



# TAKING STOCK: ZAMBIA FOOD CHANGE LAB

Mobilising diverse actors  
to advocate for food diversity

**Hivos**  
people unlimited

**iied**

The Zambia Food Change Lab includes both women and men, farmers, consumers, government, private sector, civil society organisations, media, research and international institutions. See the full list of participants on page 19.



# THE ZAMBIA FOOD CHANGE LAB STORY

Zambia has huge agricultural potential. It holds about 40 per cent of the region's underground and surface water resources,<sup>1</sup> and more than half of its total land area is classified as medium to high potential for agricultural production.<sup>2</sup> Yet in spite of these rich natural resources, 48 per cent of its people are undernourished. Forty per cent of Zambian children under the age of five are too short for their age, often with reduced cognitive capacities, while 23 per cent of Zambian women are overweight or obese.<sup>3</sup> This is the result of poor diets - high in starch and calories, but low in nutrient-rich fruits and vegetables. More specifically, the problem can be directly traced to a predominance of maize in the Zambian diet.

Maize is by far the country's most important crop and the primary source of calories for rural and urban dwellers alike. Introduced to Zambia during the colonial era,<sup>4</sup> it gradually eclipsed local staple crops such as millet and sorghum, which are far better suited to the ecological conditions of the country; more drought tolerant; and much higher in nutritional value. Aside from the adverse effect on diets, a national agricultural policy favouring maize monocropping has also contributed to considerable soil degradation, loss of agro-biodiversity and made farms more vulnerable to droughts and floods caused by climate change, as well as pests and diseases.<sup>5</sup> The effects of climate change are expected to cause a significant drop in Zambia's agricultural production.

<sup>1</sup>'Region' refers to the Southern African Development Community region.

<sup>2</sup>Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Livestock (2016) Second National Agriculture Policy, p. 10.

<sup>3</sup>Mwanamwenge, M and Harris, J (2017) Agriculture, food systems, diets and nutrition in Zambia. IIED and Hivos, London and The Hague, p. 8. <http://pubs.iied.org/Go4163/>

<sup>4</sup>Collingham, L (2017) The hungry empire: how Britain's question for food shaped the modern world. The Bodley Head, London.

<sup>5</sup>Chilufya, W (15 November 2016) Farming season is here, what you plant matters. Zambia Daily Mail. <https://www.daily-mail.co.zm/?p=85972>

In 2015 Hivos, the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) and approximately 20 partners and stakeholders began discussing the local food system in Zambia, including local production practices, traditional food culture and access to healthy food. The goal was to facilitate dialogue among low-income consumers, traders, traditional leaders, producers and government authorities to address the limited crop diversity on Zambian farms and in local diets. This successful initiative gave rise to the Zambia Food Change Lab, a multi-stakeholder innovation process designed to generate ideas for change in the food system and test these innovations on the ground. The Lab started in Chongwe District, assessing local agricultural practices and resulting dietary patterns together with local farmers, policymakers and civil society. In 2016, the Lab shifted its focus to the national food system after adding partners with a national focus, and as agricultural policy issues resurfaced.

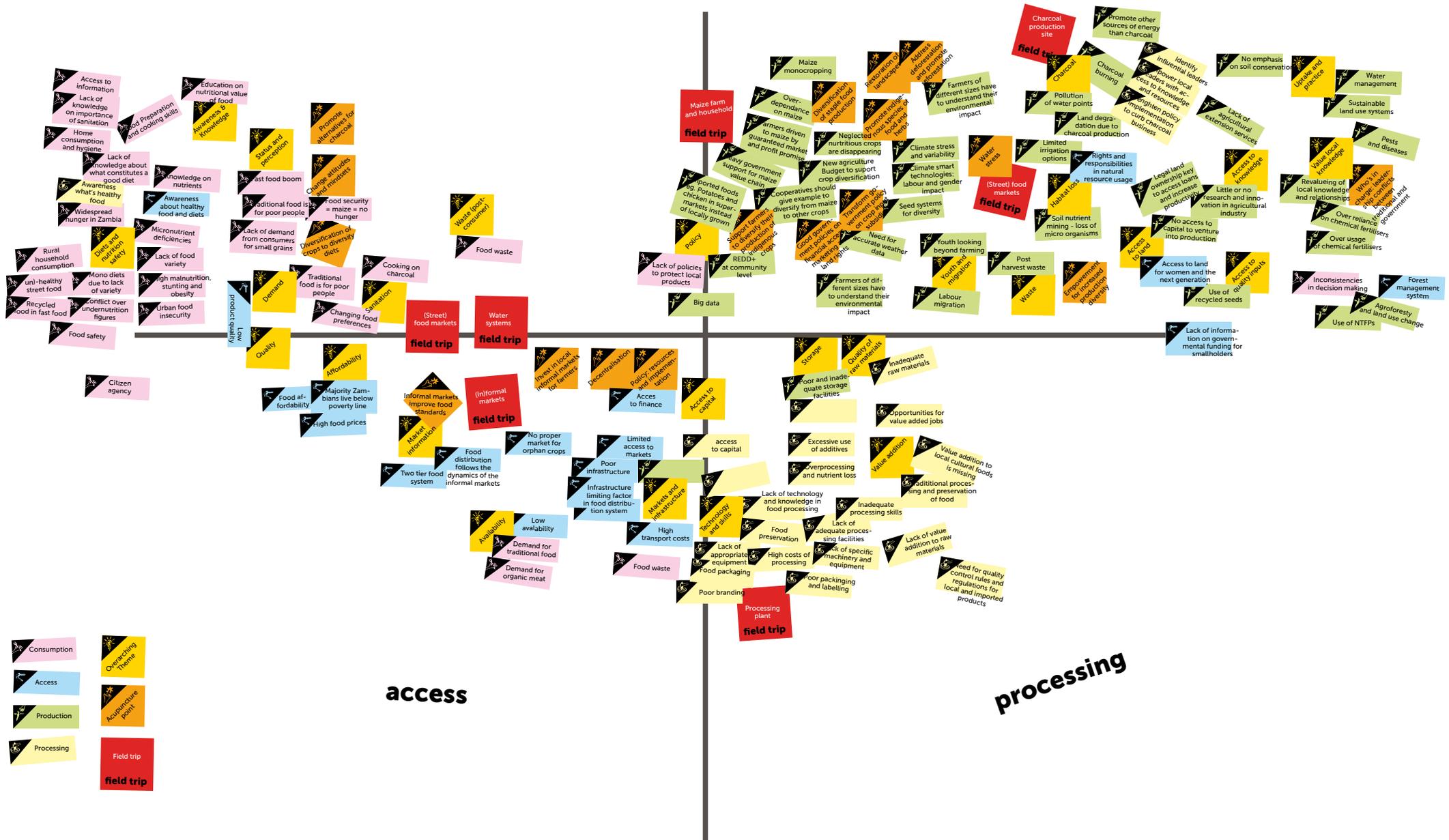
The Zambia Food Change Lab aims to create a collective understanding of Zambia's current food system and challenges for the future. In the process, it strengthens collaboration among consumers, farmers, entrepreneurs, civil society and government to foster long-term engagement, collective leadership and joint initiatives. Lab participants - from smallholder farmers to members of parliament - have collectively mapped the food system and gained a better understanding of lived realities from one another. Out of this process came 'prototypes' - small-scale interventions to test workable solutions - and focused advocacy messaging. Moreover, including national policy makers in the Lab's processes has facilitated their endorsement of the Lab's recommendations.

Lab participants  
creating  
the food map →



# consumption

# production



- Consumption
- Access
- Production
- Processing
- Overarching Theme
- Acupuncture point
- Field trip

# THE FOOD CHANGE LAB PROCESS

## A Change Lab:

- Is a multi-actor change process
- Addresses key social issues
- Aims to better understand those issues
- Generates ideas
- Tests those ideas on the ground

Central to the Change Lab process is **citizen agency** - the notion that people (both individually and collectively) have the capacity to act independently and to make their own choices.<sup>6</sup> Hence our bottom-up approach, which brings different stakeholders together and provides a forum in which they can discuss and act on their priorities and concerns.

Because our Change Lab looks at complex issues, with a myriad of actors and underlying issues and policies, we take a systems approach. We strive not only for tangible, imminent results - such as a change in (or adaptation of) policy, or new investments - but also work on more long-term outcomes. These include strengthening capacities, networks and trust between actors, which has the potential to positively influence the system

for many years ahead. We facilitate a step-wise process following the Theory U method (see page 9), spending ample time on trust building between Lab stakeholders in the process. We begin by setting a collective intention, and then we explore and connect to the world outside of our institutional bubbles. We continue by collecting and connecting findings, proposing solutions and testing them as prototypes. This approach builds in moments of reflection, so that we consider our own habits and sources of inspiration first, without jumping too soon into 'solutions mode'. Through this approach, we find solutions to be more substantiated, rooted and sustainable.

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<sup>6</sup>Vorley, B (2018) Citizen-generated evidence for a more sustainable and healthy food system. IIED and Hivos, London and The Hague. <http://pubs.iied.org/Go4300/>

## The Zambia Food Change Lab

### 5. Unleashing

2018/19: Prototypes become more independent from the Lab (eg developing into permanent initiatives; actors incorporating new practices and knowledge in their daily work).

### 1. Intention setting

2015: Lab participants in Chongwe district jointly agree on the importance of diversifying their local food system.

### 2. Exploring

2016: At a two-day event, Lab participants learn from each other and co-create a food system map to guide the analysis that follows. National policy makers get involved. National advocacy intensifies to diversify agricultural policy.

### 4. Prototyping

2017/18: The Lab functions as an exchange and learning vehicle, to sharpen approaches and identify possibilities for scaling. Four coalitions of diverse actors implement ideas for solutions.

### 3. Connecting

2016/17: Participants identify leverage points for systems change, building on the food system map. Coalitions emerge around ideas for prototypes. Some 2017 prototypes were: including youth in the national food debate; recognising the informal sector; raising awareness; and continuing advocacy for a diversified agricultural policy and practice.

# PROTOTYPES

A prototype is a small-scale intervention intended to test solutions' workability. The Zambia Food Change Lab helps to implement prototype ideas in four areas: crop diversity; awareness raising; youth inclusion; and informal food systems. For each area, a group is working on relatively small interventions in each area, ranging in duration from 6 to 12 months, including design and evaluation. These groups emerged between late 2016 and early 2017, implementing prototypes throughout 2017 and 2018 that were inspired by the food system map.

**1. Crop diversity:** A coalition of civil society organisations<sup>7</sup> led by the Civil Society for Poverty Reduction is looking at ways to increase crop diversity in Zambia, focusing on national agricultural policy change. Some of their interventions include organising an *indaba* (discussion or conference) for farmers, civil society and high-level policymakers (including the Minister of Agriculture); facilitating civil society participation in agricultural and nutrition-related policy issues; and submissions of policy and budgetary recommendations to government through multiple channels.

**2. Awareness raising:** Led by Consumer Unity Trust Society in collaboration with the Zambia Civil Society Scaling Up Nutrition Alliance and the World Food Program Zambia, this group has commissioned research on consumption patterns in Lusaka to support urban food policymaking. They have developed animations on nutrition for radio and television.

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<sup>7</sup>The Civil Society for Poverty Reduction, the Economic Association of Zambia, the Jesuit Center for Theological Reflection, the Center for Policy Trade and Development, the Zambia Land Alliance, and the Churches Health Association of Zambia.



↑ Hon Maxas Bweupe Ng'onga MP, Chairperson of the Agricultural Parliamentary Committee with Facilitator Martin Kalungu-Banda

**3. Youth inclusion:** The Lab consciously includes youth at all events, to engage Zambia's future leaders in thinking about food system issues. As a result, a group of young people from Young Emerging Farmers Initiative have established a group called Youth for Sustainable Food Zambia. With support from the Lab, they have organised a food festival for young people and leaders in a local community, given presentations at external events and symposia (including in Europe), and run a side event for Zambia Youth Day 2018, focusing on business opportunities in agriculture.

**4. Informal food systems:** A coalition of four Zambian organisations is looking at how effective the informal sector is at ensuring the availability of healthy food for low-income consumers - an angle often overlooked by official policymaking. They are collecting data on the informal sector in Lusaka and Kitwe, which will be presented to informal sector actors (food vendors, traders, growers) to validate and inform next steps and interventions.

# LAB RESULTS AND THE WAY FORWARD

## A push for diversification at national and local levels

A discussion paper by Hivos and IIED, *Agriculture, Food Systems, Diets and Nutrition in Zambia*, has proven instrumental as an evidence base for a push towards diverse crops and diets, and is well regarded among Zambian stakeholders in the food sector. During the launch of the second Agriculture Policy in March 2017, the then Zambian Minister of Agriculture stated: “I do not want to be Minister of Maize”.

## Creating a sustainable food policy with Lusaka City Council

The awareness-raising group met with Lusaka City Council to discuss drafting a municipal food policy. At the same time, they are involving these local policymakers in talks on radio and other media channels to push for wider public awareness on the effects of not eating a healthy, balanced diet. This includes discussing how local authorities can support diverse diets by promoting a suitable market infrastructure for selling a wide variety of crops and animal products. Working with the Lusaka City Council will provide a platform to address

issues at a municipal level that may not receive focus at the national level (eg the role of middlemen in hampering the efficiency of Lusaka food market operations). Building on the Food Change Lab approach, this effort will provide space for citizen voices, including those normally not heard (women, youth and low-income populations).

## Youth for Sustainable Food

By participating in the Zambia Food Change Lab, previously unconnected youth groups and individual youth leaders are now linked in a national platform called Youth for Sustainable Food. They work to spread the message on the importance of healthy, diverse food from healthy soils. They advocate at external events and organise their own awareness-raising activities; they are active on (social) media using podcasts and radio shows, targeting young Zambian farmers (including women and girls) to ‘make farming sexy again’. They are currently expanding their scope from awareness raising to supporting start-ups in the food sector, such as looking at ‘sack gardening’ in local communities in Lusaka to make these populations vegetable-secure.



## ↑ Youth prototype meeting

The group is hoping to commercialise the practice when it gains traction.

## Food safety in informal markets

The Food Change Lab will continue to keep informal food systems on the agenda of (local) policymakers, underlining street food vendors’ importance in providing safe, healthy and diverse food to low-income urban dwellers. The Lab is developing a platform with Lusaka City Council, and planning capacity-building activities using lessons from the Uganda Food Change Lab.

### The shift to an e-voucher system

The crop diversity group, along with other civil society actors, has successfully lobbied for the introduction of an e-voucher system to allow farmers to get seeds and inputs for crops other than maize. However, the system has met with challenges only one year into implementation. Approximately 40% of the target districts will temporarily return to the original Farmer Input Support Programme until these challenges are resolved. Since this move will likely promote a return to maize monocropping, the coalition will continue policy dialogues with the Ministry of Agriculture and other members of parliament to address these challenges and to emphasise the importance of moving away from monocropping and towards sustainable diets. They will also continue to raise

public awareness on nutrition and Zambia's farming patterns through the media with briefs, articles and talk shows. In the near future, they intend to work directly with farmers to support them in diversifying their crops.

### The value of local foods

In spring 2018, the Zambia Food Change Lab published its first booklet, *Celebrating Local Food Value and Diversity*. The publication is the result of early Lab consultations in Chongwe district, where local farmers, officials and consumers raised the need to value local foods. Listing a variety of local foods together with their nutritional benefits, the booklet was launched in May 2018 at a celebratory event attended by the Zambian Minister of Agriculture.

*Celebrating Local Food Value and Diversity* booklet launch.

(Left) Mr. Julius Shawa, Permanent Secretary Ministry of Agriculture; (Right) Tanja Lubbers, Regional Director Hivos Southern Africa →



# LESSONS LEARNED

**Linking up local experiences and initiatives with national lobby efforts is best done when Lab participants are as diverse as possible.** Don't be afraid to mix high-level policymakers with farmers or informal street food vendors. The exchange is valuable and mutually appreciated.

**Policymakers are people, and people change behaviour and strategy when they are touched by a topic.** This happens when you expose people to real life experiences and ask them to get out of their comfort zones and connect to their inner sources of inspiration and drive.

**Convening power is crucial.** Do you have enough credibility to get the right people at the table (ie convince policymakers to be away from their desks, or farmers and vendors to lose income to attend your event)? Do they trust you to turn their input into concrete change processes?

**System change must include youth.** They are our future leaders and need to have their voices heard. You will be impressed by the amount of energy that is unleashed to make that change.

**Obstacles make us stronger.** The challenges related to implementing the e-voucher system have only strengthened our group's lobby and advocacy skills, making them more effective at fostering change.

Talking with  
small-holder  
farmers →



# SUSTAINABLE DIETS FOR ALL

[www.sustainablediets4all.org](http://www.sustainablediets4all.org)

Hivos and IIED began partnering in 2016 through Sustainable Diets for All, a global five-year partnership with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. We work with others to influence the policy and practices of markets, government actors and international institutions through citizen action for the promotion of sustainable diets, with the dual ambition to work towards a healthy planet and healthy people. Three strategies are core to our approach: working with frontrunners, supporting local actors to generate their own evidence, and creating coalitions of the willing through a Change Lab approach.

The Zambia Food Change Lab is being implemented with four partners:

Civil Society for Poverty Reduction [www.csprzambia.org](http://www.csprzambia.org)

Consumer Unity & Trust Society [www.cuts-international.org/ARC/Lusaka](http://www.cuts-international.org/ARC/Lusaka)

Center for Trade Policy and Development [www.ctpd.org.zm](http://www.ctpd.org.zm)

Zambia Civil Society Scaling Up Nutrition Alliance [www.csosun.org](http://www.csosun.org)

## About Hivos

Hivos is an international organisation that seeks new solutions to persistent global issues. Our primary focus is achieving structural change. This is why we cooperate with innovative businesses, citizens and their organisations. We share a dream with them of sustainable economies and inclusive societies. [www.hivos.org](http://www.hivos.org)

## About IIED

The International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) is a policy and action research organisation. We promote sustainable development to improve livelihoods and protect the environments on which these livelihoods are built. We work with some of the world's most vulnerable people to strengthen their voice in the decision-making arenas that affect them – from village councils to international conventions. [www.iied.org](http://www.iied.org)

## Lab participants

African Management Services Company, ATRADE Partners, Chongwe District Farmers Association, Chongwe Local Council, Ecosystem-based Adaptation for Food Security in Africa Assembly, the Food and Agriculture Organization Zambia, Foundation for Wildlife Habitat Conservation, FreeFlo Organic Farms, Green Zambia Initiative, individual farmers mainly from Chongwe district, MASASA Cooperative, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Tourism and Arts, National Union for Small-scale Farmers of Zambia, PAMOS Media Consultancy, Policy Monitoring and Research Centre, Presencing Institute, public and private media houses (eg radio, newspaper), Shais Foods, Shalom Media, Twikatane Theatre Group, University of Zambia, World Food Program Zambia, Young Emerging Farmers Initiative, Youth for Sustainable Food, Zambia Alliance for Agro-ecology and Biodiversity Conservation, Zambia Alliance of Women, Zambia Meteorological Department.

## Read more

Cook, S (2018) The spice of life: The fundamental role of diversity on the farm and on the plate. IIED and Hivos, London and The Hague.

<http://pubs.iied.org/G04305/>

Mwanamwenge, M and Harris, J (2017) Agriculture, food systems, diets and nutrition in Zambia. IIED and Hivos, London and The Hague.

<http://pubs.iied.org/G04163/>

Hivos Southern Africa (2018) Celebrating local food value and diversity.

<https://www.foodchangelab.org/promoting-diversity-on-the-farm-and-the-plate/>

Vorley, B (2018) Citizen-generated evidence for a more sustainable and healthy food system. IIED and Hivos, London and The Hague.

<http://pubs.iied.org/G04300/>

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