In order to enhance farmers’ livelihoods and develop agroforestry-based enterprises, the shortcomings mentioned above should be documented and then addressed. A system of technical assistance and innovations is needed to help farmers overcome these issues. Rapid Market Appraisal (RMA) helps us to realize how valuable market information is. It is a tool to understand how a product or commodity flows to end users, and to understand how a commodity system is organized, operates, and works. People are competing for a smaller and smaller portion of the market, and farmers will begin to see why it is important to listen to customers and to carefully research your market.

**Getting More Access to Market Information**

In order to improve agroforestry productivity and profitability, farmers need to understand the market and how it works. This includes understanding market channels, customer preferences, and market dynamics. RMA helps farmers to identify market opportunities and develop strategies to seize them. It is important for farmers to listen to their customers and to carefully research their market.

**References**


**Getting More Access to Market Information**

Rapid Market Appraisal helps farmers to identify market opportunities and develop strategies to seize them. It is important for farmers to listen to their customers and to carefully research their market.
Marketing Research and Rapid Market Appraisal

Market research is series of activities of collection, processing and analysis of data and information about marketing systems. Markets are constantly evolving and changing, and therefore market research activities need to be conducted on a fairly regular basis. Market research can serve two main purposes:

Firstly, to enable market participants (farmers, trading enterprises and processing firms) to understand the market situation, and adapt their production and marketing strategies to improve their position in the market place. This type of analysis focuses on gathering knowledge and information about customer needs and also the activities and strategies being used by competitors. This type of market research is generally conducted by market participants themselves or by specialized consultancy firms hired for that purpose. Extension officers and development agencies working with resource-poor farmers may also undertake such research to help producers gain improved market access.

Secondly, market research can be conducted to guide interventions aimed at improving the efficiency of marketing systems and generating benefits to different participants. Such research can be conducted by a wide range of agencies, including donors, government ministries and departments, non-government organizations, and development projects. The focus of market research activities will depend on the objectives and mandate of the implementing agency. However, there will invariably be an emphasis on understanding constraints and bottlenecks, as well as opportunities for intervention. One of the primary goals of market research in this context is to find points in a market chain where improvements would have the broadest benefit, to actors in the chain, so called leverage points.

A Rapid Market Appraisal (RMA) as opposed to a formal sub-sector analysis provides a quick, flexible, and effective way of collecting, processing, and analyzing information and data about markets and marketing systems. RMAs are an efficient way to acquire knowledge about the marketing systems, with a view to informing production and marketing strategies, policy processes, and the design and implementation of relevant interventions.

What is Rapid Market Appraisal (RMA)?

A Rapid Market Appraisal (RMA) is an iterative process and interactive research methodology, which is used to better understand complex market systems in a short time (Adapted from Young 1994). It is a process for discovering market opportunities and how to capture them through focus on an entire value-adding chain.

RMA is a way to:
- obtain information about how a commodity sub-sector is organized, operates and performs;
- identify market constraints and opportunities;
- identify and diagnose policy and regulatory problems that require government (and donor) and private sector analysis, attention and action;
- recommend interventions in commodity system organizations and technologies.

Why Rapid Market Assessment?

Interest in Rapid Market Appraisal (RMA) grew out of a frustration with lengthy, costly and intensive formal surveys in developing countries that rarely generated any timely or sensible analysis.

RMA provides a quick but effective way to qualitatively understand target markets in new industries/regions or for new offerings, especially important for businesses seeking to broaden participation in the overall “money space.” In-depth interviews with influencers beyond our transactional customers help identify ways of creating pull-through demand that can help maintain our desired pricing levels. RMA often provides access to VAC influencers whom we do not engage as part of our traditional selling efforts.

The Key Steps

RMAs comprise a range of simple methods and tools for collecting quantitative as well as qualitative information. Such methods avoid the costs and delays of formal questionnaire surveys, which have often failed to provide timely and sufficiently detailed information.

Flexibility is one of the main attributes of RMAs. There are no fixed rules regarding the size and composition of the team involved in the RMA, which will depend on the resources available and the objectives of the market survey. Likewise, the number and type of markets visited, and the number and type of “key informants” selected, will vary according to the purpose of the RMA and the resources available. Similar comments can be made regarding the time required to collect and analyze information. There are five main steps to conduct RMA: (1) Set objectives; (2) Select team; (3) Do secondary research for background information; (4) Develop questionnaire and schedule interviews; (4) Train team and conduct interviews; (5) Meet to assess opportunities and formulate strategies and plans to capture value.

Agroforestry Innovation and Livelihood Enhancement, an Example

Our approach was to conduct market surveys using a rapid survey format modified from ILO (2000) and Betser (2001) to identify and understand: i) the agroforestry species and products that hold potential for farmers (their specifications, quantities, seasonality, etc.); ii) the market channels that are used and hold commercial potential for smallholder products; iii) the marketing problems faced by farmers and market agents; iv) the opportunities to improve the quantity and quality of farmers’ agroforestry products; and v) market integration (through vertical price correlation and price transmission elasticity) and efficiency.