



INITIATIVE ON  
Diversification in East  
and Southern Africa

## ZAMBIA AGRICULTURAL POLICY PROFILE

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The [CGIAR Initiative on Diversification in East and Southern Africa](#) aims to help smallholders transition to sustainably intensified, diversified, and derisked agri-food systems based on maize in 12 ESA countries. Specifically, it seeks to enable 50,000 value chain actors, including farmers (at least 40% women, 40% youth), to adopt climate-smart maize-based intensification and diversification practices and one million to access digital agro-advisory services. Emphasizing the role of the private sector in driving such transformation, UU targets to support at least 30 start-ups and SMEs.

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## 1. Introduction

This paper aims to provide an overview of Zambian policies related to agriculture and climate adaptation in preparation for the Zambia National Policy Dialogue, scheduled for 18 August 2022 in Lusaka, Zambia. The dialogue is a joint programme with CGIAR Initiative on Diversification of East and Southern Africa led by International Water Management Institute (IWMI) Southern Africa, the Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN) South Africa, and Agricultural Consultative Forum (ACF) Zambia. The paper includes an overview of the economic and administrative profile of the country and a descriptive overview of the agricultural and climate policies that are expected to be critically debated at the Dialogue.

## 2. Country Overview

Zambia is a land-locked country located in Southern Africa and shares borders with eight (8) Southern and East African countries; Malawi and Mozambique in the east, Angola in the west, Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe in the south, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Tanzania in the north. The country is a member of the African Union (AU) and belongs to the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) and the Common Market for East and southern Africa (COMESA). Zambia has a total area of 752,618 square kilometers of which 743,318 square kilometers (98.8%) is land surface and 9,220 square kilometers (1.2%) is covered by water ([www.cia.gov](http://www.cia.gov)). Geographically, Zambia is divided into ten (10) provinces and 116 districts. Zambia's population was estimated at 17.9 million in 2020 ([www.zamstats.gov.zm](http://www.zamstats.gov.zm)) with an annual growth rate of 2.8%.<sup>1</sup>

Agriculture plays an important role in Zambia's economic development. The country's Seventh National Development Plan (7NDP) rates the agricultural sector as the fourth largest contributor to GDP and the largest contributor to employment. The key agriculture indicators are summarised below.

Table 1: Key Agricultural Indicators in Zambia

Description of Indicator	Year	Indicator Value
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing Value Added Annual Growth (%)	2020	17.2
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing as % of GDP	2020	2.73
Real GDP Growth Rate (%)	2020	-2.8
Government Expenditure in Agriculture as a % of total expenditure	2019	4.3
Percentage of the people employed in agriculture	2019	49.64
Agricultural Exports as % of Total Exports	2020	7.0
Agricultural exports as (%) of NTEs	2020	29.1
Percentage of stunted children under five years old	2018	34.6
Percentage of underweight children under five years old	2020	12
Percent of the people below the national poverty line	2015	54.4

Source: Data Compiled from Various Sources

## 3. Agricultural Production and Diversification Potential

The agricultural sector is the backbone of Zambia's rural economy and, hence, the country's most important sector, even though it has been underperforming. Zambia has an estimated 74 million hectares of land, 47

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<sup>1</sup> [www.zamstats.gov.zm](http://www.zamstats.gov.zm)

percent of which is agricultural land, although only 15 percent is currently under cultivation.<sup>2</sup> Agriculture employs 56 percent of the population, serves the critical function of buffering employment volatility in other sectors, and remains key to ensuring food and nutrition security particularly for financially vulnerable communities.

The agriculture sector provides a livelihood to more than 70 percent of Zambia's population. In terms of performance, in the ten-year period between 2011 and 2020, agricultural growth averaged 0.4 percent while its share of GDP was 5.8 percent. Agricultural sector growth has been below the national population growth rate of 2.8 percent, yet it is the mainstay of a larger proportion of the population. Implicitly, the incomes of households that are dependent on this sector have been declining. The sector is characterised by low productivity, limited mechanisation and is largely rainfall dependent.

Promoting the agricultural sector is one of the government's strategies to diversify the economy from over-reliance on traditional products and exports, including copper and cobalt. Despite high biophysical potential to diversify agricultural production, maize remains the dominant crop, covering approximately 2.7 million hectares. About 90 percent of smallholders grow maize as their main crop. Maize is exported to neighbouring countries such as Malawi, Zimbabwe, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The non-traditional crops with potential and prioritised for investment as alternatives to maize include cotton, coffee, tobacco, sugarcane, pineapples, cashew nuts, cassava, and horticultural/floricultural crops.

The livestock sub-sector accounts for approximately 35 percent of the agricultural and 7 percent of the total GDP. Investment opportunities exist in beef production, small ruminants, poultry production, pig production, dairy production, production and processing of meat, dairy products, and animal feed.

Agriculture is predominantly rain-fed and, therefore, its performance is determined by rainfall patterns, though Zambia has access to 40 percent of southern Africa's freshwater water resources. The country has massive irrigation potential, estimated at 430,000 hectares, of which only 100,000 hectares is developed and mostly by large scale commercial enterprises.<sup>3</sup> The government sees opportunities in investment for irrigation expansion.

Zambia has a great potential to become the breadbasket of southern Africa since it often yields a surplus in grains. However, Zambia's 1.5 million smallholder farmers—producers of 80 percent of the domestic supply of food—are extremely vulnerable to climate stresses and shocks since they depend on rainfed agriculture.<sup>4</sup> Other issues faced by smallholders include low grain productivity and thereby income due to limited access to high-quality inputs, financial services, post-harvest storages, technologies, markets, and information. Especially, women and the youth, despite playing a critical role in production, face challenges in accessing markets for their commodities. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has further worsened access to inputs, extension services, and markets.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.abghq.com/downloads/Zambia.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> [https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/diaepcb201008\\_en.pdf](https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/diaepcb201008_en.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [https://climateknowledgeportal.worldbank.org/sites/default/files/2019-06/CSA%20\\_Profile\\_Zambia.pdf](https://climateknowledgeportal.worldbank.org/sites/default/files/2019-06/CSA%20_Profile_Zambia.pdf)

#### 4. Impact of Climate Change in Zambia

Zambia continues to be adversely impacted by climate events such as droughts, flash and seasonal floods and extreme temperatures that threaten the socioeconomic development agenda of the country. Since 1960, mean annual precipitation countrywide has been decreasing by 1.9 mm, most notably in the summer months, and the growing season for crops has been shortening. Over the same period, more than nine million Zambians have been affected by major droughts and major floods.

These extreme weather events have exacerbated the poverty of over 60 percent of the population, particularly in rural areas that are dependent on rain-fed agriculture for their livelihoods. The rural poor have experienced crop failures and the death of their livestock, which has caused them to turn to other natural resources like forests for survival.

#### 5. Food Security

After years of impressive economic performance and achieving lower middle-income status in **2011**, Zambia's economic performance has stalled in recent years. **More than half** of its population still lives below the poverty line. The COVID-19 pandemic put further strain on the economy that was already weakened by recurrent climate shocks, falling copper prices and unsustainable fiscal policies, undermining government's efforts to deliver social protection, alleviate poverty, reduce malnutrition and achieve zero hunger.

According to the World Food Programme (WFP), Zambia's malnutrition rates remain among the highest in the world. **Forty-eight percent** of the population is unable to meet the minimum calorie intake requirement and **more than one-third of children under five** years are stunted. Limited knowledge of nutrition, poor feeding practices and limited and unhealthy diets are the main impairing detrimental factors.

While **food production at the national level** routinely exceeds domestic requirements, the availability of and access to adequate nutritious food remains a challenge for many poor households, which is compounded by the country's over-reliance on maize. Obesity and being overweight, especially among women, is a growing problem attributed to a high consumption of unhealthy food.

Zambia's **1.5 million** smallholder farmers producing most of the domestic food supplies are extremely vulnerable to climate shocks, as they predominately depend on rain-fed agriculture. Furthermore, they face limited access to **high quality inputs, climate and post-harvest management information, sustainable markets and financial services**. While women constitute 80 percent of food producers, they benefit less than men from available resources and have smaller holdings.

Zambia currently hosts about **76,000 refugees and asylum seekers** across the country. **Over 18,000 refugees** reside in Mantapala Refugee Settlement. Most of them (80 percent) are women and children from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and require humanitarian assistance to survive.

Since 1967, the World Food Programme (WFP) has been a strategic partner to the government for the objective of zero hunger. In recent years, this objective has driven innovation and positive change in the areas of **disaster risk management, smallholder farmer support, school feeding and social protection**. WFP is currently focusing its efforts on **strengthening national systems and capacities** and providing support for programmes and coordination in pursuit of a **food-secure Zambia by 2030**.

## 6. The Status of Zambia's Agricultural and Food Policies

Zambia has adequate policy and planning frameworks to support the agricultural sector. The country has a national agricultural policy covering crop, fisheries, and livestock sub-sectors. The country also has a separate livestock development policy. There is also a policy on food and nutrition currently under revision. Zambia has, since 2001, revived development goals that guide sector plans. The current development plan, the 8<sup>th</sup> National Development Plan is for the period 2022 to 2026. In addition, the country is currently developing the second generation of the National Agricultural Investment Plan (NAIP) under the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP). This document, according to the current government, will be a comprehensive agriculture support programme that will be implemented during the 2022/2023 farming season. The programme will go beyond the provision of inputs through the electronic agro-input system to include extension service support, support for value addition, storage and logistics. Further, the programme will provide for better targeting and equity for all beneficiaries. Tree crop production and irrigation development will also be promoted.

All of these policies, plans and strategies are aligned to the National Long-term Vision 2030 (Vision 2030), with the overarching goal of becoming a prosperous middle-income nation by 2030.

Table 2 below shows the current development plans, strategies, and policies relevant to the agricultural sector in Zambia.

**Table 1: Policies and Strategies for Agriculture and Food Security in Zambia**

Policy name (official) Policy description	Responsible institution(s)	Main policy objective	Policy description
<i>Zambia National Policy on Climate Change</i>	<i>Ministry of Green Economy and Environment</i>	Adaptation & Mitigation	<i>The Policy provides a framework for the implementation of existing, and future initiatives and opportunities in a more coordinated manner, for sustainable development. It intends to fully integrate climate change into the country's development plans: also provides a framework for attracting finance and investments to achieve sustainable development goals. It proposes measures for addressing three key issues, namely (i) Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction, (ii) Mitigation and Low-Emission Development-Related Actions, and (iii) Crosscutting Issues</i>
<i>Second National Agricultural Policy</i>	<i>Ministry of Agriculture, and Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock</i>	Economic Development	<i>The Policy covers measures to specifically deal with three sub-sectors, namely, crops, fisheries, and livestock, including cross-cutting issues.</i>
<i>Forests Act, 2015 (Act No. 4 of 2015)</i>	<i>Ministry of Green Economy and Environment and Dept. of Forestry</i>	Economic Development	<i>The Act to provide for the establishment and declaration of forests, joint forest management areas, botanical reserves; provide for the conservation and use of forests and trees for the sustainable management of forest ecosystems and biological diversity; establish the Forest Development Fund; provide for the implementation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna, the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Convention to Combat Desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, and any other relevant international agreement to which Zambia is a party.</i>
<i>National Land Policy</i>	<i>Ministry of Lands and</i>	Economic Development	<i>The policy aims to streamline land administration and management services to improve the country's land sustainability for social and economic land development.</i>

	<i>Natural Resources</i>		
<i>National Disaster Management Policy</i>	<i>Office of the Vice President</i>	Mitigation	<i>The Policy provides direction for disaster management and definition of parameters within which the Disaster Management System in the country will operate. It also outlines and aligns the different roles and responsibilities of various actors, to ensure efficient utilisation of resources.</i>
<i>Zambia's Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) to the 2015 Agreement on Climate Change</i>	<i>Ministry of Green Economy and Environment</i>	Reducing Air Pollution	<i>The document presents the Country's Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) to the 2015 Agreement on Climate Change in response to decisions adopted at the 19th and 20th sessions of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). It promotes the development of a low carbon and climate-resilient development pathway.</i>
<i>Food Reserve (Designated Commodities) Regulations, 2015 (S.I. No. 39 of 2015)</i>	<i>Ministry of Agriculture and Food Reserve Agency</i>	Economic Development	<i>These Regulations designate commodities as essential commodities for the purposes of Section 6 of the Food Reserve Act of 1995.</i>
<i>The Food Reserve Act of 1995 &amp; 2020</i>	<i>Ministry of Agriculture and Food Reserve Agency</i>	Economic Development	<i>The Food Reserve Act of 1995 was promulgated for the purpose of establishing the Food Reserve Agency (FRA) in 1996, which replaced the operations of two former agricultural institutions, namely the National Agricultural Marketing Board (NAMBOARD) and the Zambia Cooperative Federation (ZCF). The FRA Act of 2020 defines the functions of FRA, re-constituted its Board of Directors, and repealed and replaced the Food Reserve Act of 1995.</i>
<i>National Gender Policy</i>	<i>Office of the Vice President</i>	Economic Development	<i>The Policy aims to ensure the attainment of gender equality in the development process by redressing the existing gender imbalances. It also provides for equal opportunities for women and men to actively participate and contribute to their fullest ability and equitably benefit from national development.</i>
<i>The Agricultural Credits Act, 2010</i>	<i>Ministry of Agriculture, and Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock</i>	Economic Development	<i>It provides for the establishment of the Warehouse Licensing Authority and its functions and powers; facilitates the borrowing of money on the security of charges created on farming stock and other agricultural assets; provides for the registration of charges; provides for the certification of warehouses; provides for the issuance and negotiation of warehouse receipts and the rights conferred by warehouse receipts; provides for the rights and obligations of warehouse operators; and repeals and replaces the Agricultural Credits Act, 1995.</i>
<i>Agricultural Credits (Appointment of Authorised Agency) Order, 2014 (S.I. No. 59 of 2014)</i>	<i>Ministry of Agriculture, and Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock</i>	Economic Development	<i>This regulation provides the authority for the Zambia Commodity Exchange (ZAMACE) Limited's appointment as the authorised agency for the purpose of Section 6 of the Agricultural Credits Act, 2010.</i>
<i>Control of Goods (Import and Export) (Agriculture) Regulations (Cap. 421)</i>	<i>Ministry of Agriculture, and Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock</i>	Economic Development	<i>It empowers the Minister to make Statutory Orders prohibiting, restricting or otherwise controlling the import into or the export from Zambia of controlled goods, i.e. any goods specified in the Schedule or any class of such goods. It prescribes the terms and conditions subject to which controlled goods or any class of such goods may be imported into or exported from the country. Controlled goods include vegetables, seeds for planting, manure, fruit, fish, (game) meat, eggs, oils and vaccines, toxins, sera and analogous biological products.</i>



<i>Animal Health Act, 2010</i>	<i>Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock</i>	Economic Development	<i>It provides for the appointment of the Director responsible for veterinary services and other staff and defines their powers and functions; provides for the prevention and control of animal diseases; provides for the quarantine of animals; regulates the importation and exportation of animals, animal products, animal by-products, articles and animal feed; establishes the Animal Disease Control Fund; and repeals and replaces the Stock Diseases Act, 1961.</i>
<i>Animal Health (Livestock Cleansing) Order, 2014 (S.I. No. 16 of 2014)</i>	<i>Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock</i>	Economic Development	<i>The regulation specifies livestock cleaning areas for purposes of the Animal Health Act, 2010 and requires owners of livestock that is infested with ticks to carry out cleansing of all livestock at regular intervals as prescribed.</i>
<i>Animal Health (Control and Prevention of Animal Disease) Order, 2014 (S.I. No. 24 of 2014)</i>	<i>Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock</i>	Economic Development	<i>The regulation requires owners of an animal to vaccinate the animal against the diseases in the areas specified in the Schedule. A veterinary assistant shall, where an animal is vaccinated in accordance with this Order, enter the vaccination dates and farmer cards into the stock register.</i>
<i>National Wetlands Policy</i>	<i>Ministry of Green Economy and Environment</i>	Economic Development	<i>It provides a framework for coordinated action for sustainable wetland management to promote the conservation and wise use of wetlands and wetland resources for the benefit of present and future generations.</i>
<i>Zambia Vision 2030</i>	<i>Ministry of Finance and National Planning</i>	Economic Development	<i>It is the guide for all development efforts, the commitment and dedication of all Zambians in order to attain the country's long-term vision of becoming a prosperous middle-income nation by 2030.</i>
<i>National Livestock Development Policy</i>	<i>Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock</i>	Economic Development	<i>It focuses on promoting sustainable livestock production and productivity, promoting standards and quality of livestock and its products, and strengthening livestock research and development. It also promotes sustainable management of farm animal genetic resource, improves animal welfare and the livestock production environment to enhance animal health service delivery, as well as improving the management of livestock and water resources.</i>
<i>National Food and Nutrition Policy</i>	<i>Ministry of Health: National Food and Nutrition Commission</i>	Economic Development	<i>It provides policy guidelines for food and nutrition for the country.</i>
<i>Food and Nutrition Act, 2020 (No. 3 of 2020)</i>	<i>Ministry of Health</i>	Food Nutrition and Governance	<i>It provides for the implementation of a national food and nutrition programme; upholding the existence of the National Food and Nutrition Commission and redefining its functions; establishes the Board of the Commission and defines its functions; reconstitutes the Board of the Commission and redefines its functions; establishes the Food and Nutrition Coordinating Committee and provides for its functions; repeals and replaces the National Food and Nutrition Commission Act, 1967.</i>
<i>National Policy on Environment (NPE)</i>	<i>Ministry of Green Economy and Environment</i>	Mitigation	<i>It provides a comprehensive policy framework for effective natural resource utilisation and environmental conservation</i>
<i>National Forestry Policy</i>	<i>Ministry of Green Economy and Environment</i>	Mitigation	<i>It aims to protect the environment, as well as manage and develop natural resources (including forestry).</i>

## 7. Policy Development and Formulation Process

Policies in Zambia are formulated in a transparent and predictable manner by various stakeholder consultative forums and policy briefs. Acknowledgments in both the Second National Agricultural Policy and the National Livestock Development Policy point to the fact that the formulation of these policies included wide stakeholder consultation processes at national, provincial, district and institutional levels. Generally, policies are formulated every ten years and reviewed every five years through the assessment of the associated policy implementation plans.

Rules, laws, regulations and legal provisions to guide policy implementation are in force. Where gaps exist, policies will include a recommendation for enactment of appropriate laws or, Statutory Instruments (SI's) are issued to address such gaps. (Zambia Agricultural Sector Institutional Capacity Assessment Report, 2021, Ministry of Agriculture/AGRA)

## 8. Key Issues around the country's Agricultural Policies

- a) **Policy Making Process:** The policy making processes in the country are generally predictable and transparent. Policy making responsibilities are clear as described in the Cabinet Handbook and the PAC guidelines on policy and strategy formulation. Evidence-based planning is usually adopted, however, in some cases, evidence is either unavailable or political considerations override the evidence.
- b) **Enabling Environment:** The rules, laws and regulations guiding policy implementation are in place. Where gaps exist, policy documents will include a call for enactment of specific laws to support policy implementation. In some cases, Statutory Instruments (SI's) are used to support policy implementation. The Zambian Parliament has the capacity to legislate agriculture-specific laws. Through the Committee on Agriculture, Lands and Natural Resources, Parliament consults experts and stakeholders and gathers evidence to support any proposed legislation on agriculture. Some laws are, however, out-dated and require repeal and replacement in line with relevant contemporary trends in the sector. These include the Plant Breeders' Act No. 18 of 2007, the Fertilizer and Feed Act No. 13 of 1994 and the Agricultural Land Act No. 12 of 1995. Despite these Acts being considered critical to the implementation of specific policies, other critical laws, such as the Agricultural Marketing Bill, have been slow in reaching enactment.
- c) **Implementation Capacity and Delivery:** The Ministries responsible for agriculture, fisheries, and livestock, have representation at national, provincial, district and sub-district levels. Although both Ministries have qualified staff, some specialised and commodity-specific skills are limited. In addition, personnel and inadequate quality infrastructure and equipment are some of the factors limiting the delivery of services in the sector.
- d) **Sector Coordination:** Zambia has frameworks for Inter-Ministerial coordination, through the Cluster model introduced under the Seventh National Development Plan. However, there is a weak interface between complementary policies and government institutions resulting in incoherent policy implementation. In addition, it has been observed that there is fragmented programme implementation by development partners and other players in the sector. Sector coordination at subnational levels is constrained by underfunding and this leads to failure by public and private sector players to interact regularly.

- e) **Mutual accountability:** Zambia has a sector performance framework which is consistent with the CAADP Results Framework. Further, there is capacity for independent research and policy analysis among the various Think Tanks in the country. However, the following limitations exist:
  - ✓ Lack of a comprehensive and more robust sector information management system, and inconsistent data capturing and processing.
  - ✓ Inadequate funding of mutual accountability processes.

### 9. Recommendations for Action.

The following interventions are recommended for effective development of the agricultural sector in Zambia:

- a) Annual audits of the sector policies and legislation and reviews of out-dated policies and laws.
- b) Improve funding to the delivery organs, especially at the sub-national levels.
- c) Invest in programme delivery infrastructure in a defined order of priority.
- d) Conduct cost-benefit analysis of alternative interventions to avoid biased support for specific crop enterprises.
- e) Support and strengthen sector coordinating institutions such as the Agricultural Consultative Forum.
- f) Review and strengthen the M&E systems in the ministries responsible for agriculture, fisheries, and livestock.
- g) Develop and implement systems and mechanisms for regular sector reviews.

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