

The Changing Landscape of Tanzania's Agriculture: The need for more evidence-based policy making to achieve greater food security and poverty reduction in Tanzania



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BACKGROUND/ CONTEXT

Tanzania has made great strides in macroeconomic performance during the last 15 years with economic growth above 5 percent. In recent years Tanzania has experienced a record growth of around 7 percent. Despite the impressive macroeconomic performance, poverty, food and nutrition security have remained elusive. One-third of the Tanzania's population still lives below the national poverty line and 38 percent of under 5-years children are stunted. The demographics are changing as over half of the population is under 25 years and by 2027 over half of population will be living in urban areas. Food import bill is surging exceeding \$650 million in 2013. Nevertheless, discovery of gas has revitalized the prospect for prosperity. Expectations are high as the public debate rages on how best the country could benefit from gas windfall. The multidimensionality and increasing complexity of the challenges and opportunities in the agricultural sector call for more evidence-based policy making and implement greater policy reforms to address barriers which constrain food security and inclusive growth. This entails policies that create conditions for a well-functioning regional trading system; stable financial systems; sustainable food and nutrition security; sustainable use of natural resources; equitable access to knowledge, innovation and technology; and responsible investment, amongst others.

Over the years, the Government of Tanzania (GoT) has embarked on a number of initiatives to revitalize the agricultural sector. These include, Agricultural Sector Development Program (ASDP), Kilimo Kwanza, Southern Agricultural Corridor of Tanzania (SAGCOT) and the Big Results Now (BRN). The GoT also has been implementing several policies in recent years to ensure food security in the country. The National Input Voucher System (NAIVS), export ban on staples, and duty-free importation of rice, and increasing the size of stocks held by the National Food Reserve Agency (NFRA). Some of these policies, though have been set with good intention, the outcomes sometimes have been different. This has prompted the GoT to seek more support in policy research in order to inform the policy making process. This conference is the outcome of policy research work supporting the Ministry of Agriculture in making informed policy decisions. The very first annual agriculture policy conference (AAPC) explored options for policy reforms to achieve greater food security and poverty reduction.



About AAPC

The Annual Agricultural Policy Conference (AAPC) brings together key decision makers and influencers working on agricultural policy projects and initiatives to share, reflect, learn, deliberate on key challenges and thereafter, collaborate on emerging issues arising from the conference.

Each year, a different theme is determined based on inputs from the previous year and analysis. Organized by the Policy Analysis Group (PAG) in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries (MALF), the AAPC has emerged as a national conference where policies and ideas are shared between decision makers (GoT), researchers, NGOs, civil society, local think tanks, and the private sector.

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The AAPC also provides a platform to present the latest empirical findings across six thematic areas namely: Agriculture sector policy, agriculture markets and trade, enabling policy for private sector investment, land tenure policy, access to finance and technology, and agriculture input policy.

The efforts by the PAG go a step further in policy work by providing technical support during policy dialogue, legislative process, policy implementation and in monitoring of policy impacts.

After the AAPC, a report synthesizing the proceedings of the conference is compiled by the facilitator, reviewed by PAG members and thereafter, PAG members meet to consolidate the key emerging issues emanating from the AAPC into a more refined document capturing policy analysis and analytical gaps for implementation among PAG members. Upon consolidating the emerging issues, a joint meeting is held between the Policy Analysis Group (PAG) and the Partnership Accountability Committee (PAC) to inform the policy gap analysis.

1st Annual Agriculture Policy Conference

The very first Annual Agricultural Policy Conference was convened by the Policy Analysis Group (PAG) with a theme of Assessing the changing landscape of Tanzania’s agriculture, reiterating “The need for more evidence-based policy making process to achieve greater food security and poverty reduction in Tanzania”. The event was held from 2nd to 4th December 2014 at the Serena Hotel, Dar es Salaam.

The 2014 Agricultural Policy Conference was attended by 133 participants (86 male and 47 female). The conference aimed at deepening understanding among policy makers on three overarching issues:

- i. The need for more evidence-based policy making for sustainable and inclusive growth. Sustainable agriculture could be achieved if there is a stable and predictable policy environment. There is need for continuous policy reforms for a competitive agricultural sector and positioning Tanzania strategically to benefit from emerging market opportunities while addressing the challenges.
- ii. While the emerging gas sector offers an opportunity to diversify and accelerate economic growth, poverty reduction and inclusive growth hinges on the agricultural sector where the majority of population is employed. Promotion of agricultural productivity, agro-processing and agriculture-allied industries such as textiles and shoe making are crucial for jobs creation and inclusive growth.

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- iii. The need for a greater youth engagement in agriculture. As the majority of Tanzania's population is youth, agricultural sector could not be sustained without youth engagement. Agriculture has the greatest potential to generate the much-needed jobs for youth.

Key issues discussed on the first day was on the involvement of youth in agribusiness. Generally, it was observed that it is possible for youths to engage in agriculture if an enabling policy environment is created. This include support them with capital, facilitate learning visits to other youth that are successful, promotion of locally produced foods instead of imported goods.

The second and third day was more technical where policy research papers were presented around five thematic areas.

5 Thematic areas

- Agriculture productivity and technology
- Inclusive growth-food security, safety net, women and youth engagement
- Food trade, markets and institutions
- Macroeconomic-public expenditure and fiscal policy
- Policy reforms action plan-policy reforms from G8 New Alliance on Food security and Nutrition (NAFSN)

Key issues that emerged from the conference which require further action include;

- i. Lack of involvement of all key stakeholders in policy formulation process i.e. inadequate inclusiveness consultations when formulating policies. This entails that policy formulation in Tanzania is, by and large, top-down. Consequently, the process takes too long and it is not easy to implement policies emerging from such processes due to lack of accountability. The VAT and PPP policies are examples.
- ii. Stakeholders being reactive rather than pro-active when formulating policies. This means we wait until a policy issue emerges and then try to do research to collect data and information so as to prepare a policy intervention for the issue. Should remember that investment in policies is very high as it requires to do research at ground level to collect data and information to be used in formulating policies.
- iii. There is also a need to focus at grass root level especially LGAs rather than national level when formulating policies. The LGAs are the main implementers of policies and have experience on issues that require policy interventions.
- iv. Land is a big issue in Tanzania to an extent that conflicts between livestock keepers and farmers (crop growers) is now becoming a common phenomenon. The current land policies do not vividly address issues of ownership and tenure systems.
- v. The tremendous growth of urban population presents a tremendous demand on commodity value addition especially in Emerging Urban Centers. This is an opportunity for small holder farmers particularly youths.
- vi. The meat/dairy value chain will create employment especially youths.
- vii. Engagement of youth in agriculture should be a priority by all stakeholders in the sector. Heterogeneity within youths, in region and even within the same regions should be considered. This heterogeneity should be unpacked in order to come with workable solutions.
- viii. Issues on climate change are very significant when promoting agricultural productivity. There is a need to find ways of mitigating the effect of climate change.

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- ix. Improved agriculture production should go hand in hand with improved nutrition outcomes. We have high numbers of stunted children and this need to be addressed
- x. Many of the policies do not vividly focus on gender and youths. This is a missed opportunity considering that farming is largely dominated by women. There is a need to see how to integrate gender aspects in agricultural policies.
- xi. Developing gender related technologies which will help increase availability of nutritionally rich food at household level e.g., drip irrigation drying of foods
- xii. Strengthen the policy action to “invest in agriculture statistics capacity building” to more explicitly relate to principles of transparency in the collection and analysis of agricultural data and recognizing the need for the public to access the raw data for more constructive dialogue. Clarifying the NBS as the ministry mandated to be the repository for this data and internet access to data should be considered.

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