



ZAMBIA

INNOVATIONS IN AGROECOLOGY

THE ZAMBIA FOOD CHANGE LAB

Maize is the predominant crop in Zambia, both in terms of production and consumption, and levels of crop diversity on Zambian farms tend to be very low. The country's maize-centric food system contributes to poverty, malnutrition, and vulnerability to drought, pests and diseases. Growing a wider variety of nutritious crops is needed in order to improve rural livelihoods, diversify diets, maintain soil fertility and to make farmers more resilient to climate change. The question is how to get farmers and all the other relevant actors on board.

DESCRIPTION OF THE INNOVATION

The Zambian Food Change Lab is an inclusive multi-stakeholder process in which women and men in the Zambian food system – including farmers and farmers' organisations, policy-makers, youth, the private sector, civil society and the media – jointly analyse problems, build coalitions of stakeholders, generate ideas for change, and test these innovations on the ground. Informed by and based on local knowledge and needs, the main orientation of the Zambian Food Change Lab is to define and co-create strategies for the diversification of agriculture, moving away from maize monocropping.



DESIGN AND SHARING OF THE INNOVATION

Change Labs are ideally suited to addressing complex issues which encompass a myriad of actors and policies. One of the most powerful aspects of the Change Lab process is that it works on multiple levels. While it is underpinned by the latest information and analysis on the Zambian food system, participants are also asked to listen and respond not just with their heads, but also emotionally and intuitively. After all, fomenting change cannot be done with data alone.

BENEFIT FOR FAMILY FARMERS AND FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY

Smallholder farmers and farmers' organisations are actively participating in the Change Lab meetings, and play a key role in the Lab's working groups. Strategies and concrete policy recommendations on how to

diversify agriculture are being developed: in particular, strategies for how smallholder farmers can be supported to produce more diverse and nutritious food, benefiting their own and the country's food security.

SOCIAL, ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS

Working groups that arose in the Change Lab are actively contributing towards the goal of agricultural diversification. The youth group is developing learning centres for food production by young people and conducting lobbying and advocacy around sustainable diets. A second group organised a two-day national symposium on agriculture in September 2017, which brought smallholder farmers and farmers' organisations together with the Ministry of Agriculture and other key stakeholders. Agricultural diversification has been enshrined as a key pillar of Zambia's 7th National Development Plan (2017-

2021), and platforms such as this one enable farmers to give feedback to the government on its implementation.

LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Clearly, the process of diversifying agriculture and alleviating malnutrition in Zambia is a complicated and lengthy process. Nonetheless, the Change Lab methodology can help make food governance more inclusive and effective, providing a strong impetus and inspiration while initiating durable coalitions for change. It is recommended that sub-national governments also hold such inclusive stakeholder dialogues for more effective food policy-making.

