

POLICY MONITORING AND RESEARCH CENTRE

**SUBMISSION TO:
THE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE,
LANDS AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

**TOPIC:
REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF FARMER INPUT
SUPPORT PROGRAMME**



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INTRODUCTION

Small-size farms are the main source of livelihood for about 70% of Zambia's population. The productivity of these farms is generally low, threatening household income and food security. The Zambian Government under the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) introduced the Farmer Input Subsidy Programme (FISP) also known as Fertilizer Input Subsidy Programme in the year 2002. FISP aimed to increase the production of maize and improve food security amongst small-scale farmers by supplying inputs such as fertilizer and maize seed at a subsidized price. According to the Farmer Input Support Programme (2014/2015:4) implementation manual, "FISP aims at improving access of resources to poor small scale farmers to inputs and enhancing the participation and competitiveness of the private sector in the supply and distribution of agricultural inputs in good time and adequate amounts". According to Smale & Mason, 2013, subsidized seed raises maize production, incomes, reduces the poverty gap and relative deprivation by leveraging income equality among Zambian smallholder farmers (IAPRI 2013:22).

The programme of input subsidy has undergone several transformative measures since the inception in 1997/98 from The Fertilizer Credit Programme, to The Fertilizer Support Programme (FSP) in 2002/2003 and amended to Farmer Input Support Programme (FISP) 2009/2010 farming seasons respectively. Since 2009/10, the government has been funding Farmer Input Supply Programme to ensure food security at both household and national levels.

(i) ADEQUACY OF THE POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK GOVERNING FISP

The FISP does not have a specific legal governing framework as it was established as a presidential initiative following recommendations through the Zambia Poverty Reduction Strategic Paper of 2002. However, the legal framework comes into play at the point where the Participating Farmer Organizations are being selected. It is a requirement for any farmer organization wishing to participate in FISP to have written by-laws or a constitution to manage their funds and have appropriate mechanisms as proof of accountability (FISP Manual, 2020). In addition, there are guidelines (in the FISP Manual) in place that govern the FISP program. These guidelines are reviewed every year depending on a needs assessment conducted by the Ministry of Agriculture as indicated by the FISP Direct Input Supply Implementation Manual.

Governance Structure on the Implementation of the FISP

Institution	Role	Description
Ministry of Agriculture	Business owner of FISP and Zambia Integrated Agriculture Management System (ZIAMIS)	Overall responsibility for effective implementation of FISP and operational management of the ZIAMIS process
		Oversight on the agriculture component of the ZIAMIS routine Management information
Ministry of Finance	Financial aspects of the project and overall coordination of financial institutional participation under FISP	Oversight on all financial aspects of the FISP implementation and conduct of Financial Institutions under the program
E-government Division (Smart Zambia Institute)	Primary Technical Coordinator and System Administrator for the ZIAMIS	System administration and Management of the ZIAMIS associated applications and user help

As the business owner, the Ministry of Agriculture through the Department of Agribusiness and Marketing is directly responsible for the implementation and oversight of all FISP activities under the overall guidance of the Permanent Secretary. FISP activities are implemented through the ministry's structure as follows:

National Level

The FISP Programme Coordination Office (PCO) will provide overall coordination of all activities and stakeholders in the implementation of FISP.

Provincial Level

The Provincial Agriculture Coordinators (PACOs) collaborates with the FISP Secretariat at the national level to provide overall coordination of all FISP activities within their provinces and districts. These include the registration and identification of beneficiaries; data collection activities and operations of the FISP service providers

District Level

The District Agriculture Coordinators (DACOs) collaborates with PACOs and FISP Secretariat to provide overall coordination of FISP activities within their districts. This includes identification of beneficiaries; data collection activities and operations of the warehouse managers, local transporters and other FISP service providers.

(ii) THE IMPACT OF FISP ON THE SMALL - SCALE FARMERS

The objective of FISP just like many of the agricultural input subsidy programs (ISPs) currently being implemented in Sub-Saharan Africa includes among their objectives **raising farm incomes and reducing rural poverty**. However, there is a lack of **empirical evidence on the extent to which ISPs are achieving these objectives** (Mason N. & Tembo, 2015). As mentioned earlier, the objective of the FISP was centred on poverty reduction as recommended by the Zambia Poverty Reduction Strategic Paper. Hence, measuring the impact of FISP would be done by its impact on poverty reduction on small-scale farmers. This could be measured in terms of food **security and household level of income among small-scale farmers**. There are a considerable number of studies on the impact of FISP on small scale farmers. Most studies are not done at a national level but on specific areas of which its findings can relate to other areas of the country. The following are some of the findings studies:

1. A Study on **“Do Input Subsidy Programs Raise Incomes and Reduce Poverty among Smallholder Farm Households? Evidence from Zambia”** (Mason N. & Tembo, 2015)

The study used nationally-representative panel survey data from smallholder farm households in Zambia to estimate the effects of an increase in FISP fertilizer on **household incomes, poverty incidence (the probability that household income falls below the US\$2 and US\$1.25/capita/day poverty lines), and poverty severity (the squared percentage difference between household income and these poverty lines)**. Results from the econometric analysis suggested that although **FISP fertilizer raises incomes and reduces the severity of poverty, the program has no statistically significant effect on poverty incidence among smallholder farm households in Zambia**. More specifically, a 200- kg increase in FISP fertilizer raises total household income by approximately 7.7% and reduces poverty severity (relative to the US\$1.25/capita/day poverty line) by 3.6 percentage points, but these effects are not large enough or widely distributed enough to reduce the probability of household income falling below the poverty line.

2. **A study by Funsani et al., (2016)** on “Farmer Input Support Programme and Household Income: Lessons from Zambia’s Southern Province”

The study was conducted in Choma and Monze districts which are among the highest maize producing districts in the Southern province of Zambia.

Panel data was collected through a rural household survey between July and September 2015, which includes farm household data for the period from 2013 to 2015. The data collected covers three agricultural years (2012/13, 2013/14, 2014/15). The Purposively sampling method was used to select the two districts.

This study’s estimates were in two ways: i) **using farmer given (actual) incomes** and ii) **the estimated revenue from maize production based on FRA set price**. Based on farmer actual incomes, the study estimate (kernel approach) an average increment in household annual income from maize sales of 30.8% for 2013/14 and 2014/15 crop seasons, and total household income by 13.9%. Per capita annual income from maize in the 2013/14 season is estimated to have increased by ZMK 292.06, this translates to ZMK 0.80 per capita/day income which is equivalent to USD 0.128 (exchange rate of USD 1 = ZMK 6.25). An income increase of USD 0.128 per capita/day concerning poverty severity means a reduction of 6.4% (relative to USD 2/Day poverty line), and 10.24% relative to extreme poverty (USD 1.25/Day poverty line). **The study concluded that the per capita increment resulting from FISP is still not large enough to lift households above the poverty line**

3. **A Study by Allan Magasu, 2016** on the “**Effectiveness of the FISP in Promoting Household Food Security: Case of Chiawa, Kafue District**” a study whose purpose was to establish the effectiveness of Farmer Input Support Programme (FISP) in promoting household food security in Chiawa. The study employed a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches (but largely qualitative methods) to generate data about the effectiveness of FISP in promoting household food security in Chiawa. Qualitative data were analyzed manually while quantitative data used excel. A multi-stage sampling procedure was used to select some respondents. The procedure employed both simple random selection and purposive sampling and a semi-structured questionnaire, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and interview guides were used as data collection tools. The study concludes that FISP had not resulted in **household food security among FISP beneficiaries in Chiawa**. The study went further to **identify the following as factors that affect the effectiveness of FISP in promoting household food security; inadequacy of seeds and fertilizer, late delivery of inputs, limited seed varieties, lack of funds by some beneficiaries to pay the required farmer contribution to access inputs, sale of inputs by some beneficiaries. Based on the research findings, the study made some**

recommendations on how FISP could be improved for it to promote household food security. It recommended that the government should **consider subsidizing the FISP pack further to enable the majority of the small-scale farmers to access it.** Given **the recurrent droughts in the area, the study also recommended that the FISP pack should be improved to include drought-tolerant seeds crops such as sorghum and millet.** Lastly, the study recommends a study be conducted to investigate how FISP pack can be improved to promote household food security.

4. Policy **Brief (Elias Kuntashala, Jan., 2021) on “Impact of the Farmer Input Support Policy on Agricultural Production Diversity and Dietary Diversity in Zambia”**

This policy brief is aimed at presenting evidence on the state of both agricultural production and household dietary diversity following the implementation of FISP. The data used in the study (from which this policy brief is based) came from a cross-section survey of a nationally representative randomly selected sample of 7,934 farm households in Zambia. These households participated in the 2015 Rural Agricultural Livelihoods Survey (RALIS15) conducted by the Zambia Central Statistical Office (CSO) and the Indaba Agricultural Policy Research Institute (IAPRI). The data on the 2013/14 production season was analyzed by comparing FISP beneficiary and non-beneficiary farmers with similar socio-economic characteristics. By comparing similar groups of participating and non-participating farmers, the study netted out the potential effects of other characteristics on the product diversity and household dietary diversity outcomes

The findings were that FISP significantly increases the number of crops grown by farmers but did not simultaneously increase the number of crops and areas dedicated to the crops. And, although the policy also significantly increase agricultural and household income diversities directly increased household dietary diversity, **the effects of the production diversity did not lead to increase household dietary diversity.**

5. **A study by Chibizwa Chibe Chibbompa, 2010, on “Impact of E-Voucher Farmer Input Support Programme (FISP) on Crop Productivity and Income Diversification among Small Scale Farmers of Lukanda Agricultural Camp in Kapiri Mposhi District in Zambia”**

The study was conducted in Lukanda Agricultural Camp in Mulungushi farm block of Kapiri Mposhi district which was selected purposively. The study explored the richness of the livelihood sources that directly contribute to food security and income.

The study established that the major inputs purchased using the e-voucher cards among sampled farmers in addition to fertilizers were; **maize seed (21%), livestock drugs (18%), vegetable inputs (15%), CA implements (7%) and poultry inputs (5%).** The trend

analysis shows that FISP input support has contributed to a **2.8% increase in maize productivity among the beneficiaries in the period 2014/15-2016/17. An increase in income diversification was reported during the E-voucher implementation period among the FISP E-voucher beneficiary farm households.**

(iii) MEASURES PUT IN PLACE TO ENSURE THE ONLY DESERVING FARMERS BENEFIT FROM FISP

According to guidelines and MACO, 2011, for individual farmers to be considered for participation in the programme, they have to meet the following criteria:

- i) The farmer must be a member of a registered Farmer Organization/ cooperative that has been active for at least one year after registration and is not organized on partisan line, or family business or private partnership;
- ii) The farmer must be a registered small-scale farmer and actively involved in farming within the camp coverage area;
- iii) The farmer must cultivate up to a maximum of 5 ha of land;
- iv) The farmer must have the capacity to pay ZMK 100.00 per 50 kg bag of fertilizer or to contribute 2 x 50 kg bags of white maize per 50 kg bag of fertilizer;
- v) The farmer must not be concurrently benefiting from Food Security Pack Programme (FSPP), and;
- vi) The farmer must not be a defaulter from the Food Reserve Agency (FRA) and/or any other agricultural credit programme.

However, the conditions and requirements have been changing as the FISP manual is updated over time. The introduction of the E-voucher system now means better targeting but there is still room to improve it at implementation at both the private sector and governmental levels.

(iv) PRIVATE SECTOR INVOLVEMENT IN THE FARMER INPUT SUPPORT PROGRAMME (FISP)

The implementation of FISP in Zambia since the 2002/2003 farming season has required the interaction of different stakeholders such as the Government, Development partners and the private sector. These have played a role in the implementation and success of the programme.

The introduction of e-FISP in particular in the 2015/2016 farming season, propelled the private sector into playing a critical role in the procurement and the transportation of fertilizers to various markets, the retail sale of fertilizers, the production and sale of improved seeds as well as inputs needed for livestock rearing.

There are benefits for the inclusion of the private sector in the implementation of a large and nationwide agricultural input subsidy programme, as noted in Imperial College et al. (2017).

- i) Firstly, it is believed that most of the activities can be done more efficiently by the private sector, which is less prone to the bureaucracy associated with state delivery of services.
- ii) Secondly, the involvement of the private sector is seen as a strategy for developing the private market system, especially in remote areas where the incentives for private sector investment in markets are weak.
- iii) Thirdly, the involvement of the private sector allows the Government to use scarce resources on other activities, by reducing the cost of the government subsidy. Fourthly, the participation of the private sector in input retailing reduces the displacement of commercial sales by subsidized inputs.
- iv) The private sector will stimulate job creation, especially with the well-developed agro dealer network.

Challenges

There is often a problem of trust between the private sector and the Government that has contributed to the continued exclusion of the private sector in the retailing of subsidized fertilizers. This lack of trust emerges from both sides. From the Governments side, there are some in Government who believe that the private sector firms with their profit motive are likely to exploit their engagement to the detriment of smallholder farmers and public welfare. **Chinsinga (2012) documents some of the profit and quick gain motives of some of the agro-dealers in input supply markets.** Others have also argued that when the private sector is involved in retailing subsidized fertilizers, there is a high incidence of ‘tips or bribes’ paid by farmers. The mistrust of the private sector is also exacerbated by the absence of a robust audit system on the stock’s movement of inputs as a way of detecting malpractices.

From the private sector’s point of view, the Government’s inconsistent decisions on private sector participation in the retail of subsidized fertilizers and delays in making inclusion or exclusion decisions characterize policy instability, creating uncertainty for private input market development.

Vested Interests and Non-Compliance

The e-voucher programme has attracted new entrants that were hitherto not interested in the fertilizer business, particularly from domestic companies, some just created to bid

for contracts to supply fertilizers to the programme. Some of these companies are highly connected to the political establishment, but when awarded contracts they have difficulties in fulfilling their deliveries. For non-established agricultural input suppliers, their main interest is the short-term gains from participation in the programme rather than the medium to the long-term development of the input supply market. **Chinsinga (2012) notes that a lot of the contracts in the provision of transport services are awarded to companies politically linked to the ruling party.**

Inefficient Payment System

There is evidence that the payment system by the Government for supplies and services rendered to FISP by the private sector is inefficient. The Imperial College (2017) reports that some companies have had to wait for as long as 6 months to be paid after the delivery of fertilizer supplies. These delays in payments are likely to lead to **high supply prices of inputs and services, as suppliers factor in the risk of delayed payments in their prices.**

Opportunities

Greater involvement of the private sector in FISP (and especially e-FISP) not only promotes private sector development in input markets but can also improve efficiency in the implementation of the programme as well as create employment at the local level.

Programme Efficiency

The increased involvement of the private sector provides an opportunity for increasing the efficiency of the implementation of the programme. Improving and increasing the number of sustainable agro dealer outlets from which smallholder farmers can access various inputs and broaden their choice of markets can achieve this. This increase in the competition may consequently improve the quality of services at market outlets and reduce the incidences of corruption.

Private Sector Investment in Rural Input Markets

The involvement of the private sector can also encourage private investments in rural input markets. This requires consistency and transparency in Government decisions. Such confidence-building may bring about investments in rural markets. There are also opportunities for designing future private sector participation based on performance-based indicators, such as the verifiable expansion of retail outlet coverage. Alternatively, the private sector could be bidding to supply specific quantities of subsidized fertilizer in identified underserved areas identified by the Government.

These areas can be served directly by the private companies or through private company's sub-contraction to agro-dealers.

(v) BUDGETARY ALLOCATIONS FOR THE FARMER INPUT SUPPORT PROGRAMME (FISP) FOR THE LAST FIVE YEARS

Table 1: 5 year Government budgetary allocation

Budgetary Year	FISP Budget Amount (Billion Kwacha)	Total Ministry of Agriculture Budget Amount (Billion Kwacha)	% of FISP on Agriculture Budget	Number of Farmers Targeted
2018	2.926	6.344	46.12	1 million
2019	1.428	5.321	26.84	1 million
2020	1.111	2.856	38.93	1 million
2021	5.701	7.209	79.08	1 million
2022	5.372	7.336	73.23	1,024,434

As can be seen from the table, FISP budgetary allocations have seen some dramatic changes over the last five years with the lowest amount allocated being approximately 1.8 billion Kwacha in the 2018 budget and the highest allocation being 5.7 billion Kwacha in the 2021 budget. What is clear is that the budget amount allocated to FISP has seen a tremendous upturn especially in the 2021 and 2022 budgets which is a commendable move by Government. Additionally, the E-Voucher System introduced in the 2015/2016 farming season is ultimately expected to help reduce excessive overheads and wastage associated with the traditional FISP arrangement. This will ensure prudent use of the country's resources in line with the Economic Transformation agenda.

(vi) STRATEGIES PUT IN PLACE BY GOVERNMENT FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF FISP

- Following its commitment to increase agricultural diversification, in 2015 government commenced a transition from the FISP to the electronic voucher system (e-Voucher) which allowed farmers to select agricultural inputs of their choice. This was an important strategy introduced to improve FISP and also promote sustainable agricultural diversification, as well as private-sector, led input market development.
- Linked to this, in the 2018/2019 farming season, cardless redeeming was introduced to improve efficiency and effectiveness in the transfer of funds to beneficiaries under the FISP program.
- A further strategy to improve FISP was to expand the range of crops included in the program. Rice was added in the 2010/11 farming season while sorghum, cotton, and groundnuts were added in the 2012/13 season as part of the government's push for crop diversification.

(vii) CHALLENGES THAT HAVE BEEN FACED IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF FISP

- There have been delays in Government funding and delays in input distribution.
- Certain banks that were engaged by Government to implement the e-Voucher did not have a physical presence in some districts, making transacting difficult.
- Poor internet connectivity and poor flow of beneficiary information. The lack of internet connectivity posed a challenge to farmer registration and access to farmer activation codes, especially in rural areas. This has resulted in delayed sharing of information among stakeholders.
- Poor targeting of farmers. There have been challenges in identifying beneficiary farmers and in some cases, counterfeit cooperatives have been formed for the sole purpose of accessing inputs. In other cases, beneficiaries use multiple names to obtain more inputs.
- Multiple beneficiaries from the same household meant that well-off households have more access to government subsidies than the poorer ones.
- For certain beneficiaries, the contribution amount expected of them remains high.
- The program has crowded-out private sector investment in providing input and output marketing services. Beneficiary dependence on fertilizer subsidies crowded out commercial fertilizer purchases and affected investments from the private sector.
- Poor road infrastructure has made it difficult to ensure inputs reach beneficiaries early or on time.
- There have been a limited number of participants who have graduated from the program and as a result, a dependency syndrome has developed where farmers expect to receive inputs season after season.

The traditional FISP was not increasing agricultural diversification away from Maize.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE EXECUTIVE

- I. Reducing system leakage by improving the monitoring and evaluation of FISP and crowding in private sector involvement by implementing the program through an e-voucher redeemable at private agro-dealers and input suppliers could further increase the impact of FISP on total input use and potentially create jobs in the process (Sitko et al., 2012; Mason and Jayne 2013).
- II. Evidence shows that FISP is disproportionately targeted to households that cultivate more land and are more likely to be above the poverty line. There is a need to review the

- targeting mechanism to take into account the social-economic characteristic of FISP and Food Security Pack.
- III. The programme needs to allow various technocrats to be highly involved in the design, review and implementation process autonomously.
 - IV. FISP weaknesses both E-voucher or DIS has no set productivity indices for tracking progress on improvement of yield, area and crops cultivated per farmer over time. This is important to facilitate result-based monitoring and evaluation.
 - V. FISP secretariat and Management is highly centralized causing lapses in the implementation process. There is a need for the Ministry to appoint a coordinator at the provincial level tasked to manage the activities of FISP in conjunction with the District Agricultural Coordinators offices. The Provincial Agricultural Coordinators (PACO) are administratively occupied to be allocated further technical tasks.
 - VI. Starting in 2002, the government-run agricultural subsidies has given the country's smallholder farmers access to improved inputs such as inorganic fertilizers and seeds. However, both the DIS and e-FISP need to be transformed to accommodate diversified agricultural inputs following the agricultural input suitability mechanisms to enhance holistic agricultural productivity.
 - VII. The revamped E-FISP programme offers a more diversified range of products and gives farmers much more flexibility to acquire those inputs that best meet their actual needs based on local conditions. Therefore Government should work with input suppliers, agro-dealers, the government and other stakeholders to design appropriate products based on local demand.
 - VIII. It is commendable that the government finally adopted the dual approach to implementing FISP considering the differences between remote and non-remote however studies have shown that
 - IX. The policy framework (institutionalized processes and procedures) is there to aid the implementation of both the DIS and E-Voucher as indicated in the 2020/2021-implementation manuals. However, FISP is not backed by any law (legal framework) except at the point where the Participating Farmer Organizations are being selected. It is therefore important that a legal framework improve its delivery back FISP, especially for farmer selection criterion.
 - X. On the impact of the FISP on Small-Scale Farmers, there is really no documented impact except for a few which were also no significant changes has been done by FISP implementation and has so far not reduced the poverty level such that most small scale farmers are still food insecure at household level while FISP and been implemented for over 18 years now. Headcount rural poverty rates increased marginally from 77.3%

in 2004 to 77.9% in 2010 despite a major scaling-up of expenditures on the FISP program (Jayne et al. 2011)

- XI. To make e-vouchers much more efficient in terms of farmers redeeming the right inputs Government should consider engaging large scale agro dealerships that can sub-contract reliable agro-dealers to stimulate private sector involvement.
- XII. Consider streamlining targeting to real vulnerable but viable farmers in the programme
- XIII. Government should enhance crop diversification packs but farmers should choose the type of packs by June or earlier each year. Several packs must be defined from which farmers can choose from i.e Rice pack, maize pack, climate-smart pack, fish pack and agroforestry pack.
- XIV. Lastly, Government should consider increasing farmer contribution from K400 to K800 to ensure vulnerable farmers fall off naturally to take them under the Food Security Pack (FSP) which also requires to be upscaled up to make an impact on agricultural productivity.

CONCLUSION

- Agriculture remains in Zambia as a priority sector for job creation, poverty reduction and a promoter of economic growth. However FISP success depends on the development of sound economic policies that border on efficient implementation of the programmes to allow research and development and modern extension methods to flourish that consequently will improve agricultural productivity in Zambia.
- E-vouchers remains a viable method of delivering FISP, however, systems must be put in place to allow only viable registered agro-dealers to participate in the programme to ensure stable pricing of inputs and redeeming is achieved. This can easily be tightened through the FISP secretariat. E-vouchers can cut a lot of costs and redundancies and save national treasury revenue if well implemented.

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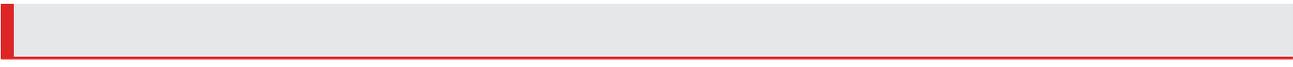
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