

**Alexander Saak (IFPRI, Washington D.C.)**

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(IFPRI, the Institute for Forecasting and Macroeconomic Research under the Cabinet of Ministers of Uzbekistan (IFMR), (WIUT), and CGIAR Project Facilitation Unit for CAC countries)

**Writing and publishing applied policy papers in Economics**

**a. Organization of the modern economics profession**

**When did economics profession appear?**

- around 1900 and afterwards with the advent of graduate programs
- most universities have a major, school, or department in which degrees in economics are awarded in the subject, whether in the liberal arts, business, or for professional study
- economists have backgrounds in mathematics, statistics, business, political science, law, sociology, or history

**Who employs economists?**

- academia,
- research centers
- as consultants in industry, including banking and finance
- government departments and agencies (Treasury, Central Bank, Bureau of Statistics, Department of Agriculture, Health, Food and Drug Administration, and many others)

The industries that employed the most economists in 2012 in the U.S.:

Federal government 28%

Management, scientific, and technical consulting services 19%

State and local government, excluding education and hospitals 17%

Scientific research and development services 10%

Finance and insurance 5%

**b. Global panorama of journals, conferences and research institutions**

**Journals by subject, level of technicality, audience**

- general interest journals (very technical)
- field journals: macroeconomics, econometrics, industrial organization, public economics, development, resource, international, financial, game theory, regulation, health, empirical methods, .... (very technical)
- interdisciplinary journals: management and operations, water resources, environment, accounting, consumer behavior, psychology, ...
- journals with shorter articles: economics letters, applied economics letters, ...
- general and field review journals: journal of economic literature, agricultural and resource economics reviews, ... (less technical)
- general and field review journals for interdisciplinary audience and practitioners: journal of economic perspectives, applied economic perspectives and policy, ... (not technical)
- methodology and pedagogical journals (for educators....)

## Journals by quality

- high quality journals (5% acceptance rate)
  - top 5-6 general interest journals
  - some top field journals
- good quality journals (10-20% acceptance rate)
  - most top field journals
- B and C journals (higher acceptance rate)

**Table 4. Social Science Citation Index (2011) Statistics for AJAE and Peer Journals**

Category/Journal	Citations	Impact Factor	5-Year Impact Factor	Cited Half-Life
<b>Agricultural &amp; Resource Economics Journals</b>				
<i>AJAE</i>	4,224	1.169	1.572	>10.0
<i>Agricultural Economics</i>	1,186	0.769	1.247	7.5
<i>Food Policy</i>	1,359	2.054	2.432	6.0
<i>J. Agricultural Economics</i>	763	1.551	1.796	8.0
<i>J. Agricultural &amp; Resource Economics</i>	482	0.710	0.803	9.6
<i>European Rev. Agr. Economics</i>	686	1.383	1.788	7.9
<i>Australian J. Agricultural &amp; Res. Econ.</i>	414	1.061	1.252	6.5
<i>Canadian J. Agricultural Econ.</i>	391	1.017	1.099	6.3
<i>Applied Economics Perspectives and Policy</i>	57	1.552	1.552	NA
<b>Environmental &amp; Resource Economics Journals</b>				
<i>Ecological Economics</i>	8,115	2.713	3.267	5.4
<i>J. Environmental Economics &amp; Mgmt.</i>	3,031	2.169	3.060	>10.0
<i>Land Economics</i>	1,946	1.300	1.798	>10.0
<i>Environment &amp; Resource Economics</i>	2,013	1.523	1.714	7.9
<i>Energy Economics</i>	3,012	2.344	2.713	4.6
<i>Rev. Environ. Economics &amp; Policy</i>	250	2.147	3.508	3.6
<b>Development &amp; International Economics Journals</b>				
<i>World Development</i>	5,817	1.537	2.180	9.4
<i>J. International Economics</i>	3,715	1.732	2.770	10.0
<i>J. Development Economics</i>	3,294	2.129	2.693	8.7
<i>Economic Dev't. &amp; Cultural Change</i>	1,304	0.980	1.452	>10.0
<i>World Bank Economic Review</i>	1,195	1.125	2.476	>10.0
<b>General Economics Journals</b>				
<i>American Economic Review</i>	26,525	2.693	4.076	>10.0
<i>Journal of Political Economy</i>	15,317	2.902	5.416	>10.0
<i>Review of Economics and Statistics</i>	7,639	2.664	3.812	>10.0
<i>J. Econometrics</i>	8,523	1.349	2.496	>10.0
<i>International Economic Review</i>	2,962	1.559	1.780	>10.0
<i>J. Public Economics</i>	5,213	1.459	2.196	9.6
<i>American Economic Journal: Applied Economics</i>	265	2.757	2.811	2.0
<i>American Economic Journal: Economic Policy</i>	126	1.939	1.980	1.7
<i>Economics Letters</i>	3,878	0.447	0.593	>10.0
<i>J. Business &amp; Economic Statistics</i>	2,919	1.779	2.442	>10.0
<i>J. Law &amp; Economics</i>	2,853	0.891	1.890	>10.0
<i>Economic Inquiry</i>	1,446	0.984	1.254	>10.0
<i>Oxford Economics Papers</i>	1,522	1.112	1.378	>10.0
<i>Applied Economics</i>	3,054	0.459	0.771	8.0

Source: Thomson ISI, *Journal Citation Reports* (2011).

Impact factor, 5-year impact factor, Cited half-life, Rankings .....  
 how research can be compared across disciplines and fields within economics

**Meetings:**

- annual association meetings (e.g., AEA, AAEA, regional and national economics associations)
- organized symposiums by universities, research centers, government agencies, industry
- variety of conferences based on economics field, topic, region, young economists
- workshops (more informal and subfield)

**Research institutions:**

- university economics department (with affiliated centers)
- think tanks (e.g., World Bank, IMF, IFPRI, many others...)
- government agencies (Economics departments at central banks, ...)
- industry: Microsoft (operations research), Google (auctions), IBM (computational economics)

**c. Scholarly writing:**

Writing and publishing a paper

- Identify an issue of sufficient importance (economic significance or technical issue)
- Initially a working paper that you are willing to share with others
- Feedback on first drafts is very useful
- Literature review is very useful to identify journals for submissions
- Reading papers in the journal you want to target and adopting their style is useful

Choosing a type of publication for intermediate results (as you work on your paper)

Types of documents in terms of the extent and rigor of peer-review:

- (1) Journal Articles (peer-reviewed except for conference proceedings)
- (2) Books (typically after published)
- (3) Collective Volume Articles (a range of review processes)
- (4) Dissertations (reviewed by the members of the graduate committee)
- (5) Working and Discussion Papers in Economics (not peer-reviewed)
- (6) Conference proceedings, selected presentations, posters (not peer-reviewed)
- (7) Book Reviews (not peer-reviewed)

1. Conference paper: can be short or normal length

advantage

- two-page abstracts is a good exercise and will be briefly reviewed by the organizers
- very helpful in the beginning: demonstrate your research interests
- feedback from organizers (at the review stage) and participants when you present
- make contacts and learn about who works in the field, find co-authors
- disseminate your results

disadvantage

- unless cited, unfortunately will be ignored rather soon
- not peer reviewed

2. Original research articles (the final product)

3. Literature survey articles

- cited more than average article

## **Some steps to a journal article**

### **1. Choose a journal**

- main topics covered, audience (theoretical, applied, interdisciplinary)
- read some articles in that journal
- read what the editors say they want the journal to be and what articles they are looking for
- guide for authors
- some journals focus more on how long it typically takes before the review process is complete
- typical range is 2-4 or 4-6 months
- desk rejection is typically based on fit and quality (journal's topics versus your paper's topic)

### **2. Submission**

- sometimes journals require a cover letter
  - typically following the formatting guidelines closely is not necessary but useful anyway
  - shorter papers may have an easier time getting in
  - also convince the reviewers and the editors that you put in effort (substance is of course more important)
- some tips (section headlines are not separated from the text, formatting, page numbers, paragraphs, make sure it is easy to read, notation that is easy to remember can be very important)
- simple and clear language (can be very important)
  - shorter sentences
  - some journals provide translation and language editing services
  - try to use standard phrases and follow the accepted style (useful to see how other authors write)

## **Structure and elements of an article:**

### **Cover page**

Title (a summary of the content using as few words as possible)

- says what problem the article studies and possibly what it finds
- try to avoid abbreviations
- often the title starts with the general issue and specifies what is studied (“Impact of Third-party Contract Enforcement in Agricultural Markets—A Field Experiment in Vietnam”)
- the first thing that the reader sees

**Authors** (if review is single-blind, not if double-blind)

**Abstract** (100 - 300 words, also important)

- will be very widely available (and will be read more often than the paper)
- brief summary of the problem, methods, and findings (often only findings)
- is used by other authors when citing your article
- is used by reviewers to verify that they got the main focus of the paper when they write a report

**Keywords** (3-6 words that describe the subfield(s) your article contributes to, used by journal website search engines, for indexing, to determine audience of interest)

We study the effect of alleviating the information asymmetry regarding product quality that is widespread in contracts between agricultural producers and buyers in developing countries. Opportunistic buyers may underreport quality levels to farmers to reduce the price that they have to pay. In response, farmers may curb investment, thereby negatively affecting farm productivity. In an experiment, we entitle randomly selected smallholder dairy farmers in Vietnam, who are contracted by a large company, to independently verify milk testing results. Results indicate that treatment farmers use 12% more inputs, and they also increase their output significantly. Some wider research and policy implications are discussed.

*Key words:* Contract farming, dairy production, developing countries, randomized controlled trial, information asymmetry, output quality, Vietnam.

*JEL codes:* C93, D82, O13, Q13.

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## Main text

**Introduction** (what your paper will study)

- background and why issue is important
- brief statement of the results
- literature review (how your article relates to the previous literature)
- 1.5 - 3 pages

Many smallholder farmers in developing countries have benefited from closer integration into global value chains in recent decades, but constraints in accessing high-value markets remain (Reardon et al. 2009). Contract farming, which has recently become more widespread, links farmers to output markets for high-value foods such as fruits, vegetables, meat, or milk (Birthal et al. 2005; Swinnen 2009; Reardon et al. 2009; Mergenthaler, Weinberger, and Qaim 2009; Bellemare 2012). When agreements between buying companies and selling farmers are complemented by schemes to provide inputs,

credit, or training, contract farming can also help to improve access to technology and overcome factor market inefficiencies (Masakure and Henson 2005; Minten, Randrianarison, and Swinnen 2009; Rao, Brümmer, and Qaim 2012).

While there are strong institutions to enforce contracts in developed countries, this is rarely the case in developing countries (Key and Runsten 1999; Kirsten and Sartorius 2002), and an environment of weak institutions can negatively affect both buyers and sellers of farm output. For example, buying companies that provide finance or inputs as part of a contract lose if farmers renege on the agreement by diverting inputs to other crops or side-selling their output on the spot market (Gow and Swinnen 1998; Bellemare 2010). On the other hand, farmers may lose out if the buying company has a non-transparent system of quality grading and thus the ability to manipulate prices. In this article, we focus on small-scale contract farmers who are negatively affected by information asymmetry and moral hazard resulting from weak institutions.

Since Akerlof's (1970) seminal work, the economics of information has received considerable attention. A relatively new and

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Christoph Saenger is an economist at the Office of the Chief Economist, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, London. Massimo Tortore is the Division Director of the Markets, Trade, and Institutions Division at the International Food Policy Research Institute, Washington DC. Matin Qaim is Professor of International Food Economics and Rural Development, Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Development, Georg-August-University of Göttingen, Germany. The authors thank Phi Van Lu Thi, Trang Tran, Angelina Viciosa, and Helger Soebens for their support in implementing the field experiment and carrying out the survey, as well as participants at the BREAD Conference 2012 at Yale for their helpful comments. We also thank two anonymous AJAE reviewers for very useful comments. The financial support of the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the German Research Foundation (DFG) is gratefully acknowledged.

**Analysis** in applied/empirical papers (how the analysis is executed)

- more details about the background/relevant facts (may not be necessary)
- theoretical model of how the outcome of interest is determined
- data sources and collection
- summary statistics
- study design (experimental design and implementation)
- identification strategy and econometric model
- estimation results
- robustness checks
- discussion
- policy implications
- 10-15 pages

**Conclusions** (what you have done in the paper, what the implications are, what is left to do)

- 0.5-2 pages
- brief summary of the issue
- brief summary of the main findings
- brief summary of limitations
- generalizability of the findings to other settings
- directions for future research

#### **Conclusions**

Contracting has become a widely embraced approach for facilitating supply chain relations between selling farmers and buying companies, especially in emerging markets for high-value agricultural products. Smallholders entering contractual relations with buyers of high-value products such as fruits, vegetables, meat, or milk often become highly specialized and derive a considerable share of their income from output sold under contract. However, a harmful asymmetry of information occurs if product quality attributes are observable to the buyer but not to the selling farmer. If buyers behave opportunistically and exploit this information asymmetry to increase their profit, output prices for producers are subject to risk, and expected prices are lower than in a situation with symmetric information. Farmers taking this into account will underinvest, that is, they may use suboptimal levels of input, which translates into lower output levels. This is a non-desirable outcome for both farmers and buyers.

In this study we have shown that third-party contract enforcement can be one way to mitigate the adverse effects of information asymmetry. Conducting a field experiment with dairy farmers in Vietnam, we found that the provision of third-party contract enforcement had a positive impact on input use (purchased fodder) and output levels (quantity of milk fat and total solids), ultimately translating into higher revenue and also higher household welfare for specific subgroups of the sample. While we carefully designed the intervention to retain the internal validity of the results, we also faced some limitations. Given the design of our intervention, we cannot fully avoid positive contamination of the control group, and thus may actually underestimate the treatment effects. While the post-experiment survey suggests that the intervention (which relied on the threat of selective double-checking rather than a comprehensive surveillance scheme) provided effective protection against cheating on the side of the buying company,

#### **References**

(most of the referenced articles are mentioned in the introduction and literature review sections)

## **Supplementary material**

(appendices with derivations, questionnaires, regressions that are alluded to but are not included in the main text, estimation and technical details, additional evidence ...)

**Tables and Figures** are often placed in the main text in the first submission

Some journals require

- bullet-point summary of the article
- suggested referees
- a preferred associate editor

## **Review process**

First round takes 2-6 months

Typically 1-2, sometimes 3 referees (not including AE in charge of your submission)

Referee reports are 1-3 pages long

- their summary of the article's contribution
- general comments
- specific comments

Editorial decision by the editor, co-editor, associate editor

- summary of the referees' reports
- editor's own opinion
- summary of what changes need to be made
- decision (rejection, weak revise and resubmit, minor revisions, accept)

Your prepare

- responses to each referee report
- cover letter: briefly describe how you responded the referee's and editor's comments
- often your responses to the referees' reports will be shared with all referees but your cover letter to the editor is not shared with the referees
- address each concern raised by all referees
- no constraints on the length of your responses (may include excerpts from the revised version)

Submit 2nd time

Same process (the article goes to the same referees)

Basically, repeat, but 3rd round is less likely: typically accept or reject after the 2nd round