

## **High Level Policy Forum**

**Theme: Revitalizing Agriculture in Zambia towards the 2014 AU Year of Agriculture -  
“Changing the way we Do Agriculture in Zambia”**

**Lusaka, Zambia, June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2014**

In July 2012, the African Union (AU) Chairperson President Thomas Yayi Boni (Benin) declared 2014 as the AU Year of Agriculture and Food Security. This year presents a critical opportunity to shape an African-led moment for agricultural development and for strengthening economies such as Zambia, where agriculture contributes 20% to GDP and 61% to employment. Economic growth in Zambia has been strong with an annual GDP of 6% and annual agricultural growth of 7%, which surpasses the 6% CAADP target. Maize, Zambia’s primary food crop, has recently recorded landmark production levels and neared 2.8 million MT in 2011. Despite such production levels of maize, achieving food and nutrition security still remains a challenge to the government. Currently, Zambia has one of the highest rates of stunting in children under 5 years old in the world – at 45.8%, higher than the 42% average for Africa, and higher than the overwhelming majority of its bordering countries. A number of factors have resulted in a serious deterioration of food and nutritional security in recent years among them limited access to agricultural services and resources, and over-emphasized the production of hybrid maize at the expense of traditional crops. The excessive focus on incentives to produce Maize dissuades farmers from diversifying their agriculture patterns.

It is against this background that the Zambia Civil Society Scaling up Nutrition (CSOSUN) partnered with the Agricultural Consultative Forum (ACF), Platform for Social protection Zambia, The Centre for Trade Policy and Development (CTPD), the Indaba Agricultural Policy Research Institute (IAPRI) and ONE hosted a one day agriculture multi-stakeholder policy forum. The high level policy forum was officiated by Zambia’s Vice President Hon. Dr Guy Scott, the Minister of Agriculture and Livestock, Hon Wylbur Simuusa, Members of Parliament and senior Government officials, farmers, agribusiness, civil society organisations and development partners.

The goal of the forum was to reach consensus among these stakeholders on policy reforms that will benefit millions of smallholder farmers – particularly rural households – and numerous small-and-medium-sized agribusinesses in Zambia. The forum discussed the challenges and opportunities facing the agriculture sector and identified priorities for short, medium and long term action by government including outlining spending priorities for the 2015 Budget.

It was discussed among other key issues that Zambia has over the past years achieved food security with regard to staple cereal, achieving food and nutrition security as recommended by the Food and Agriculture Organization and other international agencies still remains a challenge to the government.

And that the high levels of Malnutrition (45.8 per cent) in Zambia create an urgent call to ensure that investment in agriculture becomes a core part of the solution and a preventive strategy by ensuring food is affordable and diverse.”

Government at this High level event committed to reforming existing Agriculture plans to increase their impact on Nutrition by encouraging diversity in food production that is aimed at improving the nutritional outcome of the population through maximizing the positive impact of food and agricultural systems on nutrition.

Secondly, Government will be working towards eliminating the gender gap in agriculture by ensuring equal access to agricultural inputs and ownership of productive resources, by providing gender-specific interventions to maximise returns on those inputs and assets.

Further Government committed among others to increase budgetary allocations to the agricultural sector to at least 10% of the national budget according to the Maputo Declaration. Ensure that allocations target effective agricultural investments that support smallholder farmers and private sector investment including infrastructure, transport, storage, and extension services.

It is also expected that outcomes of the forum will be used to inform and give stakeholder backing to Zambia's political commitments in the agricultural sector at the up-coming AU Heads of State Summit in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, which will decide on new commitments to enforce the Maputo Declaration and CAADP framework to realise its goals on food security, growth and employment creation.