



CTPD'S MONDAY OPINION

This is a weekly column aimed at sharing CTPD's perspective and steering public debate on various issues pertaining to Trade & Investments Law, Public Finance Management, Extractives and Human Development.

TODAYS TOPIC

'POLITICS NOT AS USUAL:' PATHWAYS TO MAKING AGRICULTURE A BUSINESS FOR SMALL-SCALE FARMERS IN ZAMBIA



Dr. Simon Manda
Senior Researcher

USED last week's feature to highlight why making agriculture a business matters. This feature builds on this debate to explore specific pathways – 'politics not as usual' – that can possibly drive this agenda. To make agriculture a business is to agree there are fundamental questions at the core of the debate – of ideology. The centrality of making agriculture a business points to culture and mind-set – of the way agriculture as an economic and livelihood activity is viewed. Liberalisation of the Zambia's economy in the early 1990s means penetration of capital in the countryside would reorganise the way we see agriculture not as one of those activities do to survive, but one which people can be deliberate about and make ration decisions.

I mentioned last week that Zambian small-scale farmers should be viewed (correctly so) as private sector (both customers and entrepreneurs) who should see diverse business opportunities in the agricultural sector. A change in culture will mean that producers in the sector should not be the old and frail but young, dynamic, innovative and progressive people. Since 2017, the Africa Development Bank African Development Bank committed \$24 billion to agriculture over the next 10 years, with a sharp focus on agro-industrialization. Tapping into such potential requires changing how agriculture is treated – as peripheral activity. Deliberate actions are needed that can encourage young graduates to enter into agriculture. Our recent studies at the Centre for Trade Policy and Development (CTPD) in collaboration with the Joint Country Programme (JCP) with Christian Aid as the lead agency show drivers to entering agriculture and making it a

business include: **1) the need to improve incomes, 2) food security and nutrition, 3) employment creation.** More widely, these opportunities were seen as being important in driving technology adoption, enhanced value creation and improved adaptability to climate change.

More widely, efforts towards making agriculture a business politics not as usual. Our research at the CTPD reveal **multi-level efforts are needed to transform the logic of agriculture from top to bottom:** First, innovative approaches are needed to deliver necessary training so that people can but into the so-called theory of change – of mind-set. This should be followed by capacity building in specific value chains, which are driven by markets. Such efforts can greatly benefit from progressive partnerships at different levels. This should be linked to specific and well-motivated agricultural extension services and community facilitators. These efforts should avoid historical problems – of producing with no clear market assessments. Small-scale farmers need support and information around market opportunities. Some of these elements currently exist. However, these have largely been piecemeal, disjointed and often partial success. More broader efforts aimed at making agriculture a business should map out all these efforts and devise mechanism of building on existing efforts where possible.

Our research also shows there are several factors that hinder making of agriculture a business. To

attract young and dynamic people into agriculture and those that can

transform the sector, **access to finance must be prioritised.**

This points to multi-level state and non-state credit schemes that potential agripreneurs can tap into. There are infrastructural challenges at the heart of this agenda that hinder market access and access to inputs. Infrastructural challenges also limit the role and importance of agricultural extension services. Irrigation support is also needed vis a vis climate change extremes and risks. For rural areas, storage facilities must be improved, which can address issues of seasonality at the heart of agricultural production in Zambia. With improved storage facilities, it is possible that farmers can hold their produce in anticipation of improved commodity prices. Our research in Tanzania show this is not only possible, but also gives power to producers.

These efforts should be at the heart of Zambia's quest for agricultural transformation. These ideas should never be driven by short termism related to political cycles. Rather, they should be long-term in nature, forming the core part of agriculture thinking. Leveraging policy related provisions such as Vision 2030 would be a good starting point. I am aware that some of these efforts are underway, but more should be done to enhance effectiveness of government efforts.

That concludes this week's Monday Opinion; please join us again next week as we discuss more interesting topics.

About the Author

Dr Simon Manda is a Senior Research at the Centre for Trade Policy and Development and is also a Lecturer at the University of Zambia, Department of Development Studies.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
P.O. Box 50882, Lusaka, Zambia
Plot 3823, Manda Hill Road,
Olympia Park
Tel: +260 211 264409
Email: info@ctpd.org.zm



Centre for Trade Policy & Development



www.ctpd.org.zm



+260975876038

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