

Press Statement

FIAN Zambia Advocates for the Right to Food and Nutrition Amidst Drought Crisis during the commemoration of Farmers Day.

Lusaka, Zambia. 5th August, 2024. On this 2024 Farmers Day, we, as FIAN Zambia, stand in solidarity with the resilient farmers of Zambia, who are the backbone of our nation's food security and nutrition. As a human rights organization dedicated to advocating for the right to food and nutrition, we recognize the crucial role that farmers play in ensuring that every Zambian has access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food.

Regrettably, increased reports of violations of farmers rights particularly for local communities by large investments is concerning. Farming communities are being faced with displacements, land grabbing and forced evictions, arrests, restrictions from their communal and customary farm lands, inducing the commons. The state is not meeting its obligations to protect, fulfil and respect rights of farmers and other people working in rural areas. Government increasing in acting in favour of large investments at the expense of local farming communities.

We note Government priority under Eighth National Development Plan (NDP), to use agriculture as a tool to promote economic and social development. The plan emphasizes sustainable agricultural practices, the empowerment of smallholder farmers, and the need to bolster food security. In alignment with this plan and obligations, we call upon the Government of Zambia to renew their commitment to supporting farmers, particularly in the face of the 2023-2024 drought crisis, which has severely impacted agricultural productivity and food availability.

As FIAN ZAMBIA, we call upon the Zambian government to take progressive actions to protect farmers rights, by ensuring that small holder farmers enjoy the right to save exchange and reuse farmer managed seeds, regulate the activities of large scale investors to protect rights of small holder farmers, We call upon the Government to ensure that the Plant Breeders Act of 2007 is consistent with national interest and support the needs of small holder farmers.

Furthermore, it is evident that among the expenditure Sub-functions of the National Budget, the Farmer Input Support Program is allocated with huge amount of money. For instance, in 2023 the The allocation to the Farmer Input Support Program (FISP) was scaled up from K5.4 billion in 2022 to K9.1 billion. We strongly call upon the Government to Include Climate-Resilient Farming crops such as sorghum, millets and cassava in future FISP packages.

Doing this would strengthen resilience against potential crisis such as the 2023-2024 drought and its impact and challenges to food security in Zambia, to mitigate the impact of this crisis and build resilience against future shocks, we propose the following measures:

- 1. Mitigation and adaptation measures:** enhance the distribution of relief food, drought resistance seeds, and farming inputs to the most affected communities to prevent hunger and ensure the continuity of farming activities.
- 2. Investment in Irrigation and Water Harvesting:** support small holder farmers by investing in irrigation infrastructure and water harvesting techniques to reduce dependence on rain-fed agriculture and enhance water availability for crops and livestock.
- 3. Strengthening Early Warning Systems:** Enhancement of early warning systems to provide timely and accurate information on weather patterns, enabling farmers to make informed decisions and take preventive measures.
- 4. Capacity Building and Farmer Education:** Training and capacity building for farmers on sustainable farming techniques, climate change adaptation, and efficient resource management to improve productivity and resilience.
- 5. Policy and Institutional Support:** Strengthening policies and institutions that support smallholder farmers, ensuring they have access to credit, markets, and extension services to enhance their productivity and sustainability.

In conclusion, On this Farmers Day, we urge the government, friends of Zambia, CSOs and other stakeholders to collaborate and take decisive action to support small holder farmers. Let us work together to ensure that every Zambian can enjoy their right to food and nutrition, even in the face of adversities such as drought.

As we celebrate the hard work and dedication of our farmers, let us also recognize the challenges they face and the urgent need for collective action. By prioritizing the right to food and nutrition, we can build a more resilient and food-secure Zambia for all.

Thank you and happy farmers day to all farmers.

Issued by

Vladimir Chilinya

FIAN Zambia Country Coordinator

For further information, please contact: FIAN Zambia / +260777505228

fianzambia@gmail.com

Website: www.fian.org.zm