

## **PEASANTS SEED SYSTEMS: FIGHTING FARMER INPUT SUPPORT PROGRAMME (FISP) IN ZAMBIA**

### **Background and Introduction**

Since 2002, the Government of Zambia has been funding a farmer input support programme (FISP) so as to ensure sustained food security at both household and national level. The programme is implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture. The **Zambian** government has been supporting small-scale farmers with subsidized seed and fertilizer. Government **introduced** the Fertilizer Support Programme (FSP) in 2002, later renamed it to **FISP** in order to counter challenges that farmers face.

Under the FISP, the government distributes subsidized agricultural **inputs** (Maize seed, beans seed, soybeans seed, groundnuts seed and fertilizers) to small-scale producers. It also provides a guaranteed minimum price at which the Food Reserve Agency (FRA) buys maize, and other crops from **farmers**.

### **Challenges of FISP to the Zambian Food systems**

Under FISP, the Government provides 10 Kg of maize seed, 10 kg with a legume of either (soybeans, groundnuts, beans) and four bags of fertilizer (2 basal and 2 top dressing fertilizer). The distributed seeds are improved varieties, while local varieties (such as gangata, kafwamba, kapywa bwangu and other indigenous varieties) are left out of the system.

Farmer beneficiaries under the FISP are practicing mono cropping for cash and leaving out the nutritional needs that are found in local indigenous varieties that were previously achieved through multi cropping. New varieties also bring a financial burden of fertilizer and pesticides.

### **Seed security**

Seed has become business in Zambia as larger corporations have taken over the seed business. Local varieties are marginalized as most national programs promote new varieties of commercial nature. It is worth noting that the neglected local varieties can be recycled and can produce maize without use of chemical fertilizers as compared to new commercial varieties. This is happening as there is no law prohibiting the use and resale of local seed varieties in Zambia.

### **Factors in Zambia's agriculture system affecting Peasants**

1. The use of closed pollinated seed varieties places a huge burden for farmers to continuously purchase seed. Farmers are not able to recycle the new seed varieties
2. FISP and FSP do not include any local varieties in their distribution, neither are these varieties distributed in any agro shops
3. Marginalization of local indigenous varieties is causing disappearance of good seed which has been used in Zambia for decades. Especially the case of maize

seed where most farmers are preferring new seed varieties promoted under the FISP and FSP

4. New maize varieties require fertilizers to grow thus placing a huge financial burden for most poor rural farmers
5. New maize varieties require pesticides without which they get destroyed by pests such as army worms among other pests.