



AGRICULTURAL CONSULTATIVE FORUM NEWSLETTER

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

Issue one, 2024



Inside this issue:

- Page 2: Executive Director's Remarks*
- Page 3: Stakeholders views on the Plant Breeders Rights Layman's Bill,*
- Page 5: Stakeholders Dialogue on the Presidential Declaration of the Drought as a National Disaster and Emergency,*
- Page 8: Stakeholders submission to the 2025 National Budget and the Medium Term Expenditure Framework 2025-2026, and*
- Page 10: National and Regional Food Security Outlook*
- Page 13: Who we are – The Agricultural Consultative Forum*

Executive Director's Remarks

We would like to welcome readers to the first edition of the Agricultural Consultative Forum (ACF) Newsletter in 2024. The ACF Newsletter focuses on sharing information on the activities of ACF, agriculture policy and any emerging issues of interest to ACF members and stakeholders in the agriculture sector. This newsletter also serves to announce information on important up-coming events in the sector. We would therefore like to encourage members and stakeholders to use this newsletter to share information on their activities and programmes through articles or reports to the editor.



At ACF, we believe that stakeholder consultation and participation in running a successful Zambian agricultural sector is non-negotiable if optimal productive capacity is to be achieved. Sector policies, programmes and practices no matter how well designed, only form the first step to developing the sector. What makes them more efficient and effective is the complementary involvement of the sector stakeholders along the development chain from policy formulation, programme design and implementation through to practices. The Agricultural Consultative Forum was thus established as an innovative institutionalized consultative platform that would involve stakeholder dialogue in policy formulation and programme implementation, in order to instill a sense of ownership, in contributing to economic growth and poverty reduction, at both national and household level.

This particular edition of the ACF Newsletter shares information on the following five key issues in the agricultural sector:

- ✓ Stakeholders views on the Plant Breeders Rights Layman's Bill,
- ✓ Stakeholders Dialogue on the Presidential Declaration of the Drought as a National Disaster and Emergency,
- ✓ Stakeholders submission to the 2025 National Budget and the Medium Term Expenditure Framework 2025-2026, and
- ✓ National and Regional Food Security Outlook

STAKEHOLDERS CONVENE TO DISCUSS CONTENTIOUS PLANT BREEDERS' RIGHTS BILL

Government has called on agricultural stakeholders to support the proposed Plant Breeder's Rights (PBR) Bill of 2024.

This call to action comes as the Ministry of Agriculture seeks to repeal and replace the existing PBR Act of 2007 with the new Bill intended to better reflect the evolving needs of the sector.

The proposed PBR Bill has generated significant discussion among stakeholders, with some expressing concerns about its potential impact on biodiversity, national seed sovereignty, and climate resilience.

In response to these concerns, the Agricultural Consultative Forum (ACF) organized a stakeholders meeting to discuss the proposed Bill.



During the meeting, Seed Control and Certification Institute (SCCI) Director, Francisco Miti, explained that the Bill aims to promote agricultural innovation and safeguard intellectual property of farmers and researchers in the sector.

Dr. Miti expressed regret that some stakeholders have chosen to spread misinformation rather than fully understanding the content of the Bill.

“These rights are crucial for protecting the intellectual property of plant breeders, encouraging innovation, and promoting the development of resilient crop varieties,” he stated. He further reassured that the proposed Bill would safeguard the rights of farmers as it defines them as breeders who retain the freedom to patent and protect any new products they invent or discover.

“The proposed Bill does not take away the rights of a farmer, because even a farmer is defined in this law as a breeder. If a farmer invents or discovers a new product, they are also at liberty to go and have it patented, and protect their inventions,” he clarified.

And Agricultural Institute of Zambia (AIZ) Chief Executive Office, Mathews Ngosa, explained that the proposed Bill permits farmers to share and use seeds for non-commercial purposes as opposed to what has been disseminated in some sections of the media.

Mr. Ngosa emphasised the importance of PBR in fostering agricultural development and sustainability in Zambia. “The enforcement of PBR is a pivotal step in ensuring that our agricultural sector remains competitive and innovative. It not only rewards our local breeders but also attracts international

investments and collaborations,” He stated. Mr. Ngosa highlighted both the achievements and challenges faced by local breeders, including limited access to funding and the need for more robust legal frameworks to protect their innovations. One of the recurring themes was the need for greater awareness and education about PBR among farmers both in rural and urban areas.

“Many farmers are unaware of the benefits that PBR can bring to their livelihoods. We need more outreach programmes to educate them about how these rights can improve their productivity and income,” said Martin Sekeleti, from Zambia Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (ZAFAAS) Board Member. Meanwhile, Farmers Association of Zambia Representative, Judith Ngimbu, voiced the apprehensions of many in the agricultural community stating that many farmers perceive this as a potential threat to their longstanding role as key stakeholders and primary users of seeds.

Ms. Ngumbi noted that farmers are not against innovation or the recognition of breeders’ efforts suggesting that the legislation could not side-line those who work directly with the land.

“While we understand the need for innovation and recognize the importance of supporting plant breeders, farmer are not just users of seeds but active participants in the agricultural ecosystem. Any law that restricts our ability to work with seeds as we have always done will have far-reaching consequences,” she remarked.

Ms. Ngimbu indicated that if this legislation is passed without considering the farmers’ perspective, it could lead to an over-reliance on a few major seed companies, potentially leading to a monopolistic scenario where these companies dictate prices and availability.

In assuring the stakeholders, ACF Executive Director Masiye Nawiko emphasized the commitment of both the government and the Forum to balancing the interests of plant breeders and farmers through policy dialogue.

The Plant Breeders’ Rights Stakeholder consultations mark a significant milestone in Zambia’s journey towards a more innovative and secure agricultural sector, promising a future where the efforts and ingenuity of plant breeders are duly recognized and rewarded.

Stakeholders Dialogue on the Presidential Declaration of the Drought as a National Disaster and Emergency

Following the President of the Republic of Zambia, His Excellency Mr. Hakainde Hichilema's declaration of Zambia's drought as a national disaster and emergency, on Thursday 29 February 2024 the Agricultural Consultative Forum (ACF), held a National Stakeholder Dialogue, on 27th March 2024 at Southern Sun Ridgeway Hotel in Lusaka, to discuss the various measures that were announced to mitigate against the disaster. The dialogue was held under the auspices of the "Building Systemic Resilience Against Climate Variability and Extremes (ClimBeR) Project, which is implemented by the Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN), in Zambia through ACF.



The President called for urgent and decisive action from all stakeholders. The declaration of a National Disaster and Emergency was as a result of the severe drought, that the Country experienced in the 2023/2024 rain season which has severely affected 84

districts in Lusaka, Central, Copperbelt, Eastern, North- Western, Western, and Southern Provinces of the Country.

According to the Government, the destruction caused by the prolonged dry spell is immense and will affect the availability of ground and surface water, pasture for livestock and wildlife, and have the potential to increase the incidence of human and animal conflict, as well as disease. Further, this drought has led to the Country losing approximately one million hectares from 2.2 million hectares planted to Maize, with 1.1 million households or 9.9 million people affected.

In view of the above situation, the Zambian Government has come up with a number of short-term and long-term measures, to resolve the challenges of the dry spell, in particular, and the adverse effects of climate change, in general. However, the Government realizes that its proposed measures were by no means exhaustive, hence the call for urgent and decisive action from all stakeholders.

As per its mandate, the ACF called for a national dialogue on the Presidential declaration of the 2023/24 drought as a national disaster and emergency to discuss key policy pathways towards sustainable and resilient agriculture, and food and nutrition-secure futures, in view of climate change.

The following were the stakeholders' recommendations on the implementation of the government measures:

a) Short-term Measures

Measure 1: Channeling more resources towards humanitarian relief

Proposals

- i) Provision of water for irrigation to include water for drinking and for livestock.
- ii) categorize beneficiaries into relevant segments.
- iii) Add food-for-work component.

Measure 2: Import additional electricity and rationing energy use

Proposals

- i) Provide incentives on importation of gas stoves and gas.
- ii) Promote use of biogas among Zambians.
- iii) Incentive to reduce cost of electricity for farmers, seed companies, and millers.
- iv) Promote use of mixed power supply systems to households and business entities (hydro and solar power).
- v) Government to ensure that citizens benefit from tax incentives on solar products.
- vi) Promote the use of energy-saving bulbs.

Measure 3: Not to engage in Bush burning

Proposals

- i) Need for a Statutory Instrument (SI) or strengthen the enforcement of existing policy on bush-burning.

Measure 4: Source additional maize to mitigate the deficit

Proposals

- i) Put measures to promote dietary diversity away from maize, e.g. blending maize meal with sorghum or millet.
- ii) FRA to consider expanding crops bought to include sorghum, millet, and other grains to stimulate more production of these crops.
- iii) Ensure phytosanitary measures when importing maize.

Measure 5: Leveraging Zambia's Defense Forces to expand irrigation schemes as a way of increasing (national) food production.

Proposals

- i) Production by defence forces should be cost-effective.
- ii) Use of Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA) by defence forces in agricultural production.

Measure 6: Encourage farmers across the country to embark on planting early and winter maize using various forms of irrigation.

Proposals

- i) Put incentives to make irrigation equipment affordable to promote early and winter maize in areas with adequate water resources.

- ii) Incentives to help smallholder farmers to sink boreholes on their farms for irrigation purposes.
- iii) Build canals from rivers and lakes into farming areas.
- iv) Encourage irrigated pasture production.
- v) Consider promoting other crops beyond maize for the winter farming program.

Measure 7: Ministry of Community Development and Social Services (MCDSS) to enhance the numbers under the social cash transfer so that more vulnerable people are covered.

Proposals

- i) Increase amount for Social Cash Transfer
- ii) Consider adding food pack to the SCT package

Measure 8: Food Reserve Agency (FRA) to enhance community sales to the vulnerable and work hand-in-hand with the Disaster Management and Mitigation Unit (DMMU) in the provision of maize for purchase in the communities.

Proposals

- i) FRA to put in measures to buy local maize on time before it is sold off by farmers.
- ii) FRA to ensure avoidance of wastage of stored maize.
- iii) FRA to consider selling maize in smaller packages e.g. 25kg bags.

b) Long-term Measures

Measure 1: Focus on enhancing water harvesting mechanisms to enable precision and other irrigation developments to stimulate agricultural production.

Proposals

- i) Construction of dams to be included in Constituency Development Funds (CDF) for each constituency.
- ii) Consider linking northern water bodies to the southern part of the country.
- iii) Create consolidated farm blocks¹ for smallholder farmers located in low? populated areas.
- iv) Streamline and shorten procedures for water access policies (Water Resources Management Authority [WARMA] regulations).

Measure 2: Increase the provision of soft agriculture loans to Zambians for mechanization and increased productivity.

Proposals

- i) Appropriate scale mechanization for increased production.
- ii) Develop/design tailored loan facilities for various societal groups, including cooperatives and marginalized groups.

Measure 3: Accelerate the development of alternative energy sources such as solar, wind, and others.

Proposals

- i) Promote development of mini community solar plants.

¹ That is, amalgamating several small farms into one, to facilitate efficient and/or economic use of some farm machinery and equipment.

- ii) Review restrictive policy on coverage of community solar grids.
- iii) Explore wind energy in some parts of the Country.

c) Other Recommendations

- i) Promote sustainable farming practices such as growing of alternative drought resistance crops.
- ii) Ensure implementation of recommendations through collaboration and involvement of private sector and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs).
- iii) There is need for pro-activity and not reactive and plan for projected adverse weather events such as elnino.
- iv) There is need to promote production of region-specific crops.
- v) Strengthen weather forecasting capacity (area-specific forecasting and climate modeling).
- vi) There is need to prevent or stop the spread of bad environmental practices, such as complete uprooting of trees by migrant farmers relocating to other parts of the country.
- vii) Strengthen enforcement of maintaining the 50 meters' buffer zone on river banks, which is being violated countrywide

STAKEHOLDERS DISCUSS PROPOSALS FOR THE 2025 NATIONAL BUDGET AND 2025 TO 2026 MEDIUM-TERM EXPENDITURE FRAMEWORK



The Agricultural Consultative Forum (ACF) held a consultative meeting with the stakeholders listed in Annex1 of this report, on 22nd April, 2024. The meeting was called to discuss tax, non-tax and expenditure proposals for review and possible inclusion in

the 2025 National Budget and the 2025 to 2026 Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF).

The key budget proposals were as follows:

BUDGET PROPOSAL	JUSTIFICATION
Remove duty/taxes on agricultural machinery and equipment; irrigation equipment and solar products	This will make these equipment, machinery and solar products more affordable to small scale farmers.

<p>Review taxation on imported vegetable seed packaging which cannot be produced in Zambia.</p>	<p>Removal of duty on vegetable seed packaging material will result in reduced prices of vegetable seed and ultimately result in increased production and consumption of vegetables</p>
<p>Encourage commercial lending institutions to provide low-interest financial services to increase access to finance for small- and medium-scale farmers to stimulate agricultural diversification. There is also need to streamline the process of accessing finances under the Sustainable Agricultural Financing Facility (SAFF) and the Citizens Economic Empowerment Commission (CEEC), to make it easier</p>	<p>Providing an enabling environment for lending institutions to provide low interest financial services will increase access to finance for smallholder and medium scale farmers and this will stimulate agricultural diversification and productivity</p>
<p>Increase funding towards promotion of climate-smart agriculture (CSA), such as conservation agriculture and integrated agricultural farming systems (IAFS), as well as organic farming and other agro ecological-friendly farming practices. Incentivize smallholder farmers and small-scale local businesses who adopt and integrate CSA and nature-friendly agricultural production practices.</p>	<p>Increased funding will broaden the integration and application of climate-smart agriculture practices among the small- and medium-scale farmers. This will lead to improved environmental management, reduced Green House Gas (GHG) emissions and better preparation for and adaptation to severe droughts such as the 2023/2024 drought</p>
<p>Develop a regular Extension Service Staff Recruitment plan for the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry Fisheries and Livestock, and Ministry of Green Economy and Environment (similar to what is obtaining under the Ministries of Health, Education and Defence). And Strengthen extension workers' capacity (specific skills and logistical support) to provide more effective professional extension-service delivery in Agriculture, Livestock, aquaculture and forestry practices and technologies.</p>	<p>This proposal will lead to the promotion of technologies and practices that make crop, livestock, fisheries and forestry value chains resilient to climate related shocks, have the inherent capacity to meet the market demand and can sustain productivity and profitability to enhance the reliability of incomes derived from these value chain activities</p>
<p>Upscale agricultural insurance, e.g. weather-based index insurance protection, to small-holder farmers, through enhanced sensitization, in collaboration with insurance companies.</p>	<p>Up-scaling agricultural insurance will enable most farmers to recover quickly from crop and livestock losses</p>
<p>The Recovery Plan as a result of Drought should include: Allocating 10% CDF to resilience-building and restoration of degraded land, and construction of water-harvesting infrastructure, in drought-prone areas, e.g Southern Province. Establish or re-establish seed reserves. Funding of pasture seed production (pasture seed fund) or include pasture seed in the FISP package.</p>	<p>A comprehensive drought recovery plan will enable the country to move quickly to sustainable farming practices</p>

Supplementation of stock feed, such as mineral licks should be tax-free	This will result into healthier animals
Increase funding for irrigation technologies, dam construction, and low-cost water harvesting infrastructure	This will increase agricultural production and productivity throughout the year and even during drought periods
Waive the fees that are charged by the Water Resources Management Authority (WARMA) for abstracting water for irrigation. If need be, WARMA's operations should be supplemented by Government due to loss of revenue from fees.	Waiver of WARMA's fees will enable farmers to engage in irrigation to compensate for losses incurred from the draught. After the current draught it is important for WARMA to regulate water extraction for irrigation.
Redesign the Farmer Input Support Programme and create a policy to subsidize inputs for nature-positive agricultural production, such as CSA	A reformed FISP and FRA will result in more efficient implementation and thus leaving more resources to the key drivers of nature-positive agricultural change, such as CSA.
Commission a study to understand drivers of land degradation such as the case of Southern Province	The study will guide policy on relocation of farmers from degraded areas to new areas and promote restoration of degraded areas to sustain agricultural activities.
Provide Farmer Input Support to small-scale aquaculture development through provision of inputs such as fingerlings and fish feed.	Small-scale fish farmers need to be supported in order for the country to have enough protein provided through fish. This support can be 1% of the current FISP recognizing that crop small-scale farmers are more than fish farmers. This will put into action the political will towards increasing fish production for the nation. It will increase household nutrition and income for other needs. It will contribute to diversifying the economy in the agriculture sector.

SOUTHERN AFRICA REGIONAL SUPPLY AND MARKET OUTLOOK UPDATE

ACF Secretariat did a quick scan on the food situation in the Southern Africa Region and the following are the key findings concerning the outlook for the 2024/2025 marketing season

According to the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWSNET),

- In Southern Africa, the effective start of the 2023/24 rainy season began around 10 to 30 days late. From October to March, cumulative rainfall was below average in central Mozambique, Zimbabwe, southern Malawi, southern and northwestern Madagascar, southern DRC, parts of the maize triangle in South Africa, most of Zambia, and southeastern Angola. Central areas of the region registered the driest February since 1920. However, well-above-

average cumulative rainfall was recorded in most of Tanzania and northern parts of Zambia, Mozambique, and Malawi.

- The crop prospects for 2024 are poor, with below-average harvests expected. Maize yields are expected to be below average for Malawi, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique. Crop yields in South Africa dropped from an average of 5.64 MT/ha to 5.03 MT/ha (CEC, March 2024), although better than the 3.7 MT/ha realized in the 2015/16 El Niño season harvest. In Zimbabwe, preliminary estimates suggest yields fell from an average of 1.02 MT/ha to 0.62 MT/ha, slightly above the 0.5 MT/ha recorded in the 2015/16 El Niño season. Officially, the government has acknowledged production of about 697,000 MT, one of the lowest on record, though higher than the 2016 harvest. In Malawi, yields are expected to fall from an average of 2.02 MT/ha to 1.62 MT/ha. The decline represents a 16.5 percent reduction from the 2010 to 2023 average harvest of 3,490,000 MT. In Zambia, the government has stated that more than 1 million hectares out of 2.2 million hectares planted were severely damaged due to weather shocks.
- There is an acknowledgment of a general crop failure in Southern Africa's main summer grain regions due to record-high temperatures and dry conditions. The governments of Zambia, Malawi, and Zimbabwe have declared natural disasters because of the El Niño-induced drought crisis.
- A tight market supply is expected for maize in Southern Africa due to significant reductions in South Africa and Zambia harvests, two of the largest maize producers in the region. Given the poor harvest prospects, Zambia will likely maintain export restrictions this year. South Africa, generally the leading supplier for Zimbabwe and other structural deficit countries, may not be able to provide Zimbabwe with the total required volume of white maize this year; Namibia, Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Madagascar, and Zambia will likely also require maize imports to supplement their domestic annual needs. Tanzania will likely export maize and maize meal to Zambia, Malawi, and DRC.
- Although intra-regional trade will soften national deficits in Southern Africa, it will not meet regional needs in MY 2024/25. At least 5 million MT of imports from outside the region are required to meet regional maize demand. Fortunately, the anticipated regional deficit is substantially lower than that following the 2015/16 strong El Niño, when over 6 million tons were imported. Southern Africa will likely import maize from the United States, South America, Ukraine, and Russia. While there have been notable slowdowns at the Port of Durban resulting from increased cargo traffic around the Cape of Good Hope, there is no indication that port congestion will impact regional import capacity.

National Overviews for 2024/25 Marketing Season

1. National maize production in Zimbabwe is expected to be below average. Official reports suggest that Zimbabwe will likely produce 697,000 MT, at least 1.6 million MT below the national requirement of 2.3 million MT. The country is likely to import maize from South and North America.
2. In Malawi, national maize production is expected to be 1.92 million MT, around 45 percent below the five-year average of 3.5 million MT due to extended dry spells in the central and southern regions. Malawi will benefit from typical cross-border maize inflows from Tanzania and Mozambique and commercial imports to meet the national requirement of 3.52 million MT.
3. In Mozambique, maize production outcomes are expected to be around 41 percent below the five-year average of 2.05 million MT due to extended dry spells in the central and southern regions. Typical inflows of maize imports from South Africa into Maputo are expected to be below average and unable to cover the national requirement of 2.32 million MT. Sourcing maize from the international market is the most likely scenario for commercial and humanitarian needs.
4. In Tanzania, maize output is expected to be 8.3 million MT (31 percent above average) and a national surplus of over 1.5 million MT. Tanzania will remain a net exporter in 2024/25 with an above-average opening stock. However, the suspected presence of MLND virus in its maize is deterring some of Tanzania's neighbors from importing grain, preferring to import maize flour instead because of the fear of possible contamination of domestic seed systems.
5. The production forecast for white maize in South Africa is 6.27 million MT, a 26 percent decline from last season's bumper harvest and 19 percent lower than the five-year average. The yellow maize production forecast for South Africa is 6.97 million MT, 12 percent lower than last season but 3 percent above the five-year average. With 1.1 and 1 million MT of carryover white and yellow maize, respectively, and below-average production, the overall supply of maize is expected to be 10 percent below average. The supply and demand estimates for South Africa suggest that the country will profit more from exporting white maize but retain the more affordable yellow maize for the domestic animal feed industry. Maize imports into South Africa's coastal areas and re-exports to neighboring countries are likely later in 2024/25.
6. In Zambia, production estimates put national maize production at 1.51 million MT, a reduction of 53.67 percent from last year's production of 3.3 million MT. With a carryover of 0.41 million MT the country has a total of 1.92 million MT, which is 41 percent below national requirements. Large quantities of imported cereals will be required to fulfill consumption needs. Zambia has already signaled interest in securing maize from Tanzania and Uganda to cover the supply gap caused by the El Niño-induced drought.

WHO WE ARE – THE AGRICULTURAL CONSULTATIVE FORUM

Our vision

ACF aspires “*To be the leading policy advisory organization in the formulation and development of agricultural sector policies*” in Zambia.

Our Mission

To provide quality policy advisory services in the development and implementation of agricultural policies through evidence-based research and stakeholder consultation.

Our Core Values and Guiding Principles

➤ Non-partisan and independence

ACF is not affiliated to any political party and operates as an independent Zambian registered NGO. It, therefore, applies a non-partisan policy in the way its mission is carried out. The value of the collective effort of all stakeholders is recognized, regardless of political affiliation.

➤ Innovation and creativity

Innovation is at the heart of the ACF. The Organization continuously strives to bring in ingenuity in finding new ways of delivering solutions for its target clients and partners.

➤ Inclusiveness

ACF embraces diversity, equality, and equity in the work and services it provides.

➤ Transparency, accountability and Governance

ACF holds itself fully responsible and accountable to its stakeholders and partners for its actions and work. It also conducts its work with a very high degree of transparency. It is governed by a Board of Directors and holds Annual General Meetings (AGMs). Its daily operations are run by a lean Secretariat, consisting of highly qualified, motivated, and competent staff.

➤ Evidence-based:

Promoting and facilitating stakeholder dialogue and analysis anchored on empirical evidence to influence and advocate for agricultural policy formulation and enhanced implementation