State, Poverty and Agriculture in Zambia: The Impact of State Policies after Democratization

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Introduction

In Zambia, agriculture accounted for some 21 per cent of real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2009, and the sector still absorbs over two-thirds of its labour force.[1] The country has undergone stable growth since the beginning of the 2000s (more than 6 per cent per year since 2004) and nationally poverty has declined, but more than 70 per cent of rural people live in poverty.[2] Agriculture therefore remains as one of the main priorities for poverty alleviation (UNDP 2013). Big potential lies in the country's rural assets: out of its landmass of approximately 752,000 square kilometres, 56 per cent is arable land (42 million hectares). In addition, about 35 per cent of fresh water resources in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region are in Zambia which, if profitably utilized, could make agriculture a mainstay of the economy. Despite such assets, poor policies dating back to government choices after independence have left the agricultural sector as a secondary issue that democratization after 1991 has barely reversed.

This contribution aims first to describe what has been done or not in regard to rural areas since independence by the former authoritarian regime and subsequent elected governments. Secondly, how parties have managed the land/agriculture issue in order to get access to or keep power after 1991; and finally to evaluate how government measures have impacted on poverty, in particular rural poverty.

Apparently everything indicates a lack of a strategic approach to rural lands and agriculture in general. According to the author, two main mutually reinforcing factors have determined this disappointing result: the inability of farmer associations to voice common interests because the farmers' interests are fragmented, and governing parties' preferred regulation by patronage. Furthermore, while Zambia's agriculture potentialities are luring large-scale agricultural investors (Nolte 2013), such new developments are taking place within an inadequate land governance system.

1 National Accounts Statistics 2011, Central Statistical Office: www.zamstats.gov.zm.

2 77.9 per cent in 2010 from 80.3 per cent in 2006 (CSO-RoZ 2010).

General Overview

Zambia is one of the most urbanized countries in sub-Saharan Africa with 31.5 per cent of the population living in the largest cities (35.7 per cent in total).[3] Lusaka and Copperbelt provinces have the highest percentage of urban population at 82 and 81 per cent respectively. The Eastern Province has the lowest one at 9 per cent (RoZ 2011). Thus, the population is concentrated in a few urban areas along the major transport corridors,[4] while the rural areas are sparsely populated. About 90 per cent of its land is therefore rural land whose tenure is mainly dominated by customary land (about 80 per cent).

In 1982, Zambia was one of the five most heavily indebted countries in the world (Rotberg 2002), importing 50 per cent of its food and dependent on copper and cobalt exports for 96 per cent of its foreign exchange.[5] This was the result of strategies which had prompted mining industries at the expense of rural development at a time of declining prices for copper.[6] The economy declined and continued to decline in the beginning of the 1990s (–1.1 per cent between 1990 and 1995). This adverse condition was only reversed towards the end of the 1990s: copper prices started to rise again and foreign investments poured in. This favoured steady growth – from about 3.8 per cent GDP per year between 2001 and 2004 to 6.8 per cent in 2012 – and a better diversification of the economy. Copper dependence declined from about 75 per cent of exports in 2005 to 65 per cent in 2010 – a percentage that remains important, however. The new conditions have generally improved the ordinary life of common people but marked differences persist between urban and rural areas. The data illustrate that poverty in rural areas is worse than in urban areas. In 2010, poverty levels affected about 60 per cent of the national population with the worst results in provinces like Western, Luapula and Eastern which are overwhelmingly rural (see Table 4.1). Notwithstanding bumper maize crops in recent years which have reduced the need for imports, Zambia's economic growth has not dramatically reversed the stubbornly high poverty rates, given the burden of high birth and high HIV/AIDS rates.

3 See the World Bank's 'World Development Indicators': http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/world-development-indicators.

4 Copperbelt and Lusaka provinces are home to about 69 per cent of urban Zambians. The remaining seven provinces are overwhelmingly rural.

5 Since 2005 Zambia has qualified for debt relief under the Highly Indebted Poor Country Initiative, consisting of approximately US$6 billion in debt relief. Therefore, the debt has been seriously reduced. Zambia's domestic and external debt for the year 2013 was projected to reach 37 per cent of the country's GDP (Zambia's 2013 debt 2013).

6 For more details see the following section.

Table 4.1 Province level poverty estimates (percentage)

Provinces	1991	1998	Change 1991–1998	2006	Change 1998–2006	2010	Change 2006–2010	Change 1991–2010	Rank 2010
Central	70	77	+7	71	-5	61	-10	-9	7
Copperbelt	61	65	+4	37	-28	34	-3	-27	8
Eastern	85	79	-6	78	-1	78	=	-7	3
Luapula	84	82	-2	74	-8	80	+6	-4	1
Lusaka	31	53	+22	25	-28	24	-1	-7	9
Northern	84	81	-3	78	-3	75	-3	-9	4
North-Western	75	77	+2	71	-6	67	-4	-8	6
Southern	79	75	-4	73	-2	68	-5	-11	5
Western	84	89	+5	83	-6	80	-3	-4	1

Sources: CSO-RoZ (2006–2010) and statistics on Central Statistical Office website: www.zamstats.gov.zm.

Agricultural Policies in Historical Perspexctive: From Independence to Multipartyism (1964–1991)

In 1973, the United National Independence Party (UNIP) became the sole legal party in Zambia, but ever since independence in 1964 it had enjoyed overwhelmingly majorities. Such strong political favour enabled President Kaunda to enforce robust policies in the economic realm. Two priorities and one asset drove the economic strategy: to ensure food security and agricultural production, and copper. By 1964, the government started to implement a series of policy measures to ensure that food security and agricultural production met the required levels: price controls and subsidies were introduced and a system of rural cooperatives and parastatals was established for the purpose of buying and marketing agricultural products and to ensure the availability of enough stock for food needs.

At the same time, in order to enhance industrialization in the country, nationalization of economic assets was also pursued. In the late 1960s, foreign firms both in rural and industrial sectors were taken over in order to strengthen the presumed state capacity to deliver jobs and credit (Baylies and Szeftel 1982). In 1972, it was the turn of the copper mines to be nationalized. Zambia's industrialization was based on import substitution relying on anticipated high prices for copper. Development was primarily seen as industrial development and Zambia made no exception, like most states elsewhere in the developing world (Bates 1981: 11). Copper production and exports remained central as this satisfied the 'revenue imperative' (Bates 1981: 13).

However, all planning efforts to attain economic diversification, self-sufficiency and provision of social welfare had abruptly failed by the end of the 1970s.[7] In particular, economic centralization proved to be a failure as mismanagement and corruption followed. For example, the Industrial Development Corporation (INDECO), which had the task of establishing small industries in rural areas, was a standing case of failure and corruption (Tangri 1999: 28–31). Projects undertaken under such plans were mainly driven by political considerations and rapidly led to mismanagement and corruption (Good 1986). Furthermore, other opportunities to implement policies in the agricultural sector were also hampered by the tenure system. As elsewhere in Africa, land tenure inherited from colonial practices had barely been touched (Jackson and Rosberg 1982): crown lands had become state lands in 1964 while the remaining ones had been placed under the authority of chiefs once these were finally co-opted by the party in power.

There were plans not only to rationalize, strengthen and diversify production but to politically mobilize peasants in favour of the UNIP through the creation of grassroots structures which could link up local development needs with priorities defined at the central level (Ollawa 1978: 117–18; Bratton 1980). However, because of lack of adequate budget and because most important decisions were imposed from the centre, such structures completely lacked power. The effects were rather a decentralization of patronage opportunities for party (UNIP) officials and local elites through control of Ward Development Committees (WDCs) (Bratton 1980: 12), while Village Productivity Committees (VPCs) which were intended to run efforts at rural development mostly remained on paper. Despite a formal commitment by Kaunda in 1968 to prioritize development in rural areas, migration to urban areas continued to be the easiest solution to rampant poverty in rural areas. Behind such formal commitments by the party in power and its official policy line, there was an important reason for both the government and the party to abdicate to effectively prioritize rural development: on the one hand, rural areas remained a field for draining political support through the pivotal role of local elites; on the other, most crucial decisions rested at the central level and were centred around the strategic need to find revenue. As for the former, chiefs were now part of the local elite. The Development of Villages and Registration Act of 1971 involved chiefs in the economic development of rural areas through their active participation in activities and projects carried out by WDCs and VPCs. Hence, after having lost much of their power to the UNIP at the early stages of independence when a series of measures such as the suppression of Native Authorities had reduced their role, in 1985 the government decided to reward the '*boma* class'[8] by conferring on it the role of deciding whenever and wherever customary land should be granted for leasehold purposes.

7 The first national planning started in 1965 with the Transitional National Development Plan.

8 As Chipungu (1992) defined chiefs in Zambia.

The overall result of policies centred on price controls, subsidy inputs to farmers and purchasing of rural products through the National Agriculture Marketing Board (NAMBOARD) in a period of declining copper prices[9] was that the budgetary burden of agricultural subsidies alone became burdensome, reaching almost 10 per cent of all government expenditure in 1980 and averaging 7.4 per cent of all expenditure in the 1977–84 period. This coupled with a rampant rural exodus that hampered any serious effort of planning in rural areas. By the end of the 1980s, Zambia had lost any comparative advantage over neighbouring Zimbabwe and South Africa. The land remained as it was during colonial times: divided among small and less productive lands in the hands of small rural producers and potentially better and profitable lands in the form of state properties.

The Return to Multiparty Politics: Agriculture as a Political Issue Under MMD Dominance (1991–2011)

Having won the first multiparty elections in 1991 with strong support from electors, and destined to benefit from stable majorities in parliament for a decade (see Table 4.2), the governments of the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) in the 1990s undertook one of the highest privatization schemes in sub-Saharan Africa, extending to agriculture. Price control on food (with the exception of maize) was officially removed in December 1991 leading to an enormous increase in prices, while the state-owned marketing companies were privatized by 1994–95. Such increases in prices contributed at first to the growth of poverty in urban areas (see Table 4.1). However, the initial phase of liberalization also marked a reduction in productivity due to poor market policies to sustain the sector, especially for small rural producers of food crops such as maize. About 60 per cent of maize, which is the staple food, was produced by smallholder farmers mainly living far away from markets and owning less than five hectares. About 60–70 per cent of smallholder farmers therefore did not benefit from the liberalization reforms of the 1990s. As agricultural credit finance was put into private hands, the cost of production also rose. Privatization served the requirements of the International Financial Institutions (IFI) rather than meeting local interests.[10]

9 Copper prices fell harshly on the world market after 1974 up to 1979, then fell again in 1981 and would only recover by 2005.

10 Although the Chiluba government was seriously committed to following IFI's request to privatize the public sector, some resistance came from core supporters of the MMD with the partial exception of the business community. For instance, the mining sector was not privatized, and then only partially, until 2000 (see Note 13). For further information on privatization and its consequences, see Simutanyi (1996).

Table 4.2 Parliamentary majorities since 1991

Year	First party per cent seats in the NA	Second party per cent seats in the NA	Third party per cent seats in the NA
1991	MMD 83	UNIP 17	–
1996	MMD 87	Indep. 7	NP 3
2001	MMD 46	UPND 33	UNIP 9
2006	MMD 48	PF 29	UDA* 18
2011	PF 40	MMD 37	UPND 19

*UDA was a coalition composed of UPND, UNIP and FDD.
Source: By the author.

To address this deficiency, subsidies such as the Fertilizer Credit Programme (FCP) were reintroduced in 1997 to the benefit of rural producers. However, this happened after the 1996 elections, at a time when the MMD enjoyed its strongest majority, increasing its MPs from 125 to 131 (out of a total of 150), with 60.1 per cent of the votes cast. Once UNIP (the Kaunda party and the most credible opposition) dropped out of the race when its candidate for the presidential election was excluded for not having Zambian parents, the remaining votes went to a constellation of other parties some of which enjoyed limited rural support, such as the National Party (NP) in North-Western and the Agenda for Zambia (AZ) in Western. However, the support for these parties mainly came from an ethnic core, as Posner (2005: 239) demonstrates. The only party contesting the parliamentarian race with an agrarian platform at that time, the National Lima Party (NLP), managed to obtain a mere 6 per cent of the total vote and no MPs. Interestingly, NLP, at that time led by the now Vice President of Zambia Guy Scott, was the only party without any explicit ethnic profile.[11] MMD was still perceived as the most powerful and credible national party and enjoyed renewed support. Thus, apart from NLP, no party really challenged the MMD economic agenda in 1996. According to Rakner (2003: 121–2), at that time the link between economic interests and the party system had not yet developed. The miners' sector, which was potentially better able to pressurize governments, was actually ineffectual and its priorities were largely disregarded by MMD.

The re-introduction of subsidies benefiting rural producers occurred when the party in power realized the importance of rural votes. Such electoral use of subsidies before or immediately after elections as a reward for votes thus started in 1996 and inaugurated a practice widely employed thereafter by MMD. By 2001, with its monopolistic position in the electoral arena beginning to be seriously questioned,[12] MMD started to cultivate a burgeoning rural profile. Such had not been the case around the turning point of the 1991 elections and not in 1996 either. During the latter elections the MMD again managed to win more than 70 per cent of the votes in urban conurbations such as those of Copperbelt, although the requests of the Zambia Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) for re-introduction of subsidies on food and transport to alleviate the difficulties of the workers had been regularly downplayed from 1993 to 1996.[13] Chiluba, at that time the elected President of the Republic, enjoyed a stable majority in the National Assembly, and the trade unions, especially the major ones such as the Mineworkers Union of Zambia (MUZ), acquiesced in the government decision to privatize the mines as well.[14]

By 2001 subsidies policies for the benefit of rural voters were enacted and would be scaled up before or after any electoral cycle (in 2001, 2006 and 2011) as a way to reward loyalty or as a means to gain new voters. According to Mason and Ricker-Gilbert (2013), households in areas where the ruling party won elections acquired significantly more subsidized inputs than other households. This policy of reward was reinforced by the resilience of the ethnic factor which mainly remained a rural issue.[15] At that time MMD was perceived as having its strongholds in certain ethnic constituencies (initially Bemba, though by 2001 it extended to ethnic constituencies hitherto weakly covered). Thus, self-interest drove MMD to a policy of reward more than pursuit of a policy of penetrating rural areas which were more loyal to other parties (such as the United Party for National Development – UPND).[16] Its rural

11 Guy Scott was Minister of Agriculture during the first post-authoritarian government and was sacked in 1993.

12 Before 2001, Chiluba attempted to amend the constitution in order to seek a third term in office. That attempt was defeated by his own party. However, quarrels over the succession led some senior MMD cadres to defect (Rakner and Svåsand 2004: 53–4).

13 Only in 1997 was a new agency – the Food Reserve Agency (FRA) – instructed to sell imported food (Rakner 2003: 76). Unlike the former agency – NAMBOARD – which was abolished in 1989 under IFI pressure as being the sole buyer and seller of grain in the country and sole fertilizer supplier, the FRA was originally conceived to stock staple food so as to dampen price variability (Chapoto 2012: 3).

14 Chiluba himself had been Chairman-General of ZCTU from 1974 to 1991. Unlike ZCTU, of which MUZ was part, MUZ endorsed privatization. As a result MUZ quitted ZCTU in 1994, only to rejoin it in 1999. ZCCM (Zambia Consolidated Copper Mines) was partially privatized in 2000. There is much debate in the literature as to the effects of mine privatization in Zambia. There is a certain general agreement that the fiscal effect was limited as well as adverse effects on work conditions (Fraser and Lungu 2006). In general, privatization stoked local protest and strengthened the relations between opposition to MMD and MUZ Copperbelt cadres by the end of the 2000s (Simutanyi 2008). The PF campaign against foreign (especially Chinese) companies helped to build Copperbelt as a powerful stronghold for the PF (Negi 2011: 87).

15 On the importance of the ethnic factor in Zambia for electoral calculation, see Posner (2005) and, more recently, Erdmann (2007) and Cheeseman and Hinfelaar (2010).

16 This was so in the Southern province, which by 2001 was strictly controlled by UPND. Since all its leaders came from Southern and were of Tonga ethnicity, the UPND

profile was consequently more driven by electoral calculation based on the ethnic profile of the constituents. However, the 2001 elections also marked the emergence of an urban-rural divide which had been a silent factor under Kaunda. On the other hand, growing privatization of the rural landscape had changed the relation with local actors, a trend that actually already started during the last decade of the Kaunda regime when relations between the state and rural areas were resolved to the advantage of the '*boma* class.' By 1995, privatization had enhanced the role of the 'gatekeepers' of land administration (Brown 2005: 97) such as chiefs, district-level officers, and bureaucrats at the Ministry of Lands who were in a position to exploit their strategic position within a system designed to create opportunities for these officials by using their position to their own advantage.

Enjoying no more than an ancillary role under the one party system, rural organizations were now further weakened by patronage. The Zambia Cooperative Federation (ZCF) had always been of little interest to MMD since it was associated with UNIP machinery.[17] Hence, MMD tried to establish closer ties with the Zambia National Farmers' Union (ZNFU). However, at the end of the first electoral cycle ZNFU expressed scepticism about the effects of liberalization. Under pressure from the ZNFU, the ZCF and the Peasant Farmers' Union of Zambia (PFUZ), the government was forced to resume farmers' subsidies, as we have said, and this has remained the only social welfare state mechanism until the present.[18]

Today, of these entities, which are for the most part very weak, only the ZNFU still stands as a stable organization[19] notwithstanding its initial support for the NLP. Remnants of ZCF continue to try and rebuild an independent cooperative movement today and are calling for a return of subsidized government marketing and the provision of inputs for smallholders.[20] The same has happened with the PFUZ.[21]

has so far been perceived as a Tonga party.

17 Policies in favour of privatizing agriculture were also intended to weaken UNIP grassroots in rural society (Rakner 2003: 84). By the beginning of the 1980s, the ZCF had been affiliated with UNIP. Through this measure, ZCF representation was included in the highest decision-making body of UNIP.

18 As well as from rural organizations, pressure came from MMD MPs representing rural constituencies; this perhaps had more influence on the government's decision to resume subsidies (Rakner 2003: 177).

19 ZNFU is the only organization that represents both small- and large-scale farmers.

20 In 1973 the long-standing cooperative movement in Zambia established ZCF as its national coordinating body. Over the 1980s UNIP succeeded in drawing ZCF under party control (see Note 17). ZCF was used to pursue government agricultural policies despite the fact that these were not economically viable. In the early 1990s, ZCF was still one of the principal marketing agents. This misguided effort drove the federation to bankruptcy. On the cooperative movement today, see Lolojih (2009)

21 The Peasant Farmers' Union of Zambia (PFUZ) was a loosely organized group that called for subsidies and public inputs for small-scale farmers. Though it claimed to have a large membership, its organizational capacity was weak and it was not taken seriously by MMD. Before the 1996 election it formed a loose affiliation with UNIP, which had promised it special consideration should the party return to power. Ensuing events went differently. UNIP boycotted the election and the PFUZ lost support in the government.

Thus everything indicates a weak ability by rural actors to express any stable interest apart from subsidization. Agriculture interests are voiced through several farmer associations (ZNFU, PFUZ, National Association of Small-Scale and Peasant Farmers Union – NASSPFU, ZCF, etc.) with little effect on the government commitment to endorse rural reform. As in the 1990s, Zambia's agricultural policies revolve around the question of government involvement in the marketing of fertilizer and maize (Rakner 2003: 75–6). Furthermore, the government is expected to intervene to keep retail prices down especially during election time (Taylor and Aarnes 2002). Having mainly opted for the first solution, MMD definitively lost any serious urban support by 2006. However, courting rural areas with subsidies had no substantive effect on MMD's share of votes beyond the core ethnic strongholds (Mason and Ricker-Gilbert 2013) which have constantly shifted from Bembas to other areas. The 2011 elections demonstrate MMD's inability to hold on to large majorities. Born as an urban-orientated party, the PF started during the 2008 Presidential election to campaign effectively in ethnic constituencies which now perceived they had been duped by the government (Bemba, in particular), though without losing its urban profile. When disaffection with MMD came to a head in 2011, MMD was overthrown.

All in all, the effect of subsidization policies has been ineffectual. While they resulted in large increases in maize production ever since the last half of the 2000s,[22] this increase appears to have had limited impact on the welfare of the poorest farmers. At the end of MMD dominance, most poor people still resided in rural areas, crippled by the poor state of the infrastructure in those areas and the lack of any serious commitment to land reform.

Beyond Party Politics: Land-Related Issues

Certain structural conditions are impeding further improvements and are the main cause of poverty in rural areas because of poor infrastructure and a tenure system which has led to concentration of the best lands in few hands. Notwithstanding, since 2001 the agricultural sector has shown signs of improvement particularly for cash crop production such as cotton, tobacco, maize and wheat. In 2009 agriculture

22 In the 1970s maize production ranged from 0.6 to about 1.6 million tonnes per year. In the 1980s production stagnated and the slump continued during the 1990s with production rarely exceeding 1 million tonnes due to a decline in the maize share within the total smallholder crop output. One should note that annual demand for maize is estimated at about 1.6 million tonnes. Production started to recover after 2005 (during the 2006/2007 season production rose as high as 1.4 million tonnes) to reach about 1.9 million tonnes during the 2008/2009 season and booming to an estimated 3.3 million tonnes for the 2013/2014 season (sources: Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock; see also *Lusaka Times*, various years).

accounted for a 21 per cent share of GDP which is an improvement compared to 16 per cent in 1992. That improvement was achieved because of an increased role by the private sector. However, poverty in rural areas remained serious and much potential still needs to be developed. The same subsidies policy has proved to be intrinsically inadequate.

In the last 15 years, the Government of Zambia has sought to fill the vacuum left by the underdeveloped private sector by directly subsidizing farmers through the Farmer Input Support Programme (FISP) while at the same time it has aimed to stabilize prices by purchasing grain through the Food Reserve Agency (FRA). These subsidies, along with improved levels of rainfall, have been responsible for large increases in maize production in the last few years (Burke, Jayne and Sitko 2012). However, this improvement appears to have had limited impact on the welfare of the poorest farmers for several reasons: first, poverty in rural areas tends to concentrate where infrastructure is inadequate or unavailable; second, direct subsidies are expensive and detrimental to other safety nets (they accounted for over 70 per cent of the budget to the Ministry of Agriculture over the past five years); third, difficulties in targeting small-hold farmers (they have received a disproportionately lower amount of subsidies); and, finally, distortion of prices in the market. As Chapoto and Jayne (2009: vi) state, 'Malawi and Zambia have the highest degree of price volatility and price uncertainty.'

Land tenure remains, however, the most crucial issue. While it is true that some farmers who are more commercially orientated than the typical smallholder occupy state land under long-term leases (99 years), most farmers still work the land under the traditional tenure systems. Large commercial farms which occupy land mainly allocated along major transport routes and near population centres, are under long-term leases and use modern technology, irrigation and fertilizers. The latter are responsible for most of the country's agricultural exports and benefit most from the government policy of subsidies.

Today, land is ruled under the 1995 Land Act, which marked a change from the previous tenure system since it opened land to investors. For the first time land became tradable by converting it from customary to state ownership. Land formally belongs to the state (and is vested in the president), but it can be leased for 99 renewable years. This different approach has profoundly altered the tenure system in the last 15 years – unfortunately, with no immediate positive consequences. According to Nolte (2013) nowadays about 80 per cent remains customary land – a reduction compared to the 1980s. However, such conversion of titles has first predominantly involved urban areas and only subsequently the rural areas that are more commercially orientated or touristic. Not surprisingly, the groups that have benefitted most are foreign investors and Zambian elites (Brown 2005).

As for the Zambian elites that have profited most, Brown (2005: 97) points to three social strata: chiefs, district councillors and bureaucrats in the Ministry of Land (MoL). Such groups make up an agricultural middle class that gains by a reform-adverse system, which is marginalizing the poorer producers.[23] Whil formally chiefs must consult the local community before giving their approva to convert customary to state land – a necessary step before it can be leased – very little consultation is done (Nolte 2013: 16). To this one must add the lack o inspection and transparency on the part of the MoL as to the destination of the lanc leased, which ought to conform to developmental criteria. If we also remembe that small producers' trade unions and organizations are weak, the result is that: a the land is captured by an elite;[24] b) there are emerging 'intra-community conflicts' (i.e. chiefs vs. common people) (Brown 2005: 96);[25] and c) common resources are being closed, to the benefit of the few.

Furthermore such '(mal)administration of land' (Brown 2005: 97) is strictly linked to the poor implementation of the local governance reform as it was intended by the 1991 Local Government Act. The process is well described by Chikulo (2009). Besides financial problems which hamper the ability of local authorities (LAs) to perform as envisioned, LAs have generally been unable to ensure citizen participation and lacked the mechanisms to directly control or address development planning at the local level. The strength of such decentralized local structures therefore remains limited.

The Urban-Rural Divide and 2011 Elections: New Policy But Not for the Benefit of Rural Poor?

Zambia today produces enough maize to feed itself and its neighbours in Eastern and Southern Africa.[26] This is the most important result of the agricultural subsidies policy in Zambia. However, a series of weaknesses still prevent that policy from having a positive effect on poverty levels in rural areas. According to Sitko and

23 On this issue see also Sitko and Jayne (2012). In 1995, the Land Act was passed by parliament following two years of a contentious national debate. An array of civil society organizations (CSOs), church groups and traditional leaders all opposed the reform. Approval of the law did not pass until the government, enjoying a large majority, threatened MMD rural MPs with expulsion (Brown 2005: 85–6).

24 Similar cases have been dealt with by Acemoglu, Reed and Robinson (2013) and Scoones et al. (2010).

25 Although such 'intra-community conflicts' may vary across the country and the attitude by the chiefs towards the 1995 Land Act has been mixed, there is a general agreement in Zambia that the '*boma* class' has profited by its special relation with subsequent governments. However, on the extension of such conflict and its social and political impact in Zambia more research is needed. On the importance of understanding more about the class structure of social movements, local actors, conflicts and agrarian change dynamics in agrarian societies, see Borras (2009).

26 The crop production index rose to 170.0 in 2009 from 100.0 between 1999–2001 (IFAD – Rural Poverty Portal, Zambia statistics: www.ruralpovertyportal.org/country/statistics/tags/zambia).

Jayne (2012: 19), Zambia's agricultural development strategy 'has failed to provide a viable pathway out of poverty for the millions of small-scale farmers.' Furthermore, given the burden of the policy on the national budget, it is unlikely to be continued in the long run.[27] Several structural problems also persist: first, crop marketing. The storage capacity of the Government of Zambia, which in the recent past has purchased more than 80 per cent of the marketed surplus through FRA, is inadequate and 32 per cent of the crops stored is lost. The Government buys maize above the market price. As a result (the second structural problem), private business does not play an adequate role in buying or exporting maize,[28] to the detriment of national investments, in a period of growing interest by international investors (Deininger and Byerlee 2011).[29] Third, since 2008 the government has also subsidized the milling industry with a view to reducing the consumer price of maize; however the main beneficiaries have been big miller companies while most of the informal milling sector has not been reached by this scheme and has been squeezed out of the market. Fourth, while the subsidies policy has enlarged the area under maize cultivation at the expense of other crops, productivity has remained the same, since small-hold production does not easily reach the national market because of the poor state of the infrastructure and services available to farmers in much of the country.[30] The effect has been that Zambia is now as heavily dependent on maize production as it is dependent on copper. Fifth, since the land available to smallholder production is not so abundant as policy makers assumed, small-scale farmers will shortly find themselves bottled up in high density areas where the options for profitable use of agriculture will hardly provide them with the opportunity to exit from poverty (Sitko and Jayne 2012: 19). If present land titling and management in customary areas continues as regulated by the 1995 Land Act, small farms will have a limited future, here as elsewhere (Collier and Dercon 2009). Finally, the collective burden of these various subsidies accounts for over 80 per cent of government spending on agriculture, about 2 per cent of GDP in 2011. If we consider that the effects on market prices have been poor – while FISP has caused a drop in retail prices, FRA activities have generally triggered a rise in maize prices – the upshot is that this policy is no longer sustainable after 15 years' implementation.

In 2012, after the elections were won by a party that is considered less favourable to agricultural interests, such policies have not surprisingly been halted. The fact that subsidies were in part delivered according to political determinants (Mason and Ricker-Gilbert 2013) only speeded up the decision.[31] Since 2006 PF has campaigned on a platform centering on urban interests and the mining industry and speaking out aggressively against foreign interests – namely Chinese – in the copper sector (Larmer and Fraser 2007). While in 2006 this strategy failed nationally, PF was able to build a strong base in Copperbelt and Lusaka, which are the main urban areas. By the 2008 presidential elections, the MMD position in Luapula and Northern provinces, which are mainly rural, was eroded by a rampant PF. The PF presidential candidate was Michael Sata, a Bemba, and this helped the party to penetrate such rural areas. National disaffection with the twenty-year period of MMD power also helped PF to win both presidential and parliamentary elections in 2011, though with a small majority (38 per cent against 34 per cent of the vote at the parliamentary elections) thanks to a fall in MMD rural votes. Although still partly affected by the ethnic vote, since 2006 elections have been marked by a growing rural-urban divide (Battera 2013). It was not only PF that moulded its electoral platform around urban interests; MMD also based its campaign issues around fertilizer subsidies and higher maize prices after the death of President Levy Mwanawasa in August 2008 and the elections to replace him (Chapoto 2012: 18). One major reason for that was that the core support for the then ruling MMD party was overwhelmingly comprised of rural farming households.

The decisive PF victory in the 2011 election is even more striking if one considers that macroeconomic conditions on the eve of the election were very encouraging for the incumbent party: in 2010 the real GDP had grown by 7.6 per cent, which was above the target established by the Fifth National Development Plan (FNDP). According to the economic reports, that growth had been driven not only by the rise in metal (mainly copper) exports but by agriculture as well.[32]

Once PF got into power, MMD entered a state of shock, shaken by floor-crossing and subsequent serious defeats in by-elections at the hands of PF. However, notwithstanding the fact that PF has now penetrated rural areas, the party has not

27 This remark sums up the outcome of investigations and reports made by the Indaba Agricultural Policy Research Institute (IAPRI) of Lusaka, which can be found at www.africaresearchinstitute.org/blog/agricultural-subsidies-in-zambia.

28 More details on the effects of the higher FRA buying prices are to be found in Nkonde et al. (2011). Two important results are that well-capitalized farmers are more suited to benefit from the higher prices and that millers have found it cheaper to buy maize from South Africa.

29 According to recent reports (see for example Anseeuw et al. 2012) Zambia seems to be one of the most targeted African countries as far as attempts at land acquisition by foreign investors is concerned.

30 In marketing year 2007/08, only 10 per cent of smallholders sold maize to the FRA and these households had larger landholdings, more farm assets and a higher education level than smallholders who did not sell maize to the FRA (Mason, Jayne and Myers 2012). At the same time, only 56 per cent of the total number of smallholders receive FISP fertilizer (smallholders, those who cultivate less than 2 hectares of land, account for 73 per cent of farmers in Zambia). These are the poorest households (Mofya-Mukuka et al. 2013).

31 Once in government, PF ministers and cadres regularly denounced the electoral bias of the previous government's subsidies policy and the way land was allocated, enjoying some support in this from certain rural sectors such as the Zambia Land Alliance (ZLA), which is an NGO umbrella working for reforming land policies. However, the degree of impact by pro-rural CSOs activism on PF policies remains doubtful.

32 Copper earnings in 2010 were 81.6 per cent up from the 2009 figure.

reversed its own priorities.[33] PF stands firm on its previously formulated strategies which are centred around fighting poverty through income redistribution and infrastructure investments. How agriculture and poor rural farmers may benefit from any renewed strategic approach is still a matter for speculation. Two major measures have actually been taken: the reduction of subsidies to farms and the redoubling of mineral royalties. Such measures were intended to free resources for other 'pro-poor' efforts such as increased social spending to improve living standards, especially in urban areas, health and education, and job creation. Some pillars of the PF programme.

Since coming to power, the PF government has been conscious both of the non-sustainability of the FRA-FISP scheme[34] and of the country's dependence on copper revenues. Since the latter is a condition that will not change in the short-medium term, the government decided to increase its profits from copper production. In April 2012, mineral royalties were doubled (from 3 to 6 per cent). As a result, Zambia's tax revenues from copper mining jumped by 46 per cent (Zambia's revenue 2012). Much of the debate around revenues from mining hinged at that time on the implementation of a windfall tax on above-average profits from mines. The option had been considered by the former MMD government but was cast aside because many of the mines were still making losses due to unfavourable contracts signed by former governments with foreign mining firms. The choice of a mineral royalties hike paid off, freeing resources for other priorities. The second aim of the plan was to reduce agricultural subsidies. The thinking behind this measure was later explained by the Finance Minister, Alexander Chikwanda, in August 2013, when he announced that in the period covered by the National Development Plan 2013–2016 the government would remove some of the bottlenecks that had so far inhibited smooth implementation of development (Government Revises 2013). The Zambian government accordingly reduced subsidies for farmers (the cost-sharing is now 50 per cent for government and farmers respectively as against 75–25 per cent) and millers as well, while it continues to provide farmers with free seed and to buy maize for the FRA, paying farmers above the market price but not selling it at a subsidized rate to millers. This measure angered the ZNFU but to no avail (Removing Subsidies 2013). Other critics cautioned that the government was moving too fast. Furthermore, in April 2013 fuel subsidies were likewise removed, leading to a 21 per cent increase in fuel prices. By the beginning of 2013 the double removal of subsidies for farmers and millers had indeed begun to impact on consumers but not as expected,[35] the government having big maize reserves in the FRA by which to control prices. With the same purpose in mind, the PF government also decided to halt cooperation with neighbours in difficulty who were asking cash for maize exports to Zimbabwe (Mashininga 2013). The government was convinced it was on the right path. The timing for reducing subsidies was incidentally considered good for the party in power, since general elections were not expected before 2016.[36] As for job creation, President Sata announced at the end of 2013 that in 2014 the government would prioritize job creation and raising the standard of living among people in rural areas. On the former point, the government intends to re-establish the Industrial Development Corporation (INDECO) which will 'focus on developing labour intensive industries and enterprises in the key areas of agriculture, construction, manufacturing, tourism, science and technology' (Mwenda 2014). As is known, INDECO had been responsible for burgeoning corruption, inefficiency and malpractice in the 1970s. The declaration unleashed controversy between those in favour (former President Kaunda backed the idea) and against (some of them aligned with the MMD). In particular, MMD politicians question to the positive effect of INDECO in rural areas (INDECO Critics 2014). More realistically, plans like that of reviving INDECO could only have a positive impact if governance was improved, as warned permanent secretary for finance, Pamela Kabamba, who underlined the lack of coordination among government departments and the need for a systematic approach to national development planning – problems shared by other underdeveloped countries (Kabamba Urges 2013).

Conclusions

When PF won the 2011 elections, ending the 20-year long interlude of MMD in power, nobody doubted there would be a decisive urban bias to development strategy. So much was clear from the stated intention of Michael Sata's leadership, his political profile, the way PF had campaigned and the location of its strongholds. Backing by former UNIP cadres and by Kaunda himself, the intention of resuscitating INDECO: all pointed to a resumption of 'unipist' developmental strategy. By such a strategy, agriculture is in danger of being viewed essentially within the prism of surplus extraction for industrialization (Kay 2009: 106). PF endorsed Zambia Vision 2030 (adopted in 2006) which indeed envisages the gradual transformation of the economic structure from an agriculturally to an industrially based economy. The modernization of agriculture is mentioned as crucial and 'Secure, fair and equitable access and control of land for a sustainable socio-economic development' is also mentioned by Vision 2030, together with the provision of a safety net policy providing social protection for low-capacity households from periodic shocks (WB 2013: 87). So far, however, the tools are

33 PF has won most of the by-elections held since 2011. Most of these regard rural constituencies outside the Bemba areas previously represented by MMD. This success has largely been due both to the crisis which shook MMD after the 2011 elections and to a band-wagon effect in favor of PF.

34 FISP alone accounted for roughly 39 per cent of the resources allocated to agriculture in the 2011 budget.

35 See interview with Rhoda Mofya-Mukuka (Bhalla 2013).

36 In the meantime, Michael Sata died in October 2014 because of a worsening of his health condition. New presidential elections were held on 20 January 2015.

missing to make 'secure, fair and equitable access and control of land' not a dream but a reality. What is lacking is an approach to rural development which breaks with the past. Although the PF government attitude put an end to the patronage approach to farmers' interests (which is positive),[37] no innovative or comprehensive rural agenda tackling the crucial issue of tenure has been forthcoming,[38] leaving the impression that rural areas will again be left out from the established priorities.

Besides copper earnings, the agricultural annual growth rate underlines the importance of agriculture and its potential. The problem is that many key drivers of agricultural growth such as agricultural research, irrigation and infrastructure are still underfunded (Kuteya 2012). If we look at the 2013 budget allocations, agriculture accounts for a mere 5.8 per cent, almost the same as in the 2011 budget under the previous government.[39] This falls short of the CAADP target of 10 per cent[40] and has been hampered by other trends: generally, the real spending on agriculture has been far below planned expenditure; second, most of the actual spending in 2013 was still consumed by FISP/FRA which accounted alone for about 93 per cent of the sums allocated to the Poverty Reduction Programmes (PRPs) (49.2 per cent of all the sums allocated to agriculture).[41] Therefore, apart from formal declarations and commitments as to the importance of agriculture for poverty reduction,[42] it seems that the actual weight of agriculture is all too slight in Zambian development strategy, nor is there any synergy between agriculture and industry (Kay 2009: 129–30). The condition is unlikely to be reversed in the short term. Weaknesses in the strategic approach to rural land and agriculture are exacerbated by other crucial factors related to organizational limitations: mobilization in rural areas is too localized and national farmers' associations in particular are weak and still too fragmented to be able to voice a common interest. Even when rural areas did enjoy government attention, during MMD rule, interests tended to be regulated through clientelism. Even the re-introduction of the FISP programme in 1997 was more the result of pressure by rural MMD MPs than the work of rural organizations.

37 The government, in particular the Lands Minister, has repeatedly warned local councils to stop the indiscriminate allocation of land and prevent local PF cadres from land grabbing (*Lusaka Times*, 16 July 2013; *The Post*, 15 September 2013).

38 The PF manifesto for the general elections of 2011 did not say much about the place agriculture would take in party development planning apart from mentioning the need to preserve the 'traditional land tenure system in order to enable emerging farmers (especially women) to use their land as collateral for purposes of raising loans through registration of individual parcels of land' (PF 2011: 19). Chiefs are also recognized as crucial in the development process (PF 2011: 17).

39 Though with an increase (from 1,231 billion ZK to 1,865 billion) in the sums allocated, due to increased availability of funds. If we compare the last MMD government budget of 2010 with that approved in October 2013 under the PF, the shares of budget by function remained largely unchanged, although allocations almost doubled thanks to the increase in funds made available by copper earnings.

40 The Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) is an initiative by African governments under the African Union/New Partnership for Africa's Development (AU/NEPAD) to accelerate growth and eliminate poverty and hunger among African countries. In principle, CAADP seeks to achieve at least 10 per cent allocation of the national budget to the agricultural sector.

41 Agricultural development programs (most of them funded by donors) account for 17 per cent and personal emoluments about another 15 per cent. But if we consider actual spending, agricultural development programs are further curtailed while PRP remains almost untouched.

42 See the final draft of the Zambia National Agriculture Investment Plan (NAIP) 2014–2018 (GoZ 2013).

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