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Factors Affecting Cassava Adoption in Southern Province of Zambia: A Case Study of Mazabuka District

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Factors Affecting Cassava Adoption in Southern Province of Zambia: A Case Study of Mazabuka District

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Abstract

Southern Province of Zambia is a drought prone area and the main crop that is grown is maize which requires a high amount of rainfall. As a result maize does not do well in the area and there are frequent food shortages. The Government and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) have been promoting cassava technology which is drought tolerant to improve the food security in the area. However, the adoption of cassava technologies has been low. The findings of this study will inform the development of more effective strategies to improve food security in southern province of Zambia and it has done this by exploring the cassava promotion programme.

A single case study was used to investigate the factors that affect cassava adoption in Mazabuka district. Purposive and snowball sampling methods were used to select participants for interviews and observations. 40 farmers who included opinion leaders and 6 key informants were interviewed. The data was analysed using qualitative data methods.

The results of the study indicated that although a small number of farmers continue to grow cassava, the cassava promotion programme was a flawed programme because cassava did not meet the needs of the majority of the farmers. There was a mix of complex and interrelated factors that affected the adoption of cassava. These included internal and external factors to the farm and farm household and those related specifically to the characteristics of cassava relative to the farmers’ existing crop of maize. Cassava is a substitute crop to maize.

The result of the study indicated that the farmers’ adoption decision was based on the fact that they wanted a crop that would not only meet their food needs but also income. Cassava is a substitute crop and the farmers compared it with maize, an existing crop, which provided them with both food and income. Processing facilities and a market supported by government policy existed for maize and not for cassava. Land tenure was the internal factor, but not as a result of the length of time the lease
was held, but because of the conditions imposed on the leasers in terms of crops they were able to grow.

The most important factors were external factors and these included government policy and an aspect of extension service delivery. A competitive government policy that supported processing and marketing facilities for maize, undermined cassava, for which there was no processing facilities and only a small local market. Lack of training and knowledge amongst the local government agricultural extension personnel as to how to grow and process cassava impacted also on farmers’ knowledge and hence adoption of cassava. Although the inputs for growing cassava were provided for free, they were supplied at the wrong time and this impacted also on farmers’ willingness to grow the crop.

The research highlights the importance of using bottom-up and not top down approaches in food security programmes. The results suggest that it is important for food security policy and development interventions to understand the needs of farmers in terms of food, income and livelihoods.
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Lastly, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my husband, Ishmael, for his love, care and patience. Ishmael, you were my pillar of strength and your support and encouragement gave me a reason to look towards my goals. For these, I cannot thank you enough.
Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to Ishmael and the boys; Luundu and Nduba for the support and patience during the time I was studying and working on the thesis. I dedicate the thesis to my Dad, brothers and sister for their continued support and encouragement the time I was far away from home, without forgetting my late mother who made me realise the value of education at an early age.
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<tr>
<td>ACF</td>
<td>Agriculture Consultative Forum</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSO</td>
<td>Central Statistics Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DFID</td>
<td>Department for International Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DMEWU</td>
<td>Database Management and Early Warning Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAO</td>
<td>Food and Agriculture Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRA</td>
<td>Food Reserve Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FoDis</td>
<td>Food Crop Diversification Support Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JAICAF</td>
<td>Japan Association for International Collaboration of Agriculture and Forestry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MACO</td>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAFF</td>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCB</td>
<td>Maize Control Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOFED</td>
<td>Ministry of Finance and Economic Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>RTIP</td>
<td>Root and Tuber Improvement Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAM</td>
<td>Program Against Malnutrition</td>
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<td>SAP</td>
<td>Structural Adjustment Program</td>
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