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## Book Reviews

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## Book Reviews

Ashley Chishiba

*School of Agricultural Sciences, Department of Animal Science, University of Zambia*

*Agriculture in Zambia: Past, Present, and Future*

by Antony Chapoto and Nicholas J. Sitko eds, 2015, 165 pp.

ISBN 978-0-692-59279-3

Despite having over 750,000 km<sup>2</sup> of land, massive endowments in surface and sub-surface water resources, including the largest reservoir by volume in the world, and a population density of less than 20 people per square kilometre, Zambia's agriculture sector has not yet reached its full potential. The book "Agriculture in Zambia: Past, Present, and Future" aims to inform policymakers and stakeholders about the effects of current agricultural policies and the alternatives available to them – a critical step towards transforming Zambia's agricultural potential into reality.

Chapter 1 clearly outlines the current performance of Zambia's Agricultural sector and how it has been affected by the different Zambian political regimes since the country gained independence in 1964 (the authors delineate these political regimes by classifying them into four "republics"). The writers conclude that political decisions from the "first republic" to the "fourth republic" have largely been biased towards supporting maize production. All successive republics have treated maize as a political crop which has continued to shape agricultural policy in Zambia.

Chapter 2 focuses on two issues; the land ownership patterns in rural Zambia and smallholder maize production and market participation. The authors surmise that most smallholder farmers tend to have insufficient access to land despite its availability and that improving such access for the most land-constrained smallholder households might be an effective way to reduce poverty. Furthermore, it is noted that the heterogeneity with respect to smallholders' position in maize markets is driven in part by inequitable land access, inadequate access to productive assets, and large variation in crop productivity across households and regions. As with Chapter 1, this Chapter also alludes to the concern of Zambia's agricultural growth heavily relying on subsidy programmes such as the Farmer Input Support Programme (FISP) and the output price support through the Food Reserve Agency (FRA). The writers conclude that these programmes have been a huge drain to the treasury and have not been effective at addressing high rural poverty rates and low crop productivity.

Chapter 3 discusses the performance of the Zambian agricultural sector in the past decade. The writers continue to demonstrate the perils of an agricultural development strategy that is myopically focused on maize production and marketing in the context of predominately rain-fed agriculture. With the FISP and FRA programmes accounting for 30-60% of the total budget between 2003 and 2014, the returns on these investments have been low and rural poverty levels remain high. The writers review the performance of other agricultural commodities such as wheat, soya beans, rice, mixed beans, groundnuts, cotton, livestock, and fisheries and how these sectors have been weakened by under-investments due to a policy focus on maize.

Chapter 4 looks at the political economy of the maize sector and the key policy levers and actors who have the potential to change the maize-centric policies. The writers indicate that apart from President Chiluba's government that tried to reform the maize sector, all other governments have followed in the footsteps of the colonial government which promoted the production of maize through heavy subsidies to the farmers (as of 2014/2015 farming season). However, it is noted that the Minister of Agriculture, Minister of Finance and the president hold the keys for change in the maize sector. This change can only be achieved if politically motivated policy pronouncements and large unbudgeted expenditures can be avoided.

Chapter 5 focuses on the maize yield gap in Zambia. Yield gap is defined as the difference between the average farmers' actual yields and the potential yield for a specific area per given time. The chapter addresses two questions. What explains the difference in yields within the Zambian smallholder sector? What can be done to raise yields broadly among smallholders? It is clear that to answer these questions, policymakers and other stakeholders have to address three major factors: closing the social-economic, technology, and institutional gaps, for instance by improving the targeting of FISP beneficiaries as well as having workable policies that support private-public partnership; develop technologies that are tailored to the needs of the smallholder farmers, such as use of location-specific seed varieties; and, enhance the rate of adoption of improved technologies such as use of hybrid seed and use of fertilisers among smallholder farmers.

Chapter 6 looks at agricultural diversification and what is really holding Zambia back with respect to agricultural development. The writers give reference to Chapter 4 and allude to the difficulty in promoting agricultural diversification due to the politics involved in the maize sector in Zambia. It is very helpful that alternative value chains to maize are analysed such as horticulture, soya beans, groundnuts, livestock, and fisheries. These value chains have a significant domestic market opportunity which is driven by urban income growth in Zambia.

Chapter 7 analyses the effects of climate change on agriculture in Zambia. The authors outline the potential adaptation options for smallholder farmers such as use of conservation farming technologies, planting heat-tolerant seed varieties, agricultural investments, and policies and strategies to reduce risk for these farmers. This chapter also shows the potential of the forestry sector to mitigate climate change through prudent management of Zambia's forest resources, given its vast forest cover.

In conclusion, the empirical approach used in the book is couched in a tone that speaks clearly to policymakers and stakeholders in the agricultural industry. With a chronological outline of where the current problems facing the Zambian agricultural sector started from, it proves to be a good base in understanding the dynamics of Agriculture in Zambia. I definitely agree that the expectation by policymakers that doing the same things repeatedly will lead to a different outcome is the main enemy for Zambia to achieve sustainable, broad-based, pro-poor agricultural growth. All in all, it is a well written book.

Sylvia Jana Harrison

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*Forced to leave: Commercial farming and displacement in Zambia.*

By Human Rights Watch (Human Rights Watch, 2017) 100 pp. ISBN: 978-1-6231-35324

'Forced to leave' is a report based on a field study conducted by the Human Rights Watch (HRW) from 2016 to 2017 in Zambia. It outlines crucial and fundamental issues with regards to human rights in one of Zambia's agricultural districts, Serenje. The report begins with addressing the underlying factors that concern the protection of rights of vulnerable people and the perceived role that government has played in diminishing the said rights. The authors express concern with how commercial agriculture is being introduced and regulated in Serenje at the expense of rural households and how this new wave of large-scale land acquisitions is pushing these households further into the quicksand of poverty. Further, the report discusses the displacement of rural residents from their homes and farmland primarily because of commercial farming ventures being undertaken on the same land. This has been done with very little or no compensation to affected rural farmers.

The chapters of the book are presented in a sequential order, the first chapter giving a background of how agriculture remains the footstool of Zambia's economy. It gives insight into the importance of agriculture and by extension, commercial farming, and the positive impacts it would also have on the livelihoods of rural residents. This chapter nicely crafts the intentions and promises of government to develop basic infrastructure in rural areas and use agriculture as a means to reduce rural poverty, among other positive outcomes. The authors also zoom in on the high poverty rates in Zambia and argue that agriculture is meant to be a stepping stone, rather than cause a further injustice. Additionally, the authors describe the availability of rural land in Zambia, and how much of it is deemed vacant when in actual fact, some of this land is occupied by rural settlers.

Chapter Two gives a realistic picture of the commercial farming ventures in Serenje district by delving into six case studies of commercial farms. The authors are clearly impelled to link the Zambian government's initiative of developing farm blocks to the incorrect and poorly handled land conversion system in Serenje. While it appears to be clear that governing bodies and related agencies are to blame for the poorly handled situation and in some cases, misguidance of the commercial investors, the authors do not unequivocally lay blame on them. In the third chapter of the book, the authors engage in specific cases of evictions

and resettlements and argue that despite the positive initiative of commercial farmers—mostly foreign farm owners—to bring about positive change or development, they are in fact bringing more physical and psychological harm to local residents. Unsurprisingly, in most cases these commercial farmers have legally exculpated themselves of such acts.

The authors then move on to depict the negative impacts and risks of displacement and resettlement of local residents. The importance of this is also assessed from a gender perspective and how this is expected to drive things on a trajectory of devastation. Aspects related to food, water, health, and education insecurity are tackled and the gravity of the effects is felt through the excerpts of interviews quoted in the chapter. The inability of residents to access remedies or redress is well captured in this fourth chapter.

In Chapters Five and Six, the authors continue to develop their argument on how the Zambian government and responsible agencies have failed to regulate land transfers, hold consultations with affected parties, and facilitate resettlement and compensation of affected parties. The authors' argument is anchored in the recognised international human rights provisions and is focused on how these rights are not being upheld. The link between how governing bodies are doing a disservice to the very people they should protect and how international standards for human rights have been set up for guidance to governing bodies is nicely depicted in these chapters. The authors are clear enough to make a case for the local residents not only against the governing bodies but against the commercial farmers, too, who also have a responsibility to uphold human rights.

In the last chapter, the authors outline a series of recommendations in formal language, to the parties assumed to be responsible for the injustices observed; the parties being the Zambian government, commercial farmers, the international and regional financial institutions, and bilateral and multilateral donors.

The recommendations are presented in a meticulous fashion outlining what the “experts” should be able to do to ameliorate the living standards of the local residents. They recommend that the National Resettlement Policy and Compensation guidelines should be implemented to ensure displaced people have access to basic necessities such as housing, food, water, education, health services, and legal services. Compensation remedies should account for assets, interests, and equal participation of women affected by forced evictions. Additionally, ongoing monitoring of commercial farms should be done with all information released to the public domain in accessible format and language. It is worth noting that none of the recommendations offered in the report have been made to local residents and their headmen.

In summary, the report's recommendations are the most important contribution because an escape plan lies within reachable distance to circumvent the injustices suffered by the target communities.