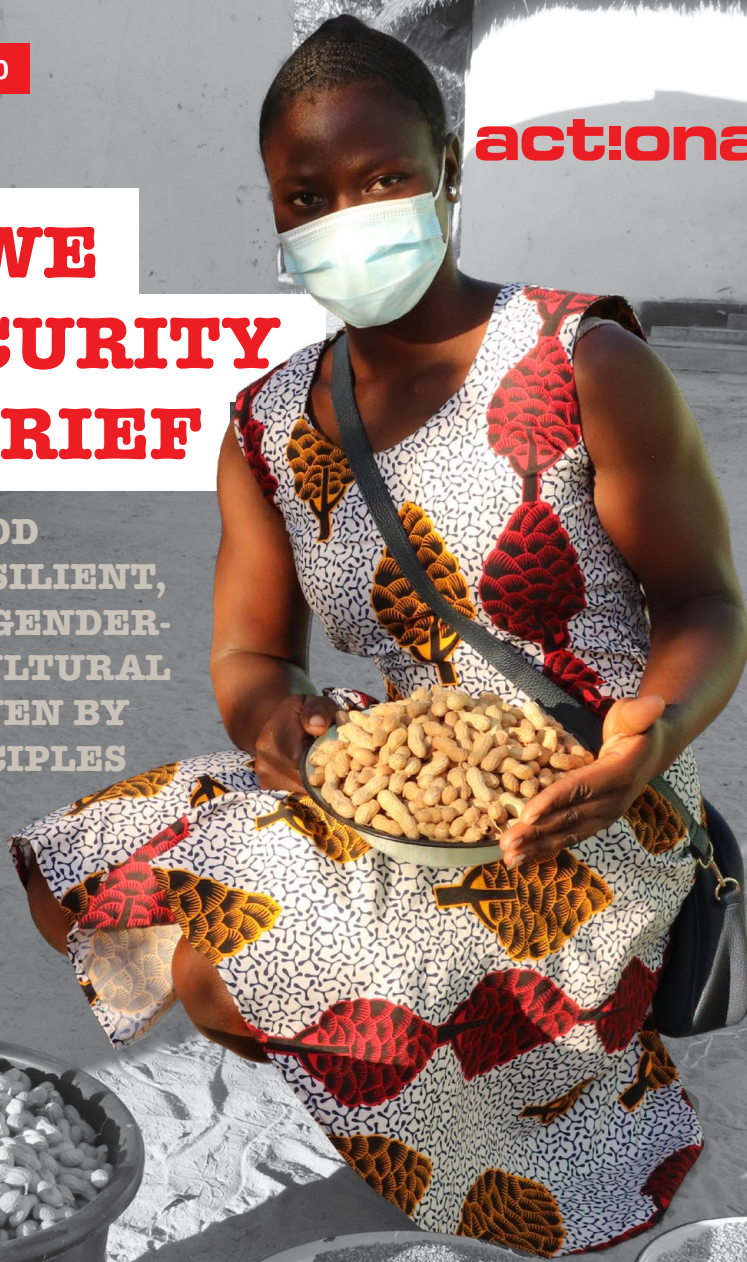


ZIMBABWE FOOD SECURITY POLICY BRIEF

RECOVERY FROM FOOD
CRISIS THROUGH RESILIENT,
ACCOUNTABLE AND GENDER-
RESPONSIVE AGRICULTURAL
DEVELOPMENT DRIVEN BY
AGROECOLOGY PRINCIPLES



INTRODUCTION

The impacts of climate change induced shocks such as Cyclones Idai and Kenneth and the worst drought experienced in the past three decades, have put Zimbabwe's food security in a precarious position and the worst in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region. The region has close to 44.8 million people estimated to be food insecure as of July 2020, representing an 67% increase from 2017 (26.9 people) and a jump of 10% from just a year ago (41.2 million people) (SADC 2020). Close to 7.7 million people in Zimbabwe were estimated to be food insecure as of July

2020, representing a 40% increase from 2019 (5.5 million people) (SADC 2020). Maize production dropped in 2019 to 770 000 tonnes from a high of 2.155 million tonnes in 2017. Wheat production dropped from 160 000 tonnes in 2017 to 94 700 tonnes in 2019 but picked to a high of 190 000 tonnes in 2020. Clearly, rainfed agriculture suffered more pointing to the need to invest more in mitigating against environment shocks. The Zimbabwe National Agricultural Policy Framework adopts agroecology¹ as the anchor to resilient and sustainable agriculture.

“The process of enhancing agricultural productivity and production must be anchored in sustainable production systems based on agroecology”

(Zimbabwe National Agricultural Policy Framework 2019 - 2030)

¹ Agroecology can be defined as a holistic system approach to agriculture and food systems based on a wide variety of technologies, practices, and innovations, including local and traditional knowledge as well as modern science (Zimbabwe National Agricultural Policy Framework).

Measures applied to help stop the spread of COVID-19 worsened the food security situation in Zimbabwe in 2020 and amplified pre-existing inequalities including access to productive assets by women, access to markets by smallholder farmers and the informal traders, among many others. In the short-term, Government's initial responses were targeted at saving human lives. In the medium to long-term, Government's efforts are targeted at building resilience in the agriculture and food


sector. The 2021 budget exemplify this strategy.

The many pathways that COVID-19 has impacted the food systems in Zimbabwe include (a) disruptions to the agriculture supply chains; (b) reduced household purchasing power; (c) social accountability in the agriculture sector; (d) resilience to climate shocks and disasters. These pathways are elaborated on in the next sub-sections.

ZIMBABWE 2021 NATIONAL BUDGET IN SUPPORT OF AGRICULTURE PLANS, AMONG OTHER MEASURES

Replace Command  **AGRICULTURE** with private sector funded **AGRICULTURE**;

Support **1.8 MILLION**  farmers through training for conservation **FARMING/ PFUMVUDZA/ INTWASA PROGRAMME**; and

Undertake revival and expansion of  **IRRIGATION SCHEMES**.

1.1 DISRUPTIONS TO AGRICULTURAL SUPPLY CHAINS

Food availability is about the physical existence of food. Availability of food is influenced by food production, food imports (including food aid), food exports and domestic food stocks. Disruptions to these supply chains have serious impact on food security. As alluded to above, maize production was affected by the drought conditions as well as the unstable macro-economic conditions prevailing in the country more so than the COVID-19 as the pandemic started when the crop had already been harvested. However, the impact may be more severe in the next growing seasons due in part to lack of or reduced or expensive inputs. To ameliorate this impact, the government had earlier adopted and is implementing the conservation farming / Pfumbvudza / Intwasa Programme to address low productivity, low production and low profitability of farming which negatively affect the food security situation in the country. The programme aims to diversify production from a monocrop (mainly maize) to traditional crops (e.g. small grains – sorghum, millet- and oilseeds (groundnuts, sunflower seeds)) and high valued crops such as soybeans, cotton and livestock



production. This is to avert the high food import bill that perennially costs the country in excess of US\$800 million annually.

1.2 REDUCED HOUSEHOLD PURCHASING POWER

Household purchasing power is directly linked to access to food. Access is ensured when households have enough resources to obtain food in sufficient quantity, quality and diversity for a nutritious diet.

An increase in food prices, usually in response to shortages due to reduced availability, has a negative impact on household purchasing power. The loss of income as a result of unemployment or restricted market access, particularly for informal traders and smallholder farmers – as often seen during disasters such as COVID-19 – reduces a household's purchasing power and therefore its ability to access adequate food and to invest into future agricultural activities. Reduced investment due

While the 2021 Budget commendably proposes an increase in the allocation of funding to the agriculture sector at ZWL\$46.26 billion, this only makes up about 11% of the total expected expenditure by Government, down from 16% in 2020. This allocation, while meeting the Zimbabwe Government's commitment to African Union 2014 Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods of 10%, the reduced trend may negate the expected improvements in the agricultural sector. Undoubtedly, COVID-19 saw the diversion of funding to dealing with saving lives, but the upholding of social accountability is critical for the food security of the country.



The importance of consistent and sufficient public investment (including in social infrastructure such as rural roads, water, energy, connectivity) and accountable governance in areas including health services, domestic food security, and social protection systems is undoubted. Long-term investment in social safety mechanisms – beyond short-term humanitarian assistance – is required, including the expansion of universal social protection, and universal cash and food transfers.

Effective short- and long-term responses to building resilience in the country's food systems must address the factors which cause vulnerability to shocks and stresses. One such approach is agroecology which now anchors the Zimbabwe National Agricultural

Policy Framework. Agroecology is an approach that embraces science and social practices including horizontal spreading of knowledge from farmer to farmer or among other actors². The five phases that make agroecology transformative are (a) increasing input use efficiency (e.g. through technical support by extension services – the provision of technical support for enhanced productivity); (b) substituting conventional inputs and practices with agroecological alternatives (e.g. the use of organic fertilisers); (c) redesigning the agroecosystem on the basis of a new set of ecological processes (e.g. the resizing of farming land); (d) re-establishing a more direct connection between producers and consumers (e.g. the re-establishment of the Zimbabwe Agricultural Commodity Exchange); and (e) building a new global food system based on participation, localness, fairness and justice (social inclusiveness). Ultimately, upholding of social accountability through sound public resource management, inclusive and gender-responsive decision-making, and effective government oversight creates better economic conditions from which individuals and communities can draw livelihoods.

RECOMMENDATIONS TOWARDS BUILDING RESILIENT, ACCOUNTABLE AND GENDER-RESPONSIVE FOOD SYSTEMS IN ZIMBABWE

Effective and long-lasting responses to the impacts of climate change and other disasters on the food security situation in Zimbabwe – made obvious by the COVID-19 crisis – call for transformation in the current agricultural approaches. The need to ensure robust and purposeful national investment towards building resilience e.g. through supporting agroecological approaches, is recognised in the Zimbabwe National Agricultural Policy Framework. In support of these efforts, this Policy Brief recommends:



1. In the short-term:

Expansion of sustained investment into local social services (in health (e.g. building new health centres, acquisition and installation of new hospital equipment, recruitment of additional health workers); education; and social protection (including social safety nets such as harmonised social cash transfers, health assistance, and distribution of farming inputs through the Presidential Input Scheme); effective stakeholder participation (inclusiveness) and improved extension services. Further domestic sources of revenue should be opened up through progressive tax reforms and expansionary macro-economic policies.

2. In the Medium to Long-Term:

Climate proofing of agriculture so as to ensure the resilience of food systems by investing in sustainable agriculture and rural development grounded on scaling out and scaling up agroecological initiatives as anchors for improved food availability and household purchasing power. This investment should include, but not be limited to:

2.1. Support innovative agricultural research and development as well as the implementation of alternatives to hybrid seeds and chemically intensive agriculture such as: (i) integrated pest management (ii) use of community-based seed systems (iii) improvement of soil fertility through increasing soil organic matter, and (iv) diversification of farmer support programmes and the redirection of funds towards the adoption of agroecological practices.

2.2. Promoting the creation of women and youth led farmer group businesses using agroecological principles to produce and facilitate transformation to profitable and viable businesses. Similarly, support farmer owned group businesses in value addition, branding, packaging and adherence to safety standards for possible integration into local, regional and international markets

2.3. Align national investments in agriculture with farmers' own priorities and focus on financing diversified smallholder support programmes such as: extension services, research, climate change adaptation and financing, input support (including development of local – OPV – seed and the updating of the national seed policy) and improve farmers' access to finance and market.

2.4. Build human and physical capacities by ensuring that women and youth access land for undertaking viable crop and livestock enterprises.

2.5. Develop a dynamic rural agriculture sector through supporting the development of robust rural non-farm enterprise systems, as well as providing adequate rural infrastructure including roads, energy, water, and information and communication technology (ICT). This should emphasise support for the development of agro-processing in rural areas, closest to where products are produced.

2.6. Fulfill the Malabo Declaration 2014 commitments and progressively allocate budgets to agriculture that efficiently and effectively sustain annual

agricultural GDP growth of at least 6%. Furthermore, fulfil national commitments to reach Government's target of 1.8 million smallholder farmers through the Pfumvudza/Intwasa programme which promotes agroecology principles and the farming of small grains.

3. In the Long-Term

Decentralisation of power to local communities (Community Based Adaptation), with a focus on women-led and youth-led accountability mechanisms, for their full participation in the formulation and implementation of policies and programmes that affect them, as well as improve collaborative competences through capacity building.

PICTURE CREDITS

Cover picture:

Mavis Govha, a farmer is a member of the Zimbabwe Smallholder Organic Farmers ZIMSOFF who is growing small grains crops which are drought resistant

Picture 2:

Synoria Mambure, a farmer from Mbire in her field where she is practicing conservation agriculture supported by the Zimbabwe Resilience Building Fund

Picture 3:

Small grain seed from a seed bank for Masvingo women farmers as part of seed retention supported by Fambidzanayi Permaculture Centre

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