

PRESS RELEASE



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Reducing poverty, improving food security for farmers in Zambia

Landmark UNDP-backed initiative launched to strengthen climate-resilient food security and reduce poverty for 3 million smallholder farmers in Zambia

08 February 2019, Lusaka, Zambia: A new United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)-backed initiative was launched today to support the Government of Zambia in strengthening climate-resilient food security and poverty reduction measures. The initiative has the potential to economically empower an estimated three (3) million smallholder farmers - mostly women, youth, and marginalised groups - in Zambia.

With funding from the Green Climate Fund (GCF), the UNDP intervention responds to one of the key outcomes of the government's Seventh National Development Plan, which deals with reducing poverty and vulnerability whilst contributing to economic diversification and job creation in Zambia. This project also responds to Zambia's climate change strategies and Nationally Determined Contributions - commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and strengthen resilience to climate change.

The landmark project was mobilised by UNDP through a coalition with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP). It aligns with Zambia's key development goals for poverty reduction and food security, as well as its goal to become a prosperous middle-income country by 2030.

Implemented by the Zambian Ministry of Agriculture under the title '[*Strengthening climate resilience of agricultural livelihoods in Agro-Ecological Regions I and II in Zambia \(SCRALA\)*](#)', the USD\$137m in financing aims to help smallholder farmers plan for climate risks that threaten to derail development gains, make their farming more resilient and diversified, and give them better access to markets.

The Government of Zambia anticipates reaching over 3 million indirect beneficiaries through the project – approximately 18 per cent of the total population – which will work in 16 districts within designated Agro-Economical Regions, viz.: Mambwe, Nyimba, Chongwe, Luangwa, Chirundu, Rufunsa, Chama, Mafinga, Kazungula, Siavonga, Gwembe, Namwala, Shangombo, Senanga, Sesheke, and Mulobezi.

Hunger and malnutrition constitute real and present risks in Zambia. Approximately 60 per cent of people live below the poverty line, and 42 per cent are considered extremely poor. According to WFP, over 350,000 people are considered food insecure, and roughly 40 per cent of children experience stunted growth. Climate change is expected to worsen these impacts by 30 per cent by 2030.

Women make up more than 70 per cent of the agricultural labour force in Zambia and play a critical role in enhancing food security and nutrition. In most places with high prevalence of undernourishment, women farmers have significantly less access to land, information, finance, and agricultural inputs. This makes them

more vulnerable to climate shocks and affects their health and the food security and nutrition of the entire household.

Given the unique role of women in agriculture and food provisioning, and their unique vulnerabilities to climate change, GCF resources will focus dedicated efforts towards building climate resilience for female-headed houses and rural enterprises.

‘The SCRALA project promotes a paradigm shift by taking a comprehensive approach to addressing the entire value chain, and providing the initial trigger for poor and vulnerable farmers to shift on to a resilient trajectory for agricultural livelihoods’, says Alexander Chiteme, Zambia’s Minister of National Development Planning as he co-launched the project along with Agriculture Minister Michael Z. Katambo in Lusaka today. ‘This will also result in sustainable development benefits, as these vulnerable farmers and their families will see increases in income and enhanced food security, leading to health and environmental co-benefit’, Minister Chiteme added.

Agriculture Minister Michael Z. Katambo was visibly delighted when he said, ‘This project supports government to take meaningful steps to enhance resilience of vulnerable populations in the targeted districts, many of whom are women and youth. These women and youth - who are reliant on agriculture-based livelihoods - will benefit from the project through scaled up use of tailor-made weather advisories to inform decision making by the farming community’.

As the largest implementer of climate action in the UN System, UNDP will continue to partner with the Government of Zambia, the private sector, and civil society groups at the national and community level to tackle the impacts of climate variability on the agriculture sector - a critical source of livelihoods and contributor to the national GDP - said Sergio Valdini, the UNDP Zambia Officer in Charge. ‘If climate change is not addressed, we risk losing the gains that have been made on the economic front. This would be through channelling funds that should have been invested in development to undertaking humanitarian operations’, he noted.

Jerry Velasquez, Director of GCF’s Mitigation and Adaptation Division, said the increasing effects of climate change are particularly severe for countries like Zambia, where 70 per cent of the country’s workforce relies on rain-fed agriculture.

‘GCF’s financial support will help farmers better manage the impacts of climate change through improved climate information and early warning systems, enhance smallholder farmers’ access to water for farming, and strengthen farmers’ links to rural markets’, he said. ‘Ultimately, the goal is to ensure that climate-resilient agriculture becomes the norm’.

Working together with national institutions like the Ministry of Agriculture, the Zambia Meteorological Department, and the Water Resources Management Authority, the partnership will deliver an integrated set of technical services that will help to advance key Sustainable Development Goal targets, especially SDG2 on hunger and SDG13 on climate action. The partnership will ensure that best practices from pilot climate resilience initiatives nurtured via coalition organisations will be scaled-up to meet the Government of Zambia’s targets on adapting its economy to climate change impacts.

The UNDP-led initiative, set to start immediately, runs for 7 years and will give deliberate emphasis on capacity building across the sectors and strata, from the national to the community level.

The SCRALA project builds upon previous climate-smart agriculture projects supported or implemented by the UN agencies participating in the initiative. These include: Adaptation to the effects of drought and climate change in Agro-ecological Regions I and II in Zambia (CCAP) and the Climate Information and Early Warning Systems (CI/EWS) projects supported by UNDP, Conservation Agriculture Scaling Up (CASU) implemented by MoA/FAO, and Purchase for Progress (P4P) implemented by WFP.

Globally, efforts are underway to mobilise international finance for low-carbon climate-resilient development through climate finance mobilised via the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) financial mechanisms, such as the Green Climate Fund - the largest such dedicated fund for climate action.

This project signals an important step to mobilise these funds in Zambia, scale-up pilot climate resilience projects, and work toward achieving Zambia's Nationally Determined Contribution to the Paris Agreement.

Building more effective policies to integrate agriculture into national planning processes will be key in building the enabling environments needed to bring these interventions to scale.

With support from a joint UNDP-FAO Programme on Integrating Agriculture in National Adaptation Plans (NAP-Ag), the Government of Zambia is stepping up efforts to build roadmaps for climate actions and ensure no one is left behind in the Government's efforts to reach both its Nationally Determined Contribution to the Paris Agreement, as well as its goals for low-carbon, climate-resilient development.

For more information, please visit: [UNDP Zambia 'SCRALA' Project Profile](#) and [GCF Zambia 'SCRALA' Project Profile](#)

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