



FANRPAN

Food, Agriculture & Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network



COUNTRY PROFILE ZIMBABWE



- Over 70% of the population depend on agriculture for their livelihoods.
- There are approximately 7,1 million smallholder farmers.
- Women smallholder farmers and the youth make up to 61% of the farmers and provide 70% of the labour. (IFAD, Rural Development Report 2019)

INTRODUCTION

Smallholder farmers (SHFs) produce over 70% of the food in Zimbabwe. Although they play such a critical role in food and nutrition security in the country, smallholder farmers often struggle with poverty and food insecurity.

Agricultural activities provide employment and income for between 60 and 70% of the population; supplies 60% of the raw materials required by the manufacturing sector; and contributes 40% of total export earnings. Agriculture contributes approximately 17% to Zimbabwe's GDP (World Bank; Poverty Overview 2020).



SHFs in Zimbabwe face challenges that include low and erratic rainfall, declining soil fertility, poor investment, shortage of farm power (labour and draft animals), poor physical and institutional infrastructure, poverty, inadequate access to markets and recurring food insecurity.

Apart from climate change related constraints, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has further worsened agricultural production, posing serious threats to the accessibility of local and regional markets.

SHFs access to reliable and profitable markets in Zimbabwe is highly limited, despite the country's relatively high score in the Ease of Doing Business Index.

Oxfam 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 the four Oxfam focus countries - Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe, were interacting with markets.



MARKET CONSTRAINTS

The following were some of the market constraints experienced by Women SHFs.

1. Access to ICT

Although ICT has become part of most people's lives, the majority of smallholder farmers in rural areas still lack access to smartphones and knowledge of accessing market related information. The prohibitive cost of internet services and smartphones continues to cripple the ability of SHFs to adopt the use of ICT for agriculture (ICT4A). Furthermore, the inadequate access to ICT denies SHFs knowledge and information necessary to make informed market choices, for example, on the price of commodities and impact of seasonal variations. Information on weather and forecasts is also easily available using ICT4A and can better equip farmers to be more climate resilient. Innovations in ICT4A have proven successful in East African countries like Kenya where farmers are able to market, price and sell their produce online.

2. Capacity gaps

This study revealed that the population between 25-54 years old is the most economically active in the country's agriculture. However, with limited skills and financial resources, this age group lacks the capacity to effectively contribute to the growth and development of the agriculture sector. Lack of access to finance and credit limits WSHFs in this age bracket to access loans and financial resources to grow and manage their agricultural businesses. They are therefore unable to produce adequate quantities and the right quality, and have limited access to farm inputs.

3. Limited local markets

Over the past five years Zimbabwe has witnessed a growth in the Ease of Doing Business Index, which increased from 47,8 in 2016 to a 54,47 score in 2020 (World Data Atlas 2020). This, in turn, has promoted foreign investment, unfortunately at the expense of SHFs due to unfair competition. This study reveals that creating competitive markets for smallholder farmers is as important as guaranteeing favourable market conditions for external producers and foreign investors. Guaranteed markets help SHFs to control marketing costs as well as limiting post-harvest losses, especially for perishables.

4. Policy gaps

Since the year 2000, Zimbabwe's farming areas have undergone fundamental transformation under the Land Reform Programme. The Zimbabwe Agriculture National Policy Framework 2018-2030 seeks to guide the development of a new and relevant policy and regulatory framework that responds to the needs of the restructured and evolving agricultural sector. This framework should be aligned not only with the country's priorities of safeguarding access to markets by smallholder farmers, but also to the regional frameworks and commitments.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Below are recommendations aimed at addressing the identified factors adversely affecting the participation of smallholder farmers in agricultural markets.

1. Improved value chains:

There is a need to conduct more comprehensive and transdisciplinary research on prioritised value chains. Thereafter, targeted support for smallholder farmers who specialise in particular value chains such as indigenous poultry and horticulture can be considered.

2. Knowledge and Information sharing

The government of Zimbabwe should encourage synergies between actors in the market space providing information services to enable SHFs to access much needed market information.

3. Capacity strengthening

It is necessary to build the capacity of farmers to understand market dynamics, as well as being proactive in seeking out market information.

ACCESS TO MARKETS CAMPAIGN

FANRPAN in partnership with Oxfam SAF and the Southern Africa People's Solidarity Network (SAPSN) are implementing a Markets Campaign to increase the awareness of the market access constraints faced by smallholder farmers, especially women and youth, and provide evidence-based solutions to create an enabling and fair environment for farmers to access profitable markets. The focus is on collective action at regional and national levels, building on ongoing work (programmatic) and campaigns in Southern Africa. For more details and on how to participate in this campaign, please visit the FANRPAN website: <https://fanrpan.org/oxfam/>.

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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