

## RE-SELLING OF FARMER SUPPORT INPUT BY SMALL SCALE FARMERS IN MWINILUNGA DISTRICT, ZAMBIA

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Small-scale farmers in Zambia rely on agriculture as a source of income and livelihood. This study sought to explore the re-selling of farmer support inputs. The study employed a descriptive multiple case study of eight (8) farming cooperatives in Mwinilunga District of NorthWestern Province of Zambia. The cooperatives are situated in a rural area of the district called Samuteba. The targeted population of the study were small viable farmers who have been receiving farming inputs from the government on a programme called Farmer Input Support Programme (FISP) under the Ministry Agricultural and Food Security Programme. The study was guided by two objectives which were to establish reasons why small scale farmers are re-selling the government given farming inputs and discuss the effects of the re-selling farming inputs. Interview guides were used in data collection and the data was analysed descriptively using the themes that emerged from the responses that were given by farmers. On the first objective, it was established that there were many reasons that lead to farmers selling the farming inputs, some of the reasons that were cited were poverty, lack of resources, having extra farming inputs and greenness. The main reason that was cited was high levels of poverty. On the second objective, the study revealed that the effect of re-selling the farming inputs by Small Scale Farmers was that it was very difficult to move out from poverty and this has the potential to affect the food security of the nation. The study concluded that poverty was the main reason why small scale farmers were re-selling the farming inputs. From the findings of the study, it was recommended that the government through the Ministry of Agriculture should employ more extension workers in rural areas who should be able to monitor the use of the farming inputs by small scale farmers and explain the reasons why the government was supporting them.

**Keywords:** Re-selling, Farmer Input and Small Scale Farmers

### BACKGROUND

Some people in Chavuma were reportedly selling inputs they obtained under the Farmer Input Support Programme (FSIP). Unscrupulous beneficiaries were selling a 50kg bag of fertiliser at a paltry K100 (Daily Nations, 2019). Authorities in the district have since warned of stern action against farmers who are selling subsidised inputs. Chavuma District Commissioner (DC) warned that "individuals selling the farm input would face the wrath of the law. He said in an interview that FISP was meant to benefit vulnerable farmers. Inputs were meant to increase productivity in the agriculture sector, it is not right for farmers to start selling the input which Government had provided for them".

The District Commissioner further said that Government was working hard to ensure there was food security at household level by providing the inputs on time. He advised officers responsible for distributing farm inputs not to get involved in dubious activities. If the officers are involved in dubious activities, they risk being dismissed.

In Eastern province, Provincial Minister warned farmers selling subsidised fertiliser and seed provided by Government under the farmer Input Support Programme (FSIP) risk being blacklisted and will face the wrath of the law. He revealed that his office had continued to receive reports of farmers selling inputs. He said inputs meant for the province should be used within the province and for the intended purpose. The Minister has urged the security wings to be on high alert and ensure that the practice of selling inputs was contained.

"My office has continued to receive reports of farmers selling inputs, but that should not be the case, farmers should use the inputs for their intended purpose and not sell them, this is not right and it has to be stopped. So

this is the task for the security wings in the province to ensure that no farmer reselling the Government-subsidized inputs. No bag of input, be it fertilizer or seed, should be sold" (Time of Zambia, 2018).

On the Copperbelt, ZNBC (2019) reported that the Copperbelt Provincial Agricultural Coordinator had cautioned farmers against selling the input they will access from the Farmer Input Support Programme. The Provincial Officer said the Ministry of Agriculture in the province has engaged the farming community to ensure inputs were used according to the intended purpose. He further, cautioned farmers against sharing the packs of inputs they receive, as one pack was meant for one farmer stipulated in the modalities.

In 2017 a scam was unearthed in which scores of agriculture extension officers were allegedly selling yet to be released Farmer Input Support Programme (FISP) electronic voucher (e-voucher) cards for the 2017/18 farming season. Zambia National Association for Youth in Agriculture (ZNAYAD) president Lazarous Mulenga told local media the alleged practice of selling e-voucher cards was widespread, with a higher concentration in Southern Province. Mulenga said, "It is no secret that some farmers in many districts, but is worse in Kalomo, he claimed the black market e-voucher cards is run by agriculture extension officers. Where some farmers have as many as ten e-voucher cards. This has been reported in many districts of Southern province. Legitimate beneficiaries will be disadvantaged by anticipated shortages in inputs, arising from the illegal sale of e-voucher cards" (Mulenga, 2017).

Zambia Daily Mail (2017) reported that Ministry of Agriculture Permanent Secretary Shawa Julius warned of stern action against farmers who are selling subsidised farming inputs under the Farmer Input Support Programme (FISP). He warned that individuals who will be found selling the farm inputs would face the wrath of the law. He was saying this in reaction to the imprisonment of three people to nine months in prison with hard labour by Luanshya Magistrate courts for alleged failure to account for fertiliser under FISP. The imprisonment of the three should serve as a warning to would be offenders. The Permanent Secretary said officers charged with the responsibility of distributing farm input should not be involved in dubious activities. The Zambia National Service officers and police officers should refrain from engaging in dubious practices as they risk being jailed or dismissed.

Mpongwe District Commissioner also on the other hand warned farmers against selling fertiliser to unscrupulous dealers as they risk being blacklisted from FISP.

ZANIS (2019) reported that Government has warned farmers against selling their farming inputs, which they would soon start accessing under the farmer's Input Support Programme. Nakonde District Commissioner Field Simwinda said this was because the government was spending huge sums of money under the FISP programme to help sustain the farmers. The District Commissioner advised farmers to use their inputs for farming and put food on their tables.

In Katete district, the DACO warned farmers in the district against reselling farming inputs given to them by the government. The DACO said that anyone found reselling farming inputs obtained in through FISP, the farmer Input Support Programme risks been jailed or banned from all government programmes aimed at uplifting the living standards of people. Government has this year prepared all farming inputs in good time in readiness for the 2015/16 farming season. He further said that the government this year has not increased the price for the FISP pack adding that farmers should be worried about any changes. He said farmers were expected to pay K400 per maize pack, K195 for a cotton pack and K210 for a groundnut pack. The DACO explained that among the inputs types that will receive support in the district are and cotton where the government is targeting to support 2,020 and 800 farmers respectively. The officer further indicated that the district was in full stock of Compound d fertiliser and Urea (breezefmchipata).

In Sinda district, the DACO said the inputs were meant to improve food production thereby having food security in the country. He said Government was paying a lot of money in subsidizing farming inputs and as such the inputs should be used for the purpose which they were meant for. No matter what challenges farmers face they should not sell farming inputs as solution as these will enable them to have food on their tables and surplus for sell. The DACO disclosed that the distribution of farming input such as seeds and fertilizer is going on well (theglobalonline.news, 2020).

In Siavonga district of Southern province, the District Commissioner warned farmers against exchanging farming inputs with beer. Speaking when he officially launched the 2018/19 farming inputs distribution exercise under Food Security Packs Support Programme, the DC said exchanging fertilizer with beer or reselling the commodity would deprive farmers the ability to increase food production to reduce poverty. The food support under the Department of Community

Development will benefit 457 beneficiaries in Siavonga (Daily Nation, 2018). The pack consists of maize seeds, groundnuts, Urea and D-compound. The DC said that,

"As a district we are geared and set for the 2018/19 farming season. Our aim is to record a bumper harvest next year. I'm therefore urging farmers to take advantage of the rains that have just started to start planting and those farmers who intend to sell the inputs will be arrested and punished. Inputs are not meant for resale or exchange with beer and other food stuff. He saluted Government for distributing the inputs on time and hoped that the beneficiaries will put the inputs to good use to guarantee food security at both household level and the nation at large. He called on government officers from the Department of Community Development as well as the Department of Agriculture to spend most of their time in monitoring and providing technical guidance to farmers".

ZNBC (2019) reported that chief Chanje of the Chewa speaking people of Chipangali district warned of stern punishment against farmers who will be found selling the fertilizer given to them under the Farmer Input Support Programme. Speaking at Mgubudu where farmers were collecting the inputs, the chief said the Government is spending a lot of money in procuring the inputs hence the need for farmers to use them for the intended purpose. The traditional leader said “government is working hard to eliminate poverty across the country stating that it is every farmer's responsibility to complement such efforts. He further, urged farmers to adhere to climate information to improve their yield”.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The Government of Zambia has been supporting Farmer Input Support Programme for a long time now. It has been subsidising the input with the aim of improving food security in the nation. The small scale but viable farmers are supposed to access these inputs for three years and later they win off the programme. This has not been the case, some farmers have been on this programme since the inception of the programme in early 2000. The programme has been abused by civil servants, politicians and the farmers themselves. In some ways it has helped to improve food security of the nation but it has not served its intended purpose. The farmers have continued re-selling of the farming input at cheap price to brief case businessmen. If the abuse of this programme continues government will continue losing huge sums of money. Hence, the aim of this study was to establish causes why small scale viable farmers have continued with habit of re-selling the farming input at a cheap prices and identify effects of such action on food production.

## **OBJECTIVES**

**The study was guided by the following objectives**

1. To establish causes why small scale have continue re-selling the FISP farming inputs;
2. Identify effects of re-selling farming inputs on food security in the nation; and

## **Significance of the Study**

The significance of the study was to inform the government through the Ministry of Agriculture to put in place mechanisms of monitoring and evaluating the FISP programme in the nation. The government through the Ministry of Agriculture should employ more extension workers in all the areas where farming activities take place. This would help the extension workers to explain to the farmers the importance of Farmer Support Input programme. Furthermore, extension workers would be in a better position to monitor and identify real beneficiaries of the free farming inputs not those interested in selling the farming inputs.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study employed a descriptive multiple case study of eight (8) cooperative in Samuteba ward of Mwinilunga district collecting farming inputs from Farmer Input Support Programme under the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security Pack Programme under the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services, aiming at describing the existing reality on the usage of the input that was received by these small scale viable farmers. A sample of 17 respondents was purposively selected. Two (2) were selected from each cooperative and one (1) buyer of the input who was camped in the area. The names of these cooperatives were the data was collected were Katuloku, Kapoya, Matavu, Chiyambamwenyi, Wamala, Mambungu, Nyilemba and Kalwela. Interview guides were used to collect data. This data was collected during the time farming input for 2020/21 was being distributed to the farmers in different cooperatives and this was very easy for the researcher to collect data from the farmers. Data was analysed thematically by identifying common themes and results presented using key concepts and narrations.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The findings and discussion were presented according to the study objectives.

### **Re-selling of Farming Inputs by Small Scale Farmers.**

The first objective of the study sought to establish reasons or causes of small scale farmers reselling the farming

input that they receive from Government. The study findings revealed that there many reasons why small scale farmers were reselling the farming inputs.

### **Poverty or lack of resources**

Poverty or lack of resources was cited as the main reason why most of them resell the farming inputs that they collect from government so that it can help them. In most case when they sell they are able to pay school fees for the children and even help them in the cultivation in the feeds. Part of the money is given to people to do some piece work and by so doing it become very easy for them to cultivate. One of the respondents said,

“twadikeng’a wanyi kuladisha fetiliza nambutu yitunakutambula kufuma ku gavumeti, ilan’ga chuma cheneni chinakuletsha etu adi anyanya kuladisha fetiliza and seed yakudima nachu kumbula hakwilila. Ing’ovu yamuntu wumu hakwila nawu adimi malima amavulu namakasa hohu chinakutwikolela mwani. Dichi chuma chacheneni chinakuletsha adimi anyanya kuladisha fetiliza kulonda kudi kwasha nachu”. This can be translated as “it is not our wish to be selling the farming inputs we are getting from the government but the challenge we are facing as small scale farmers is lack of resources to help us. One person cannot cultivate a big portion alone. This is what is leading us to sell the farming input”.

### **Having Extra bags of Fertilizers of farming inputs**

Having extra bags of farming inputs also was cited as one of the reasons why farmers resell the farming inputs. The farmers in most cases receive farming inputs very late and they keep that to be used in another farming season. If it happens that in that particular farming season they receive the input fast they happen to have extra bags. The input that was given comprised of 4 bags of D Compound, 4 bags of Urea and 1 bag of maize seed. If a particular farmer does not use his/her pack for one season it will happen that the next farming season they have about sixteen bags of fertilizer. One of the farmers said,

amakwawu aladisha fetiliza neyi yinavuli. Chamwekanan’a hayaka yikwawu gavumeti yaletan’a mbutu na fetiliza hakulamba. mpinji yekwawu yashikang’a muMarch hela mu April henohu kudima kwamana dehi. Adimi amavulu ekalang’a na fetiliza yayivulu. Neyi anakali nayayivulu amakwakwa achimonan’a chaswayi kuladisha. Adimi ama kwawu asendan’a fetiliza kuyimpanyi yiyedi. Ku cooperative naku Social Welfare. This can be translated as

most of the farming seasons farming inputs reach farmers very late. Sometimes we collect in March or April. So this time most farmers even if they receive input they have nothing to do with it in that particular farming season. They keep the fertilizer to be used in another farming season so you find that farmers have extra bags of fertilizer. It becomes so easy for them to sell the extra bags of input so that they solve other challenges. Some farmers are beneficiaries from two different groups. These are under the Ministry of Agriculture under FISP and the Department of Social Welfare under the Ministry of Community Development and Social Welfare.

### **Greediness**

Greediness was also cited as one of the factors leading to small scale farmers re-selling the farming inputs. It was revealed that most of the cooperatives were so greedy. In some cooperative, the leaders were not giving the members the right numbers of bags of fertilizers to farmers. Cooperative were collecting so many bags of fertilizers and they ended up selling. For one to belong to a cooperative he/she has to manage to pay K400 which will go to the Ministry of Agriculture, K50 membership fees and another K50 for administration of the cooperative. The administration fee caters for the transport, lodging and meals for the cooperative leaders when they go out.

In the case of 2019/2020 farming season the input was not delivered in respective cooperative. It was the duty of the cooperative to organise transport from the Boma to the cooperatives. It was now the duty of the respective cooperatives to be going to the District Agriculture Coordinator’s Office to collect the inputs. This prompted some leaders to ask members to contribute each a bag of fertilizer to raise money for transportation but some took advantage of the situation to get more bags from the farmers. In some cooperatives farmers were given as little as four bags of fertilizer.

One of the respondents said, “at first we use to buy a bag at K170 from the farmers of fertilizer but as more buyers arrived the price had to increase to K280. Most of the buyers were from Kitwe, Solwezi, Manyama and Kalumbila”. The farmers and some of the cooperative leaders took the farming inputs to the mentioned areas for re-selling were they able to sell at good price.

It was further revealed that even some Government departments such as the Zambia National Service (ZNS) took part in the process of buying farming from small scale farmers. They went with the truck at night and

bought the input from the farmers. According to one of the buyers, it is the ZNS who even increased the price of buying fertilizer. They were offering a good amount to farmers as compared to other buyers. They were buying at K250 per bag of fertilizer.

### Effects of Re-selling Farming Inputs

The second objective of the study was to identify the effects of small scale Farmers re-selling the farming inputs. The findings revealed that there are many effects of Farmers re-selling the farming inputs but for the purpose of this study. It revealed that Farmer Input Support Programme is not serving the intended purpose of which it was formed. It was formed to alleviate poverty levels among vulnerable but viable farmers so that they become self sustainable after being assisted with free inputs for some farming seasons and graduate. The study further showed that some farmers have been dependant on the programme for many years without graduating to give other small scale farmers to benefit from the programme.

Furthermore, the findings revealed that the government is losing a lot of money since most of these farming inputs such as fertiliser is not manufactured within the country. it is imported from the middle East. The government spent a lot of money in purchasing, transportation from the source to Zambia and distribution of the farming inputs within the country in all the districts in the country in readiness for farmers to collect. At first the government used to take the farming inputs to different farming cooperatives but this time around they only deliver up to the district level. Farmers pick it up from the district to the final destination.

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concluded that the main reason why small scale farmers re-selling the free farming inputs which is from the government is due to poverty. When farm are given the farming inputs it becomes the source of income when they sell some bags, it helps them to pay the school fees for their children. The other money is used to give people to help them cultivate and clear the fields.

From the findings of the study It was recommended that:

- (i) The government through the Ministry of Agriculture should employ more extension workers in all the districts and catchment areas where farming activities take place.
- (ii) Extension workers should be equipped with the necessary skills and tools which will enable them move within the catchment to monitor the farmers.
- (iii) Extension workers are in a better position to explain the importance of Farmer Support Input programme to the farmers and identify real beneficiaries.

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