



A CALL TO ACTION: Time to Fully Domesticate the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

**Focusing on the Realisation of Farmers' Rights and
Supporting Farmer-Managed Seed Systems**

February 2021

Introduction

As a contracting party to the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (the Treaty), Zambia is under obligation to take the necessary administrative, institutional, policy and legislative measures to implement its provisions.

Recommendations for Actions Required

The ZAAB network calls for government to address policy and legislative gaps in the implementation of the Treaty, particularly farmers' rights.

1. Apply relevant provisions to the Protection of Traditional Knowledge Genetic Resources and Expression of Folklore Act 2016.

Actions to be taken:

- The Ministry of Commerce and Trade should work closely with the Ministries of Lands, Natural Resources and Environmental Protection and Agriculture, in consultation with ZAAB members, farmer representatives and other key stakeholders to **review draft regulations and ensure that farmers' rights are incorporated**.
- The three Ministries should work collaboratively to **push for the approval of the regulations**.
- The Ministry of Agriculture should request that Ministry of Commerce and Trade, and its agency PACRA, **delegate to** the Zambia Agriculture Research Institute (**ZARI**) **the role of administering particular clauses of the Act** to implement provisions of farmers' rights.

2. Exempt exchanges and sales of farm-saved seed from the scope of current national seed certification and control regulations.

Actions to be taken:

- Government, through the Ministry of Agriculture is requested to **withdraw the application to join UPOV**. Not being a member of UPOV does not in any way disadvantage the Zambian seed industry, while aligning to UPOV 91 will harm the growth of the informal seed sector.
- The Ministry of Agriculture, through the Seed Control and Certification Institute (SCCI), along with key stakeholders, should **develop and adopt a national seed policy** that is holistic and supportive of the critical farmer-managed seed system.

3. Wider promotion of on-farm management of crop diversity

Actions to be taken:

- The Ministry of Agriculture should work closely with the Ministry of Lands, Natural Resources and Environmental Protection to **establish a sub-committee on agrobiodiversity** under the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) to

implement the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in Zambia, in order to strengthen linkages between agencies responsible for the implementation of CBD and the Treaty.

- **Establish a working group for the domestication of the Treaty**, including the realisation of farmers' rights.
- **Create a platform for developing a common understanding of farmers' rights**, and establish community registries and catalogues on agrobiodiversity, including documenting work already done on this. The Ministry of Agriculture through ZARI and the Department of Agriculture, Extension Branch, should ensure that these activities are streamlined into ongoing programmes.
- **Transform the National Genebank into a separate department or institute**, with increased level of authority and budgetary support.
- **Identify custodian farmers and farming communities** who are acknowledged by their communities for playing special roles in the development and maintenance of crop diversity, including local traditional farmers' varieties and associated knowledge.
- **Spearhead and scale-up awareness creation and educational campaigns and programmes**, on the importance of the Treaty and agrobiodiversity to supporting sustainable food systems through the use of 'champions'.

The above efforts will contribute to protecting farmers' rights to use, save, exchange and sell seeds grown on their farmlands; ensuring equitable sharing in benefits arising from use of their crop diversity; the protection of traditional knowledge of farmers; and ensuring that farmers participate in decision making on matters affecting the conservation and sustainable use of their crop diversity and local seed systems.

Government, through its relevant agencies, is responsible for taking necessary actions or steps required. The ZAAB and farmer associations will continue to avail themselves to work closely with government in this regard.