



FANRPAN

Food, Agriculture & Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network



REGIONAL POLICY BRIEF

- Malawi
- Mozambique
- Zambia
- Zimbabwe



PARTNERSHIPS FOR IMPROVED MARKET ACCESS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA: EMPOWERING SMALLHOLDER FARMERS, PARTICULARLY WOMEN AND YOUTH.

BACKGROUND

Women and youth form a large proportion of the agricultural labour force in Sub-Saharan Africa and play a vital role in ensuring food and nutrition security. In Southern Africa, agriculture continues to be at the centre of local and regional economies, representing a critical source of income and financial stability.

Agriculture contributes about 35% of the Southern African Development Community's (SADC), Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which is approximately 13% of total export earnings (African Development Bank, 2018).

However, gender-based inequalities regarding access to and control of productive and financial resources inhibit agricultural productivity and reduce food security.

Oxfam in Southern Africa (Oxfam SAF) in partnership with the Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN) implemented a project that focused on how smallholder agricultural producers, especially women and youth, in four Oxfam focus countries - Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe, were interacting with markets.

The study proved that despite smallholder farmers, particularly women and youth, being the majority of agricultural sector players, they derive the least value from their limited participation in agriculture. This is because most smallholder farmers lack adequate access to Information and Communication Technology for Agriculture (ICT4A), and finance and credit to fully benefit from such technology.

THE STATUS OF THE REGION

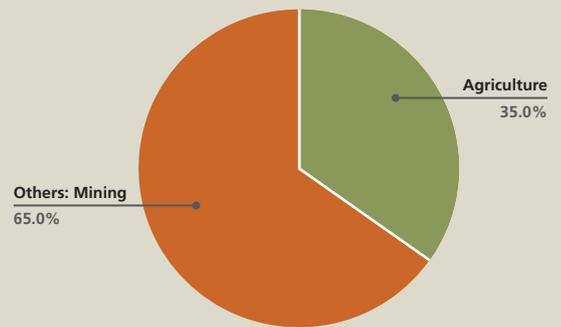
Approximately 70% of the population depends on agriculture for food, income and employment (World Economic Forum, 2016), with women and the youth comprising over half of the agricultural labour force (FAO, 2018. The future of food and agriculture – alternative pathways to 2050).

Climate change continues to manifest through erratic weather, decline in soil fertility and resilience of crops and livestock and in the emergence of transboundary pests and diseases. This is already compromising agriculture productivity, especially among vulnerable smallholder farmers in the Southern Africa.

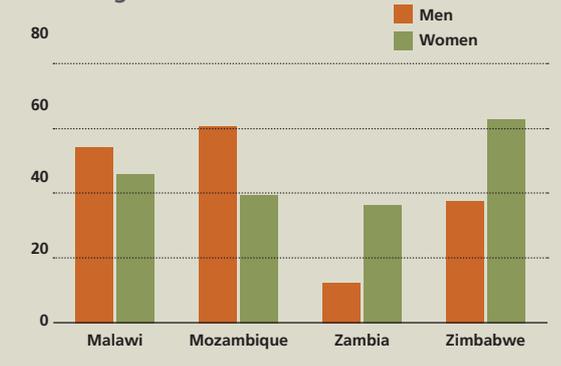
During the last decades, efforts have been made to reduce poverty, create employment and reduce food and nutrition insecurity through several agricultural initiatives in the region. However, access to markets still remains a challenge among smallholder farmers, especially women and the youth.

Levels of poverty in the region are exacerbated by the changing climate and pandemics such as COVID-19. Southern Africa continues to be among the worst COVID-19 affected regions in the continent. The restrictions of movement and country lockdowns have worsened smallholder farmers' ability to access resources to improve their agricultural productivity and profitability.

SADC Agriculture GDP Contribution, 2018



Jobs in Agriculture



MARKET GAPS AND OPPORTUNITIES IN THE REGION

Below are market access challenges and opportunities faced by smallholder farmers, especially women and the youth:



1. Accelerated adoption of ICT in the region

Smallholder farmers have great potential to benefit from the rapidly growing ICT sector, especially to access market information as well as finance and credit. A steady increase in ICT penetration has been noted over the past decade. However, without effective knowledge systems, most smallholder farmers, especially women and young people, still lack access needed for relevant agricultural information. For example, large-scale farmers continue to engage with processing companies and exporters, while smallholders are confined to informal markets where relationships and word of mouth remain the major information sharing channels.

Recommendation - A need to invest in ICT for agriculture is evident. Improved ICT infrastructure will enable access to market information and knowledge necessary for smallholder farmers to make informed choices on when, where, and to whom to sell their produce.

2. Policy frameworks

The four focus countries have various national agricultural policies and National Agricultural Plans and frameworks that are aimed at promoting the growth of agriculture.

Recommendation - There is a need to invest in domesticating regional and continental policy frameworks to complement the existing ones and to transform market systems to make them more amenable to smallholders.

3. Infrastructure

A few safe and gender-favourable physical market structures are available in some countries in the region for use by smallholder farmers. However, without connecting roads and other transport networks, smallholder farmers remain confined to their local markets that provide only limited profits for their products.

Recommendation - The region must work together to develop the infrastructure to connect smallholder farmers, especially women and the youth, to more profitable markets.

4. Capacity building of smallholder farmers for policy advocacy

Smallholder farmers' access to training and extension services is highly limited. This is mainly a function of high levels of illiteracy, patriarchal systems, and lack of proper organisation among farmers. Consequently, female smallholder farmers received only 5% of all agricultural extension services in 2017 across the four focal countries (FAO. 2017. *The future of food and agriculture – Trends and challenges*).

Recommendation - There is an urgent need for regional blocs such as ECA, AU, SADC and COMESA to support and assist smallholder farmers to build their capacity to engage and influence the private sector and government to create an enabling policy and business environment.

Further, the regional blocs could ensure that all development programmes prioritise the economically active age group of women and youths between 25 and 54 years. Smallholder farmers ought to be encouraged to form district, national, and regional farmers' associations to tap into agricultural research for development resources. There is also a need for state and non-state actors to collaborate in creating a regional *Knowledge and Information Hub* that will promote the centralisation of agriculture market information.

THE MARKETS CAMPAIGN INTERVENTION

Following the successful implementation of the supermarkets and agriculture markets research projects, FANRPAN, in collaboration with Oxfam SAF and the Southern Africa People Solidarity Network (SAPSN), are implementing a Markets Campaign project in Southern Africa focusing on access to markets and supermarkets by smallholder farmers, taking into account vulnerability to shocks such as climate change-related weather events and the COVID-19 pandemic.

The objective of this campaign is to increase the awareness of constraints to market access faced by SHFs and provide evidence-based solutions to create an enabling environment for farmers to access markets. This campaign strategy builds on the global, continental and regional policy framework provisions on market access detailed in the Markets Campaign Synthesis Report.

The campaign seeks to strengthen and coordinate smallholder farmers, especially women and youths, to have increased access to sustainable and profitable agriculture markets, supported by an enabling policy environment. The emphasis is on collective action at regional and national levels, building on ongoing programmatic work and campaigns in the focus countries (Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe).

For more details and on how to participate in this campaign, please visit the FANRPAN website.

About FANRPAN

The Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN) is an autonomous regional stakeholder driven policy research, analysis and implementation network that was formally established by Ministers of Agriculture from Eastern and Southern Africa in 1997. FANRPAN was borne out of the need for comprehensive policies and strategies required to resuscitate agriculture. FANRPAN is mandated to work in all African countries and currently has activities in 17 countries namely Angola, Benin, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

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