

ZAMBIAN CIVIL SOCIETY POSITION ON THE UNFSS

The paper covers recommendations to the Summit on Seed, food and policy related issues. It provides a summary of what the CSOs in Zambia expects as points of discussion and outcomes from the upcoming UN Food Systems Summit in September 2021 in New York.

THE ZAMBIAN CONTEXT

The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted a number of global vulnerabilities, including the uncoordinated nature of the world's pandemic response, its inability to support the poorest countries and their populations in managing the economic fallout, and of course the weakness of existing health-care system and infrastructure. The pandemic has also exposed the fragilities and inequalities in food systems and emphasizes the urgent need to ensure that food systems are more sustainable, inclusive and resilient. It has exposed the urgent need for political Leaders to address these weaknesses, alongside other major global challenges, ranging from climate change and rising inequality to technological disruption and terrorism. Moreover, already fragile agriculture and food systems, particularly in Africa and other low-income regions, have exacerbated the pandemic's impact. Unless addressed, these systemic shortcomings could deepen any crisis in the decades ahead.

According to the acute food insecurity analysis in Zambia, it is estimated that around 1.42 million people (22% of the analysed population) were facing high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above) between July and September 2020, despite increased crop production in most areas. (*Republic of Zambia: IPC Acute Food Insecurity Analysis July 2020 – March 2021, Issued in December 2020*).

Zambia achieved lower middle-income status **in 2011** after years of impressive economic performance, yet **more than half** of its population still lives below the poverty datum line. A deteriorating economy underpins government's efforts to deliver social services, alleviate poverty, reduce malnutrition and achieve zero hunger. This is especially true in rural areas, where most people rely on subsistence agriculture and are exposed to the effects of climate change. (<https://www.wfp.org/countries/zambia>).

Zambia's malnutrition rates remain among the highest in the world. Zambia ranked 146 of 189 in the 2019 Human Development Index, with 48 percent of the population unable to meet their minimum calories requirements, more than one-third of children under five years are stunted and more than half suffering from iron deficiency¹.

There are a lot of reasons why Zambia is suffering from food insecurity and failing to meet its nutritional needs and targets. Though it is true that one cannot point at one specific reason why food shortages, food insecurity, and prevalence of malnutrition uninterruptedly afflict Zambia, one can however identify **a number of failed internal economic policy tools and international policy prescriptions as the underlying causes of systemic food insecurity and malnutrition in Zambia.**

Fewer among many reasons as to why food insecurity has been chronic in Zambia are the following:

- (1) **endemic, persistent, and institutional corruption;**
- (2) **misdirected economic policies and mismanagement;**
- (3) **lack of committed political leadership to put in place implementable policy frameworks;**
- (4) **sheer neglect towards local, small-scale and family farmers who are**

¹ World Food Programme. (2021) Zambia Country Brief. Available at: <https://www.wfp.org/countries/zambia>

the major food producers; and (5) lack of political will to meet the commitments made in the Maputo and Malabo declarations in order to enhance financial and economic investment in farmer driven initiatives in the agricultural sector, and to boost local economies and rural development.

In addition, there is a significant gap in the ongoing FSS discussions, research and agenda setting in Zambia, related to market ownership, and the basics of what economists suggest are ‘sound’ levels of concentration in order to allow for functional competitive markets, and its implications for achieving a just and sustainable food system in Zambia. Dangerous levels of concentration now exist in input industries in seed and agrochemicals, animal genetics, fertilizer, machinery, processing and trade. Four foreign and multi-national seed companies control 80% of the Zambian commercial maize market, and 100% of rice, groundnuts and beans (ZAAB, 2019). Lack of information in Zambia limits proper assessment of the state of Agro-biodiversity within our own context. Assumptions related to market smart subsidies for pro-poor growth, ‘sustainable intensification through the increased use of corporate owned hybrid seed and chemicals, are brought into serious question under this economic framework. **None of these issues are being adequately addressed and yet are central to any discussion on food systems in Zambia.**

Consequently, because of these policy prescriptions and systemic failures, Zambian farmers have lost income supports from their respective governments, and millions of low-income families became victims of food insecurity and nutrition deficits.

In view of the above, we raise the following:

6 KEY QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AT THE UN FOOD SYSTEMS SUMMIT

- ✓ **Why** do we around 1.42 million people lack access to sufficient, nutritious food in Zambia?
- ✓ While more food is being produced today than ever before, **why** are food systems failing to deliver for the most vulnerable households?
- ✓ Despite investments in Agriculture, **why** is food production and key ecosystems still undergoing stress from climate change and current policies?
- ✓ **Why** is providing nutritious food to a growing global population while protecting vital natural systems which sustain life a challenge of this decade?
- ✓ **Why** are small scale farmers, rural and indigenous communities (mostly women) not given space to share their most desired needs to enhance sustainability in the food system?
- ✓ **What** Agriculture subsidies should be key in a just rural transition of the food systems, that enhance resilient livelihoods and eco-social justice?

Based on the experience of Civil Society Organizations working with and accompanying thousands of local communities in Zambia and to respond to the 5 action tracks, we forward the following:

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONSIDERATION AT THE UN FOOD SYSTEMS SUMMIT

Action Track 1: Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all and Action Track 4: Advance equitable livelihoods

1. Policy Change to Unlock the Potential of a Resilient Small-Scale Agriculture Sector

- There is need for policy with emphasis on **payments for ecosystem services** instead of subsidies for synthetic inputs and hybrid seeds. Need to move away from FISP² for commitment to sustainable subsidies that enhance local markets.
- **Integrated seed system laws** endorsing local traditions and knowledge, rather than outlawing use and sale of traditional varieties and breeds.
- **Climate change adaptation funds to be used on agroecology principles** rather than “new” green revolution which does not respond to the desirable needs of the vulnerable farmers.
- **Inclusive land rights** giving priority to local youth, women and traditional community ownership rather than legislations that enable 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** with a focus on **agroecological transdisciplinary and systemic approaches** rather than research focussing on single crops or inputs.

Action Track 2: Shift to Sustainable consumption Patterns

2. Transition to Sustainable Food Systems for Social, Ecological, Economic & Democratic Development

- Food choices are often considered as personal choices. But choice is instead determined by many factors and can be conscious, conditioned or constrained. Even if one has high nutrition literacy, the lack of local availability or the inaccessibility, due to high price, of healthy foods may prevent an individual from adopting healthy dietary habits. Hence, a transition to Sustainable Food Systems should have at its center the full realization of the human right to adequate food, where by every individual and every community should be enabled to have adequate, accessible, nutritious, culturally adequate, healthy and environment-friendly food at all times. This requires putting right-holders at the center, rather than the interests of the market.
- Consequently, the Summit must urgently recognize the need and call for a supportive political will from national leaders open and transparent participation mechanisms for right-holders in all stages of policy making, implementation and monitoring of the food systems. Strong accountability and transparent mechanisms for all actors, from government bodies to the food industry should be in place in order to move away from the production model to a Production, Income and Nutrition Model

Action Track 3: Boost Nature Positive Production

3. 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.
- It is **imperative that national food systems move away from agro-industrial and genetically engineered 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 and traditional knowledge and practices.

²Farmer Input subsidy Programme

- The Summit should hence focus on **Food Ssovereignty** to enable people define their own policies and strategies for sustainable production, distribution and consumption of food.
- Sustainable, just, and healthy food systems can only be achieved if governments will put “the right to adequate food and nutrition and food sovereignty at the core of transformation.” “(This means asserting) the rights of peoples, nations, and states to democratically define their own food, agriculture, livestock, and fisheries systems, and to develop policies guiding how food is produced, distributed, and consumed.”

Action Track 3: Boost Nature Positive Production

4. Changes in the International Trade Rules and Systems - responsibility of the United Nations and its relevant bodies

- The Summit should give a high priority to implement a comprehensive, global framework 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, bringing forward a systemic approach that is grounded in human rights principles.
- Among the goals of this systemic effort should be the following: generation of 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; promotion of Agroecology principles 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.
- Recognising the particular vulnerability of women, and especially girls, to malnutrition, the Summit should aim at protecting a woman’s human right to adequate food and nutrition. **The empowerment of women should firmly be embedded within all strategies.**

Action Track 4: Advance equitable livelihoods and Action Track 5: Build resilience to vulnerable shocks and stress

5. Making the Seed sector socially Viable and Sustainable”

- The Summit **should** efficiently **recognise farmer’s rights and support Farmer Managed Seed Systems (FMSS)**, which are to be reinforced 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 diverse genetic resource and traditional knowledge and ensure that the benefit sharing System is inclusive and implemented.

Specifically, We would like to call on the following to be considered towards the processes to the UNFSS;

- To reconsider the appointment of former Rwandan agriculture minister Agnes Kalibata, president of the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa, an international nonprofit founded by the Melinda and Bill Gates and Rockefeller foundations in 2006, and the World Economic Forum (WEF), representing about 1,000 multinational and transnational companies and industry leaders, as among the summit’s key partners and actors of the summit.

- UNFSS excludes the voices of people worst affected by hunger and environmental collapse largely caused by destructive globalized industrial food systems. The UNFSS must include voices of the people
- The UNFSS has sidelined democratic and human rights-based organizations and made representatives of corporations as among the key solvers of food-related problems that the firms themselves have ironically created and perpetuated,” the UNFSS should include human rights organisations.

CONCLUSION

The Civil Society in Zambia hopes that the National government will push for discussions that focus on **enhancing Agroecological principles at the summit.**

Lastly, we would like to appeal for an inclusive process of engagement that will result in a meaningful pathway of implementation beyond the summit and help contribute to a sustainable, resilient and people driven food system in Zambia!

Parties to the paper;

1. Caritas Zambia
2. FIAN International
3. Zambia Social Forum (ZAMSOF)
4. Zambia Alliance on Agroecology and Biodiversity (ZAAB)
5. Participatory Ecological Land Use Management (PELUM) Zambia
6. Civil Society for Poverty Reduction (CSPR)
7. Civil Society Organization for Scaling Up Nutrition (CSO-SUN)
8. SNV
9. Grassroots Trust
10. ActionAid
11. Zambia Climate Change Network (ZCCN)
12. Kasisi Agriculture Training Centre
13. World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Zambia
14. Community Trust for Development and Technology (CTDT)
15. Green living Movement
16. Green EnviroWatch
17. Catholic Relief Services
18. Zambia Community Based Natural Resource Management Forum (ZCBNRMF)
19. Sustainable Innovations Africa (SIA)
20. Non-governmental Gender Organisations' Coordinating Council (NGOCC)
21. Consumer Unity Trust Society- CUTS Lusaka