



2021 FARMERS MANIFESTO.

THEME: PUSHING FOR AN AGRICULTURE SECTOR THAT EMBRACES RURAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, FARMER SEED AND FOOD SOVERIGNTY AND ADDRESSES HOUSEHOLD FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY

1. BACKGROUND

There are two paradigms for agriculture, food, and health, based on two paradigms of knowledge: one being systems based, the other being self-centred. The first, based on a systems approach, recognises the interrelationships between how we produce, process and distribute our food. It embodies the idea that human beings are not separated from nature, but are part of it and of its complex living processes. This system recognises the self-organising capacity, from cells, to our bodies, and planet earth. Planetary health and our health are one health. In this perspective, ecological degradation and disease are seen as an impairment in this capacity of self-organisation, self-regulation, self-healing and renewal of living systems. In the ecological paradigm, agriculture, food production and health are internal inputs into systems, which have an internal capacity and potential to produce what they need. The earth, food and our bodies are interconnected living systems. The second paradigm is mechanistic and reductionist, based on seeing human beings as separate and apart from nature. Nature, food and our bodies are viewed as One Planet One Health. The mechanical worldview is static, non dynamic, non interactive, divisive and separating. It insulates itself from a living and lived reality, creates artificial and abstract constructions which are disconnected from reality.

1.1 AGRICULTURE IN ZAMBIA

The industrial agriculture model has profoundly altered the quality of food coming from the countryside of the world. Food systems, starting from the way our food is grown, can be the basis of human health and wellbeing or one of the most important direct and indirect risk factors. Today, industrialisation and globalisation characterise the entire food system in all its phases, influencing food, lifestyle, health and wellbeing in general, and are driving a global dietary transition in which traditional diets are replaced by diets higher in refined sugars, refined fats, oils and meats.

Agriculture in Zambia plays an important role in the economy and has contributed around 20 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in recent years and about 12 percent of national export earnings. Agriculture employs nearly 70 percent of the labor force and remains the main source of income and employment for most of the people living in rural areas.

Presently, food production systems and the environment are engaged in a mutually damaging relationship. In Zambia Agriculture and food processing systems are degrading the environment through greenhouse gas production, pesticide use, soil erosion and water depletion as well as energy intensive production methods. The same systems that put our health at risk also have a

devastating impact on environmental health. In a vicious circle, environmental degradation is also reducing the quality of basic nutrients. In addition, the current agricultural policies are not doing enough to prioritise measures that would achieve productivity and reduce poverty especially among rural populations.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, about 2.3 million people were estimated to be facing severe acute food insecurity (IPC Phases 3 and 4) in the October 2019-March 2020 period, more than double the number in the corresponding period in 2018/19. Although there have been no nationwide assessments since the outbreak of COVID-19, the pandemic is likely to have caused an overall increase in the number of food insecure people and the prevalence of malnutrition. The primary cause of the aggravation to food insecurity is the loss of incomes and livelihoods, as the slowdown in the global economy reduced export demand for Zambian resources and services, while movement restrictions curbed economic activities. The impact is expected to have been particularly acute in urban areas, where job losses have been more prevalent. Based on preliminary results from a rapid urban food security assessment, carried out by the Government and some partner agencies, an estimated 322 000 people are in need of humanitarian assistance in four urban zones.¹

FARMERS VOICES

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2. CURRENT AGRICULTURE CHALLENGES

2.1 Concerns on the Agriculture Practices

i. Use of Chemicals and Health Impacts in Food Production

Since the onset of the Green Revolution, synthetic non-biodegradable chemicals have been welcomed as simple solutions to complex challenges in mass food production. However, after over a half century of following this approach, we now have overwhelming empirical evidence of associated negative consequences. Chemical fertilisers as well as pesticides and herbicides pollute the waters of rivers, lakes and therefore the sea, damaging an essential food source for many populations of the planet. Chemical pesticides have not only damaged the environment and human health, but have also failed to eliminate pests and weeds from farms. Residues of pesticides are found not only in fruit and vegetables but also in meats, fish and dairy products, due to their bioaccumulation and biomagnification in the food chain². Pesticides are undoubtedly an important risk factor for the onset of cancer both in childhood and in adults and all the main classes of substances (insecticides, herbicides, fungicides, pesticides as a whole) proved to be responsible. A number of reviews and meta-analyses found that pesticide exposure increases cancer risk and incidence, including but not limited to kidney cancer, bladder cancer, lung cancer, childhood cancer following parental pre-natal exposure and the most empirically verified.³

¹ [FAO GIEWS Country Brief on Zambia -](#)

² Ministry of Health, 2015),

³ NonHodgkin Lymphoma (Chiu and Blair, 2009; Shinasi and Leon, 2014), amongst others.

ii. **Darkening the Future of Our Children and Their Children: Intergenerational Health Effects**

Impact of unhealthy diets. Health damaging effects of inadequate or imbalanced diets and chemicals in our food are not confined to a single generation. Nutrition provides nourishment that is vital for health and wellbeing at every stage of human life. This linkage commences even prior to conception, with the nutritional status of the adolescent girl who is a prospective mother, and continues later during periods of pregnancy and lactation as a critical determinant of child development. Besides these biological effects, unhealthy diets have intergenerational effects through sociological effects on dietary behaviours. Children who grow up accustomed to unhealthy diets, are conditioned to continue them in later life. Access is a key pillar of food security and nutrition and features in the formation of obesogenic environments. Access to healthy foods is limited in some urban centres in a phenomenon known as ‘food deserts,’ mostly in low income or ethnic minority neighbourhoods

We must not forget that food is derived from the seeds and that the primary cause of health problems that afflict the world today is to be sought in the way seeds are produced to be uniform and to respond to chemicals, not for their nutritional density. And because seeds - that later produce the food that has all those effects on our health described already - are produced by the science called genetic improvement, in order to change things we must rethink how breeding is done, and shift from “cultivating uniformity” to “cultivating diversity”

Food and seed regulations run contrary to the imperative of a diet based on biodiversity, organic and local food for a healthy microbiome and nutritious food. Between the need to eat “diverse” foods discussed so far, and the uniformity in food products required by laws on crops, there is a clear contradiction. So too there is an obvious contradiction between uniformity and stability on the one hand and the need for crop adaptation to climate change and local environments on the other. If our health depends on the diversity and diversity of the diet, how can we have a diversified diet if the agriculture that produces our food is based on uniformity (DUS)?

The question for reflection here is that.... Can we keep calm if pesticide residues are within legal limits?

2.2 Concerns on the Farmer Input Support Programme:

The government has identified agriculture as priority sector to reduce poverty and enhance household food security. Although Zambia has made some progress in this respect, the evidence shows that despite achieving annual growth rates of more than six per cent in agriculture, crop yields remain low by international standards and rural poverty rates remain stubbornly high at about 80 per cent. The failure of the agricultural sector to provide for livelihoods for the majority people in rural areas is considered a major factor contributing to rural poverty. The Farmer Input Support Programme (FISP) does not effectively contribute to its intended goal of improving yields and addressing household food and income security by reducing poverty and boosting staple crop production among smallholder farmers. Given that the highest levels of poverty are in the rural communities. However, FISP has been hit by several challenges that have hindered its successful implementation. One of the main challenges includes failure to graduate farmers since the Programme was effected in 2002, there has not been effective monitoring to graduate the beneficiaries. Other challenges include:

- Inputs received by farmers are inadequate to meet the farmer's production.
- The program is unsustainable in that it requires that the farmers raise money to meet the cooperative requirements, they are unable to participate.
- Fake co-operatives have been formed for the sole purpose of accessing inputs and some farmers collecting farming input from more than one input provider are other major challenges.
- Some deserving farmers have completely no access to the programme and yet it is meant to serve the vulnerable but viable small-scale farmers. Depending on how capacity is defined, this policy excludes 15-20 per cent of the households with the least access to land.
- A significant proportion about 60% of the poverty reduction strategy portion of the agriculture budget is being spent on FISP and FRA which has not proved effective at boosting productivity. Government expenditure through FRA and FISP has been benefiting larger and relatively well-off households hence, limiting poverty reduction in rural areas.
- FISP has contributed to poverty in rural areas as most beneficiaries have become dependent on this programme while others sell their packages due to hunger.
- The conventional FISP in its raw form promoted Maize hence marginalizing other crops. Despite government effort to diversify and roll-out the E-voucher, challenges are still ongoing while most Agro dealers stock maize mainly. Not all small-scale farmers have access to fertilizer. As highlighted above, the FISP comes with challenges that have contributed to failure to improve yields thereby affecting rural household food security.

2.3 Concern on the Seed sector

Seed sector development would gain attention when seed security and food security are linked together with agricultural economic development in sub-Saharan Africa. In Zambia, the seed industry includes the participation of both the private and public sectors. CSOs acknowledge and appreciate Government's vision to promote diversification in the agriculture sector by promoting, among other measures, the use of improved crop varieties and certified seed. Recognize and appreciate the existence of legislation to further support diversification such as the Plant Breeder's Right Act and Plant Variety and Seed Act No. 21 of 1995 which provides for regulation, control, production, sale and import of seed as well as testing and for minimum standards of germination and purity. Above all, Government's recognition of the existence of the formal and informal seed sector is appreciated.

However, concern is about the limited focus on farmer rights and seed sovereignty. Seed sovereignty includes the farmer's rights to save, breed and exchange seeds, to have access to diverse traditional open pollinated seeds which can be saved, replanted and which are not genetically modified, owned or controlled by emerging seed giants. Seed sovereignty recognises the importance of Farmer Saved Seed Systems (FSSS) which is essential for food security at household level as commercialised seed is mainly accessible to those farmers with some disposable income and is able to purchase them. This creates a gap in boasting food security for most rural households.

Besides displacing and destroying diversity, commercialised seed varieties are also undermining seed sovereignty and farmers rights. Furthermore, the multinational capture of local seed companies is a process that has long been underway in most parts of Africa and is marginalising

the local seed companies which in most cases promote the open pollinated seed varieties. Across Africa, new seed laws are being introduced which enforce compulsory registration of seeds with a bias towards Distinct Uniform Stable (DUS) which the traditional seed varieties do not conform to, thus making it impossible for small scale farmers to grow their own diverse traditional seed as seed but rather grain, and forcing them into dependency on the giant seed corporations which mainly grow hybrid seed which cannot be recycled and depends heavily on synthetic chemical fertilisers and pesticides not friendly to the environment.

2.4 Concerns on Extension services

The provision of extension services seeks to provide quality and effective services to the farmers and the nation at large. From the auditor general's report of 2019 on assessment of extension services in the Agriculture sector, the report established that 42% of the farmers do not meet with any extension officers. In addition, for farmers who were in contact with camp extension workers, the report under this finding does not clearly state what kind of extension service they received. The analysis also identified that there is need to establish the ideal number of times extension officers are supposed to meet with farmers.

The ideal Extension Officer to Farmer ratio is 1-660 but even when fully manned, from the case study in Eastern Province, the Extension Officer to Farmer ratio was 1-2,084 farmers. In addition, the extension staff have limited resources which among others include motorbikes as well lack of in-service training to be able to response to challenges in the agriculture sector given the trends

Furthermore, the allocated and disbursed in terms of funding to the sub sector is not adequate to cover key drivers of extension service. In addition, over the years the disbursed has been declining over the years from 10.8% in 2014, 7.8 % in 2016 to **XX in 2021**.

3. KEY MESSAGES FOR REFLECTIONS

“There is need for re-discovery” of traditional agriculture by application of ecological principles to agricultural systems and food systems”

“Diet is what we consume through food and drink. Nutrition is what our body extracts from the diet for obtaining the nourishment that is vital for maintaining health and wellbeing across the life course.”

“A Healthy Diet is a Universal Right and Not Just a Matter of ‘Personal Choice”

“How can farmers, who are the main victims of this system, be mobilised for the good cause? How can new generations be convinced that this food production system is harmful to nature and their own future?”

“How can the vested interests of the agroindustry be countered?”

“How can it be made clear that the right to healthy food is not viable unless a new idea of economy, sustainable development and a new sense of civic ethics are established?”

“There is need to move from monocultures and uniformity to biodiversity in our fields, in our plates, in our gut and in our cultures”

“A transition from competition to cooperation. Competition between countries, between people, leading to conflicts and precarious work, between humans and other species, to cooperation

across countries for a new planetary citizenship between people to create community and cultivate the commons, between humans and other species to create Earth community and an indivisible health from the planet to people”

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

Policy Change Needed to Unlock the Potential of Agriculture

- Policies need to consider food systems holistically and support a sustainability transformation to ensure a good future for all.
- There is need for emphases for payments for ecosystem services instead of subsidies for synthetic inputs and hybrid seeds.
- Integrated seed system laws rather than outlawing use and sale of traditional varieties and breeds.
- Climate change adaptation funds used on agroecology principles rather than new green revolution.
- Inclusive land rights giving priority to local youth rather than legislations that enables corporate land grabbing.
- Public procurements schemes that create a market and demand for organically produced diverse diets rather than highly processed food.
- Drastic increase in funding for research, training and extension with a focus on agroecological transdisciplinary and systemic approaches rather than research focussing on single crops or inputs and placing extension in the hand of the private sector with vested interest.
- Good nutrition is not merely an essential support for good health but it allows and enables the development of other human capabilities to full potential. Good health enhances opportunities for accessing and assimilating quality education, acquiring an array of skills, securing gainful livelihoods and performing well in all dimensions of life. Denial of health promoting nutrition is a denial of the right to health and deprives an individual of the opportunity to develop his or her capabilities to full potential. Access to good health, through good nutrition, should therefore be regarded as a commitment to social justice.
- We recommend that government assents to the Maputo declaration of 10% of the budget allocation to Agriculture. In addition, there is need for Government to seriously consider reducing FISP budget allocation and to reallocate more funds towards extension services and other agriculture needs.
- Government strategies and programmes should be appropriate, farmer driven and ensure that they respond to the mandate of the extension services. For extension services to be meaningful, the government needs to serious consider the extension worker to farmer ratio towards the 660 thresholds.
- Furthermore, on monitoring of extension services, there is need for quarterly review, with approved M&E tools that will provide feedback and learning. A monitoring mechanism should be out in place to enhance activity accountability and quality review.

Biodiversity is Health: From Our Farms, to Our Plates, to Our Gut Microbiome

- Biodiversity rich agriculture is essential for proper nutrition & good health. Diverse peoples, with diverse cultures, have always eaten diverse plants. Farmers have been developing hundreds of different farming techniques and evolving countless varieties of species, they have built up an extraordinary reservoir of biodiversity. The application of reductionist methods based on uniformity to plant breeding, however, has led to the substitution of traditional local varieties, which were evolved over hundreds of years by our farmers, by widespread genetically homogeneous varieties, spurring a dramatic loss of diversity.

A Transition to Sustainable Food Systems is a Social, Ecological, Economic & Democratic Imperative

- In this context, food choices are often considered as personal choices. But choice is instead determined by many factors and can be conscious, conditioned or constrained. Conscious decisions too may be based on correct or incorrect information and understanding of the relationship between diet, nutrition and health. Choice is also conditioned by aggressive marketing and promotion by commercial interests, cultural influences and peer pressure. Even if one has high nutrition literacy, the lack of local availability or the high price of healthy foods may prevent an individual from adopting healthy dietary habits.
- What we need is the emergence of a supportive political will from national leaders and dedicated government policies, backed up by secure funding and strong accountability mechanisms for all the actors, from government bodies to the food industry. Tackling noncommunicable diseases at the national level means tackling unhealthy diets. Coordinated national efforts coming from agriculture, health and education sectors would ensure a healthy diet for people, making consumers part of an adaptation process.

From Chemical Monocultures to Organic Food Systems

- Agroecological practices are the only alternative to combine food quality, environmental protection of soil fertility and response to climate change, water quality, biodiversity and human health. Organic food has not only proven to contain lower levels of contaminants and pesticide residues, but also has better nutritional profiles and should not be a privilege for the few, but a right for all.

Making food systems “nutrition sensitive”

- To promote meaningful change, actions must also be directed at the food system level to make it more “nutrition sensitive.” It is imperative that national food systems move away from agro-industrial production methods which are responsible for dietary monotony and reliance on ultra-processed food and beverages, towards a system that supports food sovereignty, small-scale producers, and local markets based on ecological balance, agro-biodiversity and traditional practices.
- Food sovereignty allows peoples to define their own policies and strategies for sustainable production, distribution and consumption of food. Nationally, the majority of food is supplied by local farmers. Therefore, efforts to combat

malnutrition must support smallholder farmers and promote nutrition sensitive production. Agro-ecology ensures food and nutrition security without compromising the economic, social, and environmental needs of future generations. It focuses on maintaining productive agriculture that sustains, yields and optimizes the use of local resources while minimizing the negative environmental and socioeconomic impacts of modern technologies. It is imperative to support comprehensive research initiatives to lay the scientific basis for the claim that agro-ecology satisfies nutrition sensitive production while promoting local livelihoods and the environment.

- Recognising that industry self-regulation is ineffective, the government should impose strong regulatory systems to ensure that the food industry does not violate citizen's human rights to adequate food and nutrition. It is however recognised that such efforts may face formidable resistance from the food industry seeking to protect its economic interests.
- A holistic approach to nutrition requires national policymakers to create an environment conducive to nutritious, healthy diets, including through education, and dietary guidelines. Finally, a comprehensive approach should encourage adjustments in food supply and changes in food systems to increase availability and accessibility of healthier food that is both sustainable and nutrition sensitive.

Making the seed sector socially Viable and Sustainable'

- **National seed policy;** with the introduction of a number of reforms and protocols at regional level. We appeal is for the government to consider finalising the draft national policy of 1999 which would regulate the sector. We hope to see a decentralised consultative process to this process and the effective recognition of farmer's rights and the support of farmer managed seed systems which are to be supported by policy to reduce restrictions during trade, as currently trade can't go beyond achieving economic benefits. Further, there is need for the development of regulations that protect our diverse genetic resource and traditional knowledge and ensure that the benefit sharing System is inclusive and implemented.
- **Lobby for space in all consultative processes:** There is need for a formal platform to be created that will allow for effective CSO and farmer participation in policy formulation and decision making to ensure that farmer' voices are heard. We request for space at all levels horizontally and vertically by a more diverse CSO that will allow for more and effective CSO representation and participation. Consultative engagements and representation of key stakeholders is key in achieving seed sovereignty, and this responsibility lies with national governments who should ensure that the rights of the farmers are recognised and protected in national policies and legislation for the sake of national building and social and economic development.

5. ROAD MAP: THE ROOT TOWARDS TRANSFORMATION

Community Civic actions

- Save, grow and reproduce traditional seed varieties to safeguard biodiversity. They need to be saved not as museum pieces in germplasm banks, but in living Seed Banks as the basis of a health care system
- Create and support local food economies, farmers markets and bio districts
- Create links between schools, hospitals, health care centres and local organic fresh, diverse food systems
- Create poison free zones, communities, farms and food systems
- Demand labelling of chemicals and GMOs on the basis of fundamental right to know
- Organise to demand that public money and taxes stop subsidising unhealthy food systems that create a burden of disease for people and shift all public support including policy to health promoting agriculture and food.
- Do not cooperate with laws that force unhealthy agriculture and food system

Government actions - local, regional, national, international

- Local governments should take back their right to protect public health on the principle of subsidiarity and promote healthy local food economies.
- Need for the local government to engage with regional government, lobby and promote biodiverse local agriculture and bioregional food and health policies.
- National governments should be guided in all policies and laws to give primacy to the health of their citizens and future generations.
- Public subsidies should be redirected from health damaging systems to systems based on agroecology and biodiversity conservation, which provide health benefits and protect common goods.
- Governments should ban the use of contaminating chemicals and instead defend biodiversity and promote agroecology.
- National and regional governments should put in place policies to assess the damage caused by chemicals and apply the polluter pays principle and the precautionary principle in respect of pesticides and food additives. Moreover, Public Research should shift from promoting chemicals and contaminants to promoting biodiversity and agroecology, and assessing the harm of chemicals and putting in place polluter pays principle.
- All policies related to agriculture, food, nutrition and health need to be integrated on the basis of interconnectedness between what are seen as separate sectors.
- Institutions at all levels should lead the transition to healthy agriculture and food systems by declaring organic, pesticide and poison free regions
- Citizen participation to create food democracy and healthy agriculture food systems should be considered essential at all levels.

Changes in the International Trade Rules and Systems: responsibility of the United Nations and its relevant bodies

- The UN is a global declaratory, regulatory, and articulator of global policy. The UN should give a high priority to work on a comprehensive, global treaty to minimise the adverse impacts of the use of chemicals, and other practices

that are dangerous to health and environmental protection, with great sensitivity to biological diversity, offering a framework that is grounded in applicable human rights principles.

- Among the goals of this treaty include the following; generate policies to reduce pesticide use worldwide and develop a framework for the banning and phasing out of highly hazardous and toxic pesticides as a matter of urgency; promote agroecology and related approaches as an alternative production method to the current reliance on monoculture based industrial agriculture with its major use of chemical inputs, and impose strict liability on pesticide producers that refuse to follow voluntary guidelines.
- To reach these ambitious goals, awareness and encouragement of various non-binding documents are an essential step toward transforming agriculture for the benefit of human health: use of various existing tools established by the UN, such as the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition, as well as NGOs and academic networks to create a “master plan for nutrition” with a time frame and budgetary targets specifically tailored to meet national needs. The UN can make great contributions to the attainment of ambitious nutrition targets and ensuring the right of every person to adequate food and nutrition by using its convening and coordinating position at a global level.
- Recognising the particular vulnerability of women, and especially girls, to malnutrition, the Universal Human Rights framework must protect a woman’s general right to adequate food and nutrition. The empowerment of women should firmly be embedded within nutrition strategies.

CONCLUSION

Agricultural production systems’ transformation requires a structural change rather than short-term policies. This political view would contribute to increasing healthy food availability, granting sustainable incomes and better life conditions to local producers and to the conservation of natural resources and biodiversity.

A transition to a sustainable food system needs a paradigm shift from reductionist to systems science. It needs a shift from chemical intensive industrial agriculture to ecologically intensive organic farming. It needs a shift from extractive economies to circular and solidarity economies.

It is now necessary to stop and regulate the agroindustry multinational corporations’ power machine, which gets its extraordinary profits by speculating on the essential need for food. We need to claim the right to food for all the earth inhabitants, from human beings to nature. We are facing a modern social issue, behind which lies a modern class conflict: a minority is enjoying the privilege of eating good quality food and is multiplying its patrimonies and profits by manipulating and exploiting a primary need.

We invite all of you to engage in the various concerns, platforms and processes to take the future of agriculture in to your own hands and help contribute to a sustainable, resilient and prosperous development!