Enhancing the link between evidence and policy-making in Zambia’s agricultural sector

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Presentation Outline

What is evidence-based policy-making?

Why is it important?

Evidence based-policy making in Zambia

How do we improve the status quo?

Some questions for discussion
The Challenge?

- Implementation of costly but ineffective programs
  - Disregarding evidence in decision making
  - Limited commitment to try out alternative policies
- Conventional wisdom usually rules the day
“Evidence-based policy helps people make well-informed decisions about policies, programmes and projects by putting the best available evidence from research at the heart of policy development and implementation. (Davies, P.T., 1999)
Why Evidence-Based Policy-Making?

- **Effectiveness** - ensure we do more good than harm
- **Service orientation** - meet citizen’s needs/expectations
- **Democracy** - enhance the democratic process

- **Efficiency** - use scarce public resources to maximum effect
- **Accountability** - transparency of what is done and why
- **Trust** - help ensure trust in government and public services
Evidence-Based Policy-Making in Zambia

- Development outcomes depend on the quality of policies adopted.
- Quality of policies depends on the evidence on what works and what doesn’t.
- Implication is that sound agricultural policies based on evidence will be required to address development challenges.

Poverty

A dynamic economic environment and scarce resources

Malnutrition

Food Insecurity
Evidence-Based Policy-Making in Zambia

Status Quo
Evidence demand constrained country

- Limited evidence use.
- Improved quality and availability of evidence.
- Poor development outcomes.

Where we want to go
Virtuous circle country

- Improved evidence demand.
- Improved quality and availability of evidence.
- Improved development outcomes.
Agricultural policies and programs in Zambia are often inadequately informed by research-based evidence due to:

- information gaps,
- the need for speedy responses,
- political expediency
- lack of transparency
- the fact that policy makers are rarely scientists and
- rent seeking behaviour by a privileged few.
Lots of Data

Limited use of an Enormous Amount of Data for Evidence Generation.

- Costly datasets are used for basic descriptive analysis
- Generating more evidence from these could help decision making.

Challenge to researchers and technical experts in government.

- Crop Forecast Surveys
- Post Harvest Surveys
- Living conditions Monitoring Surveys
- Rural Agricultural Livelihood Surveys,
- Demographic Health Surveys, etc.
Evidence-Based Policy in Zambia
Some Positive Examples

- Switch to bio-fortification as a main avenue for combating Vitamin A deficiency. Sugar fortification reduces the problem modestly.

- Shift from giving 8*50Kg bags of fertilizer to 4*50Kg bags

- The E-voucher Pilot: 13 districts 2015/16 Ag. Season
Improving the Status Quo
How can we change the status quo?

- Government policy makers or Technical staff
- Researchers
How can we change the status quo?

- Include senior decision-makers from policy making institutions in the early stages of research designs to ensure early buy-ins.
Enhancing evidence-based policy

- Communicate research effectively to decision makers and their technical staff
Enhancing evidence-based policy

- Continuous dialogue between senior decision-makers, government technical staff and researchers.
Enhancing evidence-based policy

- Increase the speed with which evidence is generated.
Enhancing evidence-based policy

- Capacity training of key policy makers and their support staff
A long term solution is to instill a culture of inquiry in the population the education system.

Ordinary citizens need to demand evidence-based policy
Policy making is complex

- Policy processes are complex (not linear)
  - simply presenting information to policy-makers and expecting them to act upon it is very unlikely to work.
  - Policy processes have various stages and each may take time to complete.
- So our strategies must be fluid.
What do we want to see?

- Zero Post harvest Losses
- Breadbasket of the Region
- High agricultural GDP growth
- Lower rural poverty rates
- Open Borders
- Zero malnutrition
- Diversified Agricultural Sector
- Hunger Free Zambia
- Private sector led agricultural growth

Evidence-based Policies
Some questions for discussion

- Why is there less appetite for evidence based policy making in Zambia?
  - Are decision-makers aware of the existing evidence?
  - How relevant is the evidence to decision-makers?
- How can we increase the appetite for evidence based policy making in Zambia?
Thank You