

OFFICE OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL- Zambia

Summary of the Performance Audit Report on Government Measures to address the Impact of Climate Change on Food Security in Zambia: A Focus on Main Crops

Why the audit was carried out

Zambia like many countries has been hit with changes in weather patterns with the country experiencing long spells of drought and flush floods. Pests are also a recurring feature every farming season due to high temperature. This has can be further evidence by the report made by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) which stated that food security has since been negatively affected and that the country had an estimated 1.42 million people facing acute hunger in 2020. As a way of improving food security, Government introduced various measures to help farmers adapt to climate change which included, SMART Agriculture practices (crop diversification, conservation agriculture), paste management system and an early warning system. The audit was therefore conducted to assess if the measures put in place by Government were effective in ensuring the country was food secure amidst climate change. The Ministry of Agriculture was the main audit client.

What was reviewed?

Documents from the Ministry of Agriculture, research reports on agriculture, Conservation Agriculture implementation reports and national agriculture statistics reports were reviewed and analysed. Interviews were conducted with the Ministry officials, selected farmers from various regions with different rain patterns and various stakeholders engaged in providing agricultural support in the country. Field inspection of farm lands was conducted to obtain evidence of what farming methods were used, the type of crops grown, the area of land cultivated and the challenges faced by farmers.

What was found?

The audit established that Government had mainstreamed activities related to climate change to the extent of planning. The actual implementation of the plans was not effective resulting in farmers still not being food secure.

The audit established that the early warning system for the agriculture sector in the country was not operating at full capacity as not all the districts had a weather station resulting in farmers not being able to plan effectively.

The control of pastes was not effective as evidenced from most fields inspected, this was attributed lack of an integrated pest management system.

There was low adoption of Conservation Agriculture by farmers resulting in poor yields. This was attributed to low monitoring by the Ministry and differing and conflicting messages as well as poor targeting by the non-governmental players providing Conservation Agriculture.

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There was low adoption of crop diversification as most farmers visited practiced mono cropping with maize dominating. This was attributed to lack of market and long distances to the market for the other produce compared to the maize market which was readily available.

Government had not prioritised investment in agricultural research as evidenced by the resource allocation which was less than 1% of the total agricultural budget.

Conclusion

Whilst the Ministry had made strides in mainstreaming climate change with agriculture adopting smart agriculture in their plans, the implementation of the measures put in place was not good enough to encourage farmers adopt the smart agriculture practices resulting in them not being food secure. The early warning system which is key in helping farmers plan on what crops to grow was not fully operational resulting in farmers not planting the correct crop.

Recommendation

There is need for the Ministry to prioritise the activities that help spearhead SMART agriculture, improve monitoring mechanism as well as harmonising the implementation of SMART agriculture practices.