

Maize Marketing in a Changing Agricultural Policy Environment

A Case Study of Mkushi District in Zambia

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Abstract

This study was conducted to investigate the effect of agricultural policy changes on maize marketing in Kambia. Mkushi District was taken as a case study to represent other areas in the country where maize is produced. Maize is the staple food in Zambia thus it is produced in nearly all districts. Data was collected from 290 respondents who were randomly selected from five agricultural camps namely: Munsakamba, Musogu, Nkumbi, Kalombe and Chitina. Descriptive analysis using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was employed as a tool of analysis to determine agricultural policy factors that affect maize marketing in Zambia. The descriptive results revealed that maize marketing in Zambia has been significantly affected by different agricultural policy changes, particularly after the adoption of a free market economy. This led to the removal of subsidies, either partially or totally. As such, maize producers were largely affected in terms of marketing of their agricultural produce. Most respondents during the study pointed out that due to lack or inadequate inputs, their production and marketing of maize has been dwindling continually. Furthermore, some of the maize producers, due to hardships in acquiring farm inputs such as seeds, fertilizers and pesticides on time and at affordable prices, have sometimes been compelled to enter into local arrangements with private maize traders. These private maize traders sometimes provide the required farm inputs and in return producers pay them in kind during the harvest period. Such a practice was also confirmed by district agricultural officials to have been taking place.

In addition, the study revealed that despite the good government intention of fighting poverty and meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the magnitude of rural poverty in Zambia is increasing basically due low production caused by agricultural policy changes and poor marketing conditions which do not favour producers particularly the peasant farmers. This was observed in all agricultural camps visited where about 15% of their population lives in extreme poverty

affording only one meal per day and living in poor housing with poor sanitation facilities. During the study, most respondents recommended that the government has to take a deliberate action to formulate and implement new policies which are favourable to maize producers, especially in rural areas. They further recommended that government should improve infrastructure in rural areas as one way of improving the rural livelihood for the rural population and at the same time stimulating agricultural production as well as rural development in general. To ensure that maize Production and marketing is made vibrant, necessary incentives for agricultural extension officers was a suggested improvement.