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An Assessment of the Catholic Church's Role in Marketing of Agro-products in Rural Areas: A Case Study of Katikamu North Sub-county, Kasana-Luweero Diocese, Uganda.

This research aimed at finding out the Catholic Church's role in the marketing of agro-products in rural areas, using a case study of Katikamu North sub-county, Luweero district, Kasana-Luweero Diocese, with a view of improving on the marketing sector of development in combating the challenge of poverty in rural areas. The researcher used a sample of 96 participants selected by use of the simple random sampling technique and purposive sampling technique. The researcher used three data collection tools namely questionnaire, interview and observation to collect data.

The study found out that the Catholic Church is involved in a number of development programmes in Katikamu North sub-county. The Catholic Church has helped to mobilise communities, to form them into groups known as CBOs, to train them on sustainable agriculture techniques, to construct schools, and to operate programmes on health especially HIV/AIDS prevention. The findings also revealed that the Catholic Church is involved in marketing oriented initiatives. For example, in Katikamu North sub-county, the Catholic Church has built two markets, formed marketing associations, and has provided the associations with machinery that enhance marketing like moisture meter, weighing scales, and installation of a coffee hurler. These revelations are attributed to the mission of the Catholic Church of giving life to the full. In effect the findings have confirmed that the Catholic Church generally plays a historical role of offering moral guidance to individuals and institutions on matters pertaining to business oriented ventures, emphasising the dignity of a human person. In recent times especially in Uganda, the Catholic Church has also come up strongly on supporting rural farmers in marketing of agro-products. The findings have, however, contradicted the function of the Catholic Church in marketing agro-products in that most of the respondents showed a high level of ignorance of what the Catholic Church does in this area compared to other areas. This shows that the role of the Catholic Church in this area is not yet publically known in the society. Secondly, the findings revealed that there are still a lot of challenges in marketing agro-products namely: low quantity of products, high price fluctuations in markets, few marketing and collection centres, poor transportation systems and so forth. This is most likely because of the external factors that have affected the ongoing development like geographical location, high population versus resources, political instability, pests and diseases, low education levels, poor accountability and high corruption levels as well as the universalism of the Catholic Church which renders the local Catholic Church powerless in dealing with specific local social economic challenges. Furthermore, there were some limitations identified particularly regarding the Catholic Church's way of operation. These include the following: The Catholic Church uses more theoretical approaches rather than practical approaches in training communities; lack of markets and warehouses/collection centres; failure of the Catholic Church to use its structure/organs as marketing networks; failure of the Catholic Church to collaborate with the local government and other stakeholders in planning and implementing their activities; and limited involvement of research. Based on the findings, the researcher recommends that the Catholic Church should professionalise its staff especially the priests; the Church should invest in markets and warehouses; the Catholic Church should use its structures/organs as marketing networks; the Catholic Church should collaborate with the government and other NGOs in its development ventures; and finally, the Catholic Church should always engage in research for proper implementation of their development programmes.

Key Words: **Catholic Church, Marketing, Agro-products, Rural Areas, Kasana-Luweero Diocese.**