are able to generate sales from their production, while the remaining 60% struggle to market their goods due to a lack of access to markets or limited produce that is only sufficient for household consumption. Marketing becomes crucial for smallholder farmers, as their inability to make a profit from their produce affects their business growth and living standards. Sigei et al. [9] indicate that a minority of smallholder farmers are able to successfully market their produce, while the majority struggle to secure a market, resulting in significant losses due to product spoilage. Collective marketing is

introduced to smallholder farmers as a strategy that aims to help them secure broader and more formal markets to improve their sales and livelihoods [10]. Collective marketing allows smallholder farmers to come together, share ideas and strategies for accessing the market, compete with commercial farmers, and increase their potential profits while learning from one another [11]. This study thus assesses collective marketing participation trends, effects, and deterrents among smallholder farmers in the sub-Saharan region (SSA) to provide insights that can be expansively adopted across the region for better income and livelihoods for farmers.

Participating in the market requires smallholder farmers to understand the impact of both individual and collective participation on competition and profit [12]. Participating as individual farmers in the market opens the door to competition, which can negatively affect product sales. Hence, the need to collaborate and strategize on how to succeed in the market is evident [12]. Smallholder farmers are often under-resourced, making it difficult for them to successfully participate in the market as individuals and generate profit [13]. The concept of collective marketing allows smallholder farmers to overcome challenges such as high transaction costs and competition, providing them with the opportunity to secure formal and profitable markets [14,15]. Collective marketing enables smallholder farmers to enhance their understanding of potential markets and gain access to information through socializing and sharing with other farmers [16]. The importance of collective marketing lies in fostering growth among smallholder farmers through profit generation and knowledge enhancement, thus empowering them to compete effectively in the market [17]. Smallholder farmers who have adopted the collective marketing strategy have reportedly secured markets and improved their sales [18]. Countries such as China have successfully implemented this strategy and formed cooperatives to help them overcome market challenges [19]. Smallholder farmers in China are successfully participating in cooperatives, enabling them to meet market demands due to their increased production capacity [19]. In contrast, most smallholder farmers in African countries have yet to adopt this strategy and continue to struggle to participate in the market, resulting in significant production losses [20]. In South Africa, the majority of farmers are still labeled as subsistence farmers, despite their potential for market participation, primarily because they do not produce sufficient quality and quantity as individuals, and they are not recognized in the market [21,22]. Simelane et al. [23] report that due to a lack of education and knowledge about collective participation, many organizations formed in rural farming have collapsed, leaving smallholder farmers to struggle independently. Consequently, supporting agencies have overlooked the valuable work that smallholder farmers are doing, and less support is provided, as government and private policies tend to favor cooperatives [24].

Several factors influence smallholder farmers' participation in the market, including age, experience, household size, marital status, education level, and the quality and quantity of products [25,26]. Kangile et al. [27] indicate that smallholder farmers with higher education levels tend to have better market access due to their stronger strategic management skills compared to those with lower education levels. Additionally, farmers with more years of experience in farming have a better chance of succeeding in the market than those who have just started [28,29]. These factors contribute to varying perspectives on collective marketing among farmers and influence their decisions regarding participation in collectives. Some smallholder farmers aspire to join collectives by observing the success of others, which also serves as a motivating factor [17]. However, Lutz and Tadesse [12] indicate that some smallholder farmers may reject collective action if they already have market access or have heard negative feedback regarding potential conflicts within collectives. Jebesa [30] reports that despite any challenges that may arise within a collective, it is generally beneficial and advantageous for smallholder farmers to form cooperatives, allowing them better access to the market and opportunities to grow their businesses. It is crucial for smallholder farmers to understand collective action and how it can impact their potential market. Therefore, there is a need for extension personnel to ensure that smallholder farmers are aware of these practices and interested in adopting

them. Extension officers play a key role in enhancing understanding among smallholder farmers through knowledge and information sharing. They also monitor cooperatives to address the challenges that these groups may face [31]. Additionally, extension personnel assist smallholder farmers by providing resources that facilitate collective efforts, ensuring that farmers remain engaged in their participation. Wossen et al. [32] indicate that in areas where extension officers are active, cooperatives thrive, as they receive relevant services. These cooperatives are better able to offer products that meet market standards due to the information and resources they obtain for production. Hence, the motivation of this study is the need to scale up the utilization of collective action and marketing initiatives across the SSA region to ensure the improved and sustained market participation of smallholder farmers for better income and livelihoods.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Research Design

This study employed a systematic review technique to conduct a comprehensive examination of the trends, effects, and deterrents of collective market participation in sub-Saharan Africa as shown in Figure 1. This technique was utilized to collect and summarize literature from existing studies within the region. The literature search focused on the trends, effects, and deterrents of collective marketing among smallholder farmers in sub-Saharan Africa. To facilitate the literature review, (i) research objectives were established, (ii) relevant studies related to the review were identified, (iii) a summary of the identified studies was compiled to address the objectives of the review, and (iv) the findings were interpreted to complete the review and provide recommendations.

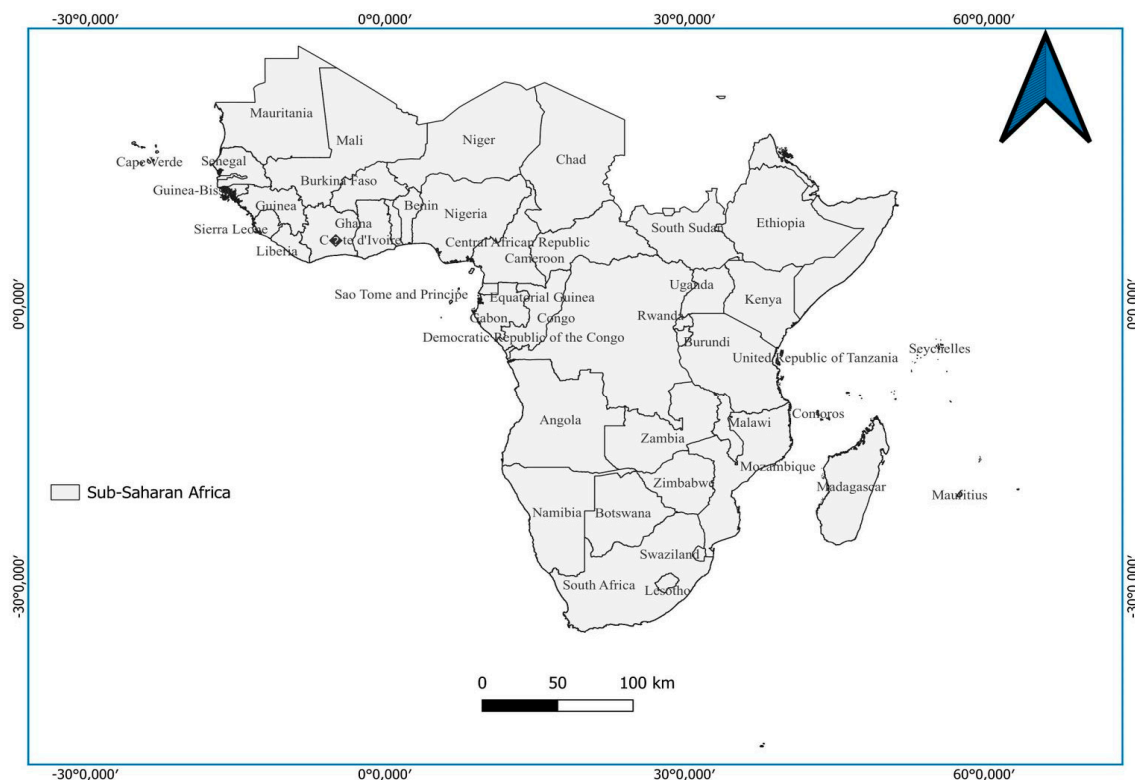


Figure 1. Sub-Saharan Africa map. Source: Authors, 2024.

2.2. Data Collection Methods

Google Scholar was used to obtain relevant literature for this study. Keywords such as “smallholder farmers”, “collective marketing”, “collective action”, and “sub-Saharan Africa” were employed to find pertinent articles. To explore different aspects, “and” and “or” were utilized; for example, “Smallholder farming and collective marketing and employment

opportunities". The search was narrowed to articles published from 2014 to the present day to ensure that no articles were more than 10 years old. Additionally, the search was limited to countries in sub-Saharan Africa, so only articles with relevant locations were selected.

2.3. Data Extraction

The selection of used and unused articles involved reviewing the abstracts and objectives of each article. Document screening provided a glimpse of the details, and an article was included if it was deemed relevant. The downloaded articles were screened for further review based on two criteria for inclusion and exclusion. These criteria were as follows: "Does the article address issues of cooperative or collective action among smallholder farmers?" and "Does the article specifically address issues of collective marketing among smallholder farmers?". Articles that did not focus on these two themes (collective action and collective marketing) among smallholder farmers, as well as those not published in English, were excluded from the systematic literature assessment. Key elements in selecting documents included the participation of smallholder farmers in marketing, the success of smallholder farmers' cooperatives in marketing, and the issues faced by these cooperatives regarding market participation or collective action. The year of publication and the location of the study were also considered during the selection process.

2.4. Data Analysis Method

The studies included from the literature were gathered and analyzed using thematic analysis. This method was chosen because the research was secondary, reviewing the findings of existing studies. The aim was to analyze the trends, effects, and deterrents of collective market participation among smallholder farmers in various countries, ultimately drawing conclusions relevant to sub-Saharan Africa. A total of 955 articles were initially downloaded for selection, of which 221 were duplicates. After removing the duplicates, 734 articles remained. Of these, 412 did not meet the study criteria and were discarded, leaving a pool of 322 articles. Following a thorough thematic review, an additional 233 articles were found not to meet the study criteria and were also removed. This left a total of 89 articles, all of which were included in the study. Figure 2 presents a visual analysis.

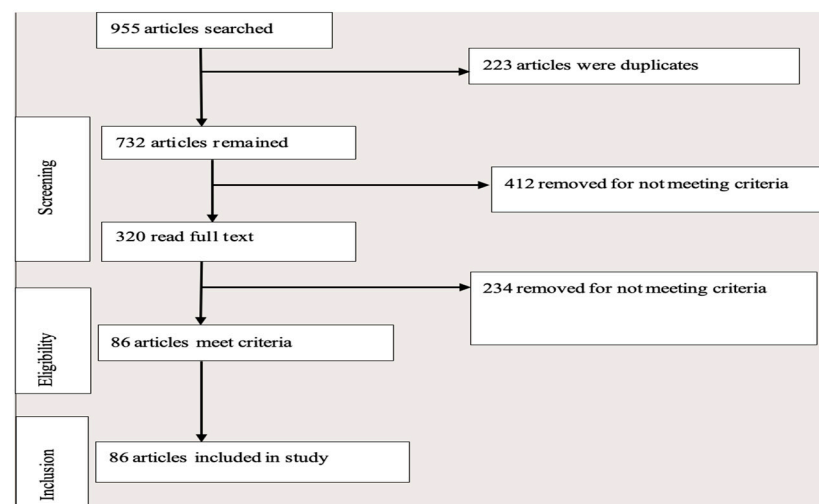


Figure 2. Summary of data analysis. Source: authors, 2024.

3. Results

3.1. Smallholder Farming and Marketing in Sub-Saharan Africa

Smallholder farming in sub-Saharan Africa is a key economic practice for most rural dwellers; however, it often struggles to sustain rural livelihoods [33]. Giller et al. [34] indicate that most smallholder farms in sub-Saharan Africa are one hectare or less. With the limited yields produced from this small space, households are unable to sustain their

livelihoods or participate effectively in the market, resulting in persistent levels of poverty and food insecurity. A lack of resources, knowledge, and improved technologies in these countries contributes to the challenges in enhancing farming practices, preventing smallholder farmers from participating in the market [35]. The inability to utilize improved technologies and resources affects the quality of products and their market standards. Additionally, smallholder farming in sub-Saharan Africa is characterized by low production input, which leads to low production output. The lack of profitability from market costs leads to insufficient investment in inputs, causing smallholder farmers to struggle to gather the necessary resources, which perpetuates a cycle of poor inputs and outputs [6].

The majority of smallholder farmers in Rwanda and Uganda market at least 30% of their produce, while the remainder is consumed by their families. In Ghana, only 20% of the maize crop produced makes it to the market, with the remaining 80% consumed at home [36]. The limited sales of products in the market compel smallholder farmers to diversify their income sources; consequently, many rural individuals pursue additional businesses and careers alongside their agricultural production [37]. Anthony et al. [38] indicate that in Nigeria, about 80% of the population are smallholder farmers who continue to live in poverty because they are unable to market their produce and lack strategies to improve their situation due to limited access to knowledge and information. Oluwatayo [39] further emphasizes that the number of smallholder farmers in Nigeria has the potential to supply large markets, even through exports, if they work together; however, their lack of unity undermines their market approach and participation. Some of the production and marketing difficulties faced by smallholder farmers in countries such as Ghana and Uganda stem from their inability to invest in high-quality inputs [40]. This situation creates a cycle of poor production and lack of market access, which perpetuates high levels of poverty. Additionally, the lack of capital makes it challenging for smallholder farmers to initiate seasonal production. Mutero et al. [41] indicate that many smallholder farmers have fallen out of the age group typically eligible for bank loans and lack sufficient assets to present as collateral, further limiting their access to quality production inputs. Mkuki and Msuya [31] report that the absence of extension services hampers smallholder farmers' ability to successfully produce and market their products, as knowledge about farming and marketing practices is not effectively shared with them. Poor policy structures and implementation also prevent smallholder farmers from participating in high-value markets [42]. In South Africa, policymakers do not adequately support smallholder farmers, despite the recognized need for policy implementation [43]. Most production and marketing strategies tend to favor commercial farmers over smallholder farmers due to the lack of policy outreach and input from extension agents [8]. In Kenya, however, where extension officers engage with smallholder farmers, there has been growth from these farmers adopting collective marketing strategies to sell their products [44].

In Botswana, small livestock farming predominates over crop production, with goats being the most common livestock among farmers [45]. While rearing and marketing goats has the potential to uplift smallholder farming, these farmers struggle to access high-level markets and often make sales primarily during community events [46]. Dlamini-Mazibuko et al. [47] note that in Swaziland, smallholder farmers rely on informal marketing methods, such as farm-gate sales, door-to-door marketing, and vendors, to sell their products. Many smallholder farmers have reported that the formal market imposes too many requirements that they cannot meet, often due to a lack of resources and market information. They have also noted that high competition increases their transaction costs and places their crops and meat at risk of spoilage [48]. Louw [49] reports that smallholder farming in Angola has the potential to be robust and productive due to key resources such as fertile soil, extensive land, and a favorable climate. He further indicates that many smallholder farmers are doing well in production and are able to successfully market their livestock and crops through informal markets. However, smallholder farmers face challenges in participating in the formal market due to its demanding regulations, which can be difficult for them to meet as individuals, especially when production fluctuates [49]. Corsi et al. [50] report that in Chad,

smallholder farmers demonstrate the ability to produce successful market-worthy products. Nevertheless, their participation in the market remains low, even in collectives, due to a lack of knowledge and information about their target market. They require assistance from officials regarding marketing strategies that they can utilize as cooperatives.

Collective marketing among smallholder farmers in most countries in sub-Saharan Africa is not as effective as intended. The majority of smallholder farmers in countries like South Africa and Nigeria still live in poverty because they cannot commercialize their products, both crops and livestock, relying instead on local markets for sales [51]. Lesala [21] supports this by indicating that in South Africa, smallholder farmers continue to experience poverty because they have not adopted collective action strategies, despite struggling as individuals. However, some smallholder farmers in Kenya who use collective marketing have successfully entered the formal market. This underscores the necessity for extension agents to educate smallholder farmers on the importance of working together to overcome the challenges they face individually. In Botswana, where livestock farming is prevalent, marketing is also an issue as smallholder farmers struggle to enter the market due to competition and associated transaction costs [46]. Overall, smallholder farming and marketing in sub-Saharan Africa require significant attention and improvement to realize their potential for alleviating poverty and enhancing livelihoods through job creation and increased profits.

3.2. Trends and Effects of Collective Marketing Among Smallholder Farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa

In many cases where smallholder farmers struggle to market their products, collective marketing is proposed as a strategy to improve the situation [52]. As noted by multiple authors, smallholder farming is crucial for the livelihoods of many households, particularly in rural areas; however, peak poverty levels raise concerns amidst the expected development and growth [53]. For years, smallholder farmers have faced challenges in accessing formal markets and selling large quantities of products individually. Collective marketing helps smallholder farmers overcome these barriers by enhancing market access and increasing their bargaining power, as it allows them to be recognized as registered business owners [17,54]. Additionally, it provides them with access to more production resources, such as production credits, bank loans, government support, and training opportunities [55]. Collective marketing has uplifted smallholder farmers and their livelihoods through increased production and profit in countries such as Kenya and South Africa [50]. Fischer and Qaim [56] report that those practicing collective marketing in Kenya are experiencing stability in their households, allowing them to meet both felt and unmet needs and move toward food security. With this stability, smallholder farmers feel more confident in living a normal social life as their livelihoods are balanced. This means that smallholder farmers and their families can be more socially engaged, attending gatherings that provide knowledge and information, as well as serving as pathways to marketing channels [57]. Additionally, smallholder farmers are equipped with leadership and management skills through support from both private and government institutions [58].

Through collective action, smallholder farmers in countries such as South Africa, Kenya, and Ghana have received resources and capital from non-governmental organizations and the government to enhance their production [59]. Wanyama et al. [60] report that in Burkina Faso, smallholder livestock farmers in cooperatives know how to obtain production inputs and tools that help care for their livestock without endangering their health. Ochieng et al. [53] indicate that more than 80% of the population in Rwanda and the DRC are smallholder farmers. Recognizing their difficulties with market access, these farmers have formed organizations that enable them to generate income and receive support from the government. In Ethiopia, since smallholder farmers began organizational farming in 1991, they have been able to supply both formal and informal markets and have gained attention from input and output marketing. As a result, smallholder farmers are now able to produce high-quality products and maintain healthy livestock thanks to access to proper and quality inputs and relevant services [61]. Mutonyi [59] reports that smallholder farmer

organizations in Kenya receive substantial support and services from non-governmental organizations. This support encourages them to work to the best of their ability and to defy the odds to engage in both informal and formal markets. Collective action allows smallholder farmers to reduce transaction costs, enabling them to improve their inputs and resources, which in turn leads to higher quality production output [15]. Collective marketing empowers smallholder farmers with greater marketing power and confidence to compete with commercial farmers, as it increases their bargaining power [62].

Ekepu et al. [63] report that smallholder farmers in Uganda's Soroti district are showing interest in forming cooperatives. They recognize that this will facilitate easier access to government assistance, provide them with sufficient resources, and promote growth through collaboration. Studies by Aniah et al. [64] and Wanyama et al. [60] indicate that collective action requires patience and a willingness to learn, which some smallholder farmer cooperatives in Kenya, Ghana, and Ethiopia are exemplifying as they learn from one another and from extension officers. Previously, smallholder farmers focused on marketing what they produced, which led to significant losses due to competition and low sales. Collective marketing has helped these farmers understand that they must produce for the market rather than merely market what they produce [50]. Through information sharing, smallholder farmers gain insights into market demands, allowing them to better understand what to supply and the prices that will benefit both them and the market [65].

Different countries exhibit varying evolutions of collective action due to differing policies and governmental contexts. For instance, countries like South Africa and Kenya experience low rates of smallholder farmer cooperative formation, primarily due to poor policy implementation and a lack of outreach by extension agents [66]. This results in a lack of knowledge about cooperatives among smallholder farmers [67]. Ayieko et al. [65] report that in the past, collective marketing was primarily for smallholder farmers with better resources and education. However, this strategy is now being adopted by any interested smallholder farmer looking to improve their livelihood. Currently, smallholder farmers who are informed about collective marketing recognize that it enhances production and marketing management, which is essential for a successful farming business [68]. As production and profit increase through collective marketing, smallholder farmers are making strides in both production and marketing. Zeweld et al. [69] report that some farmers did not use proper irrigation methods until they joined group farming, which taught them how and when to irrigate to produce high-quality products. Smallholder farmer organizations are able to secure direct markets through advertising and by coordinating transport to deliver goods, thereby reducing their transaction costs [43]. Furthermore, these farmers support one another in meeting market demands, encouraging each other to provide the best services and to deliver on time [67]. As these changes occur in smallholder farming, they create opportunities for employment and production expansion. Yami et al. [70] report that smallholder farmers who are part of organizations have employed local residents on their farms, providing not only wages but also training, which enhances their livelihoods and contributes to the rural economy. The quality and quantity of production have also improved as farmers motivate each other to adopt advanced farming practices. Table 1 summarizes the literature findings of the study.

Table 1. Summary of the effects of collective marketing across the region.

References	Location	Effects of Collective Marketing
Sisay et al. [71]	Ethiopia	Market satisfaction through improved quality and quantity of products.
Ochieng et al. [53], Yami et al. [70]	Rwanda, DRC; Africa (review article)	Increases income and profit for smallholder farmers
Yami et al. [70], Aniah et al. [64]	Africa (review article), Ghana	Job opportunities for unemployed rural dwellers and the improvement of rural economic status
Abate et al. [61]; Ekepu et al. [63]	Ethiopia, Uganda	Enhancing smallholder farmers' knowledge on production and livestock rearing, which improves the quality of the products

Table 1. Cont.

References	Location	Effects of Collective Marketing
Bizikova et al. [42]	Review of articles across sub-Saharan Africa	Secure market and reduced transaction costs for smallholder farmers
Jordaan et al. [67]	South Africa	Poverty alleviation
Fischer and Qaim [56]	Kenya	Improved and balanced livelihood and social capital
Gyau et al. [62]; Sellare et al. [54]; Sikwela et al. [17]	Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, South Africa	Improved bargaining power for smallholder farmers and registered business owners
Selhausen [55] and Wanyama et al. [60]	Uganda, Africa (review of various African countries)	Access to production facilities and relevant input adoption for livestock production
Mutonyi [59] and Ochieng et al. [53]	Kenya, Rwanda and DRC	Smallholder farmers receive services and inputs from government and non-government organizations, as well as exposure to such organizations and the private sector
Abate et al. [61]	Ethiopia	Smallholder farmers are able to supply produce to formal and informal markets
Corsi et al. [50]	East Chad	Smallholder farmers understand and supply what is needed by the market
Ssajakambwe et al. [66]	Uganda	Information sharing on market needs and product prices

3.3. Deterrents to Collective Marketing Among Smallholder Farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa

Collective marketing is a strategy that involves different individuals interacting to achieve a common goal, making social capital vital for building strong relationships among them [72]. However, establishing such relationships is not always achievable due to discouraging behaviors and scenarios. Mistrust among smallholder farmers' organizations is a significant issue, stemming from the actions and experiences of other farmers [57]. Some smallholder farmers join these organizations primarily to access benefits while continuing to market their products individually as a means of differentiation [73,74]. This lack of trust limits smallholder farmers from sharing information with one another, which undermines the purpose of collaborating for greater knowledge and restricts their full participation. As a result, they remain stagnant and may eventually disband [75,76]. Additionally, this mistrust affects the reliability among smallholder farmers, hindering their ability to assist each other [68].

Many smallholder farmers still need education on various aspects of farming, including collective marketing. Martey et al. [77] emphasized that numerous smallholder farmers lack access to information-sharing platforms, resulting in insufficient information and knowledge. Mobile phones have become the primary source for sharing information; however, the requirement for funds to purchase airtime and data poses a challenge, as most smallholder farmers in rural areas often lack access to these resources along with reliable network coverage [78]. The absence of information and knowledge becomes a barrier for smallholder farmers to join any group, as they may be unaware of what they are committing to and the potential benefits [57,79]. The majority of smallholder farmers are located in remote areas, where transportation is limited, and infrastructure and resources are poor. This shortage of essentials complicates social interactions among smallholder farmers and hinders their ability to share or form groups effectively [70]. Gender is another factor that prevents smallholder farmers from participating in organizations. According to Selhausen [55], most women smallholder farmers prefer to work alone because they are not recognized by their male counterparts as hardworking or deserving. On the other hand, some women want to exclude men because they wish to hold leadership positions and assert dominance in their space. As a result, gender exclusivity creates a barrier between the two genders, leading men to believe that women are not fit to perform their duties, while women feel that they do not need men to succeed [80,81]. Furthermore, Huyer [82]

indicates that the perception that women have more active responsibilities than men in the household restricts their participation as active members of cooperatives.

Marketing is a challenging aspect of business that requires individuals to be confident in their approach. Therefore, it is essential for smallholder farmers to acquire marketing skills and strategies, such as collective action, to participate effectively. The lack of education and extension outreach limits farmers' understanding and involvement in collective marketing [9]. Tarekegn and Yosefe [83] indicate that in Ethiopia, smallholder poultry farmers showed interest in collective action; however, their groups did not succeed due to numerous conflicts and a lack of commitment within the cooperatives. Thaba [84] reports that this behavior results from a lack of knowledge about the benefits of collective action, as well as insufficient management and leadership skills that should have been taught to the farmers. Despite the absence of information and knowledge dissemination agents, such as extension officers, some smallholder farmers, particularly the elderly, continue to adhere to indigenous methods of production, which prevents them from collaborating with those who have adopted improved practices, let alone securing a market [85]. Inadequate infrastructure limits smallholder farmers' ability to work together and access the market [79]. When smallholder farmers collaborate to produce and market their products, their overall production can increase significantly. This necessitates large and adequate storage facilities to accommodate the products before they reach the market. The facilities must include refrigeration, sufficient water, and labor to ensure that the products arrive at the market in good condition. For many smallholder farmers, this poses a challenge, as they are already struggling with inadequate storage facilities, putting their increased yields at risk [86].

4. Conclusions

Smallholder farming is the backbone of many households in most African countries. Smallholder farmers work hard to sustain their livelihoods and eradicate poverty, but progress has been limited. One factor hindering smallholder farmers is the lack of market participation. This participation is crucial for generating income to sustain their livelihoods and grow their businesses. However, smallholder farmers have not been able to engage fully in the market due to the demands of market participation, a lack of knowledge, and insufficient access to markets. Collective marketing is a strategy that allows smallholder farmers to participate in the market and overcome the challenges they face. It not only facilitates market participation but also enhances their knowledge of both production and marketing. Through collective marketing, smallholder farmers can establish a strong business profile, increasing their chances of being recognized in the market. Smallholder farmers who have adopted collective strategies are showing growth in their production and market presence in countries like Kenya and Ethiopia. However, in South Africa, many smallholder farmer cooperatives have collapsed due to a lack of knowledge in group management, distrust among members, and insufficient support from extension officers. Some smallholder farmers do not engage in collective action or marketing due to a lack of resources and proper infrastructure. Being located in remote areas also makes it difficult for smallholder farmers to participate in the market due to distance and lack of transportation. Additionally, gender dynamics can pose challenges, as some individuals may be unwilling to have their group managed by someone of the opposite gender.

Agricultural extension assistance is greatly needed in many areas of Africa to disseminate information and knowledge. However, little action has been taken, as many smallholder farmers still lack knowledge and continue to struggle. In some cases, smallholder farmers resist adopting the practices suggested by extension officers, as they are attached to their traditional methods of farming and marketing, even when these methods prove to be unbeneficial. Smallholder farmers have certainly shown their love for their work, as they do not give up when faced with constant uncertainty in the industry. Their perseverance demonstrates a genuine desire for change in both production and marketing, leading to improvements in their livelihoods. Extension officers must be actively available to support smallholder farmers across all areas of farming. It is essential for

extension officers to continuously engage with smallholder farmers, as the market is always changing; this will allow them to update farmers on new developments and assist them in adapting. The access to and availability of information will pave the way for smallholder farmers, enabling them to know how and when to act to meet market demands. The presence of extension officers will not only facilitate information dissemination but will also help identify areas where farmers need resources and inputs, aiding them in accessing government support.

Additionally, smallholder farmers should take initiative by sharing knowledge among themselves through regular meetings and by exchanging contact information. Maintaining constant communication will foster trust among farmers and encourage the comfortable exchange of information. It will also reduce individual competition in the market, as they will better understand their collective actions. These meetings will create opportunities for idea sharing, allowing farmers to grow through the application of those ideas. Collective marketing will also mitigate resource deficiencies, enabling them to share the resources they have. Business registration is crucial for smallholder farmers to participate in the market and gain recognition as a collective. The group of smallholder farmers working together must be formalized, and group regulations must be established to maintain individual roles and responsibilities. This structure will help minimize conflicts and sustain trust among members. From this study, policymakers and extension officers should be able to understand the importance of imparting knowledge about collective action to smallholders. When adopted, this knowledge will enhance production, increase profits, and improve livelihoods. Consequently, poverty will be alleviated, and the rural economy will be strengthened.

5. Limitations

This review is confined to English-language publications and studies conducted from 2014 to the present day, which may have resulted in the exclusion of relevant research published before 2014. Additionally, the review primarily focused on the SSA region as a whole, rather than paying significant attention to the individual countries within it. As a result, the literature on collective marketing utilization by smallholder farmers in other countries outside of this region may have been overlooked.

6. Future Studies

In future, researchers can use this study to reference similar studies that conducted in sub-Saharan Africa. This study will provide them with recent findings to support their results.

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