

# What drives agricultural transformation in Tanzania? Lessons from a political economy analysis

## SAIRLA Research Brief 2

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**In this briefing we explore the politics and institutions of agricultural policy and implementation in Tanzania to understand how local institutions play a role in shaping agricultural policy and implementation.**

**The findings and recommendations presented here are based on research carried out as part of the Afrint IV/Papaya project 'Equity and Institutions in Sustainable African Intensification' – a project designed to analyse patterns of smallholder intensification in Tanzania, Malawi and Zambia. The research sheds light on how agricultural policy is shaped and how it is implemented in Zambia and also assesses how agricultural policy and practice influence changes in society over time.**

### Using a political economy methodology

The aim of the Equity and Institutions in Sustainable African Intensification research is to analyse patterns of smallholder intensification from a sustainability perspective with particular attention to: (a) gender and youth; and (b) the ways existing rural institutions could be enabled and incentivised to improve equity given prevailing policies, norms and structures. This particular piece of research covered three areas:

- (a) Mapping the organisational actors (who does what?);
- (b) Understanding the formal and informal rules of the game in which they operate (how are things supposed to work and how do they work in practice);
- (c) Analysing the differing incentives and interactions among actors (what are the dynamics of the actors working on agriculture?).

#### At a glance

The majority of the Tanzanian population depend on agriculture for all or part of their livelihoods. Successive governments have sought to transform and modernise agriculture.

This research finds that current agricultural policies and practice will NOT achieve this due to: too much emphasis on policy rather than implementation capacity, an over simplistic policy focus on 'women' and 'youth', and wider market forces that enables the wealthier and better connected to capture resources, such as land and water; and also allows the exploitation of smaller farmers.

We recommend that local institutions (including universities, civil society and local government) adopt a problem-driven iterative adaptation approach (PDIA) to drive agricultural transformation. This works from real locally defined problems, with a wide range of partners to create an environment for active learning and experimentation to find solutions that are feasible and implementable.

To assist them, researchers adopted a political economy methodology. Political economy is the study of power and resources and how they shape the nature of the economy. It helps us to ask questions about who controls resources, and about how societies change to benefit or exclude particular groups. A political economy analysis entails multiple methods of data collection (e.g. key informant interviews, survey, secondary data, media analysis, focused group discussion), to gather many perspectives. It aims to provide a reasoned explanation for how a current situation comes to be as it is. It therefore requires understanding of how change happened, who influenced it and what outcomes it has led to. The nature of institutions and how they shape change is particularly key to this.

The research is based on multiple sources of data: a review of existing data in conjunction with interviews with key informants from local and central government, CSOs and NGOs, donors and private agricultural enterprises.

This briefing summarises the findings of the research in Tanzania. A full version of the working paper is available at [www.keg.lu.se/en/research/research-projects/current-research-projects/afrint/afrint-ivpapaya-0](http://www.keg.lu.se/en/research/research-projects/current-research-projects/afrint/afrint-ivpapaya-0)

## Findings

### Mapping the organisational actors

**The quest to transform agriculture in Tanzania has a long history.** The Government in conjunction with donors has consistently developed agricultural policies and initiatives aimed at the commercialisation of small scale agriculture (e.g. Kilimo Kwanza and the Southern Agricultural Growth Corridor – SAGCOT). However, the fundamental problem is that they remain disconnected from the realities of small scale agriculture.

**Tanzania's strong economic growth of the last decade has not been driven by agriculture, but mining, construction, telecommunications, tourism and aid.** A growing middle class and elite is increasingly interested in agriculture and is rapidly acquiring land, but agriculture remains a risky and uncertain business. Inequality is growing, and this is the most critical concern for inclusion (Coulson 2013).

**The only universal characteristic of agricultural change is diversity.** In some places, agriculture is growing through intensification, in others through extensification, in other places it is declining. Soil degradation and competition for water resources is becoming critical and acute (Mdee 2017). The direction of policy remains unaltered: the small farmer will be transformed and eradicated by commercialisation. How this will happen through a current policy of industrialisation (with the window dressing of 'climate-smart' agriculture) remains unclear.

**Agriculture is becoming less inclusive in Tanzania,** but the dynamics of this are predominantly class-based with complexities of age, gender and ethnicity being played out in specific contexts.

**Since 2007, there is a growing interest by donors in encouraging foreign investment, particularly in agriculture, favouring large-scale outgrower schemes.** Donor interventions and NGOs shape government policy, and in doing so often create policies that are contradictory, and unimplemented in practice by institutions that lack capacity. Sustainability of intensification is not a serious concern in current policy (despite lip service in donor driven policy areas)- with the emphasis continuing to be on a modernisation and commercialisation that is predominantly framed as the use of hybrid seed, inorganic fertiliser, irrigation and mechanisation. Although strong policy frameworks exist, the lack of implementation capacity means they have very limited impact in practice.

### The gap between policy and practice

A political economy analysis that only considers the policies that are described in interviews with elites, or in donor-funded documents is inevitably incomplete.

**In Tanzania, the gap between policy on paper and implementation is vast:** to the extent that policy exists as a narrative 'collective fantasy' concocted by the mutual interests of donors, civil servants and political elites. Local government and institutions charged with policy implementation are ill-equipped to do so, lacking human capacity, resources and authority. Power remains heavily centralised despite an advanced policy rhetoric of decentralisation.

**Where intervention does exist, then elite capture is a frequent issue, as is illustrated in the example of the National Agriculture Input Voucher Scheme (NAVS).** Elite capture may have a gender dimension but requires explicit consideration of class. This also applies fundamentally to land policy, where land titling and formalisation may have made it easier for the poorest farmers to be dispossessed of land. A poorer man is very much more disadvantaged than a wealthier woman in this regard.

### Land Ownership, Intensification and Equity

Land in Tanzania is vested in the office of the President on behalf of all citizens. However, the 1999 Village Land Act enables local control over land allocations. **Under the law, women have equal rights to land ownership, however in practice customary rights, inheritance practices and a booming land market create variable incentives driving land use and ownership.** As customary inheritance co-exists with bureaucratic land ownership procedures, land rights claimants still require capacity and resources to challenge situations of injustice. Giving women rights to land, does not mean that they can exercise those rights (Dancer 2015). Different actors and stakeholders thus have chosen several routes to deal with land use conflicts. In reference to lands, research has revealed that as commercial interest in farming heightens in Tanzania, fathers are less willing to provide land to their children, promoting intergenerational conflict.

### Governance and Accountability

**The government of Tanzania remains highly hierarchical and centralised in practice, in stark contrast to policy rhetoric of decentralisation and participation.** During fieldwork, it was reported that most farmers receive little support from the government and much of the support comes from NGOs and CSOs. In the Kilosa and Chamwino districts for instance, it was noticed that districts lack sufficient funding, and expenditure and budgeting information were treated as confidential. The few resources received from the central government are mainly targeted at running district council meetings rather than delivering services. District councils believe themselves to be an implementation agency, responsible for implementing all central government policies at the district, division and ward level.

"our duty is to 'receive instructions from the top levels'~ district level

### Incentives and interactions

**Policy frameworks are dominated by an aid-driven donor discourse.** State investment in agriculture remains limited. Private finance is often unaffordable to the small farmer and outgrower schemes have disappointed many of those involved, and in some cases decreased food security. Elite and commercial interests are favoured in legal frameworks and in the normal business of institutions e.g. water permits can be purchased on an ability to pay basis with no assessment being made of actual water use.

**Small scale and farmer-led irrigation is often considered 'illegal'.** Markets remain exploitative, hard to access, and unreliable for the small farmer. Exploitation and dispossession of resources are the dominant trends.

**Attempts to inclusion of 'women' and 'youth' have led to 5 per cent of locally generated government funds to be allocated to the enterprise activities of formally registered groups of women and youth.** However, the evidence of impact of such groups is minimal for several reasons: highly bureaucratic procedures in applying for the funds and considerable delays in the fund being released back to the Districts.

## Recommendations

- **Do not seek change at policy level until existing implementation capacity problems are acknowledged.**
- **Do not assume that group-based labels such as 'women' and 'youth' will enable more complex processes of inclusion and equity to be addressed.** Creating women's groups and making reservations on committees do not automatically mean that gender concerns or inequality is tackled. Implement a class-based analysis to understand how the poorest households are systematically excluded (see work on this from the Chronic Poverty Advisory Network)
- **Work from conditions as they are on the ground.** The presence of a policy document or of an institution does not automatically create implementation capacity. Donor-Government-NGO interactions must be harmonised and consolidated in line with the actual capacity of local institutions (local government, traditional authorities and civil society).
- **Adopt a problem-driven iterative adaptation approach in efforts towards achieving sustainable and inclusive agricultural intensification.** This approach starts a wide range of partners working from locally defined problems, with to create an environment for active learning and experimentation to find solutions that are feasible and implementable in the actual conditions of delivery (See Andrews et al 2013).

## Further Reading

Andrews, M., Pritchett, L., & Woolcock, M., (2013) 'Escaping capability traps through problem driven iterative adaptation (PDIA)', *World Development*, 51: 234-244

Coulson, A. (2013) *Tanzania: a political economy*, Oxford: OUP

Dancer, H. (2015) *Women, land and justice in Tanzania*, Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer Ltd

Mdee, A., Lemma, A. & Emmott, R., (2016) 'Compatible or contradictory? The challenge of inclusive structural economic and environmental transformation', *Challenge Paper for Chronic Poverty Advisory Network*, London: Overseas Development Institute  
[www.chronicpoverty.org/resources/2016/10/31/compatible-or-contradictory-the-challenge-of-inclusive-structural-economic-and-environmental-transformation](http://www.chronicpoverty.org/resources/2016/10/31/compatible-or-contradictory-the-challenge-of-inclusive-structural-economic-and-environmental-transformation)

Mdee, A. (2017) 'Disaggregating orders of water scarcity-the politics of nexus in the Wami-Ruvu River Basin, Tanzania', *Water Alternatives* 10(1): 100.

## Acknowledgements

The opinions expressed in this briefing are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of SAIRLA or DFID. Readers are encouraged to quote and reproduce material with full acknowledgement. In return SAIRLA requests due acknowledgement and quotes to be referenced as follows:

Mdee, A., and Dedaa, A.O., (2018) 'What drives agricultural transformation in Tanzania? Lessons from a political economy analysis', *SAIRLA Research Briefing 2*, Chatham: Natural Resources Institute

## About SAIRLA

SAIRLA is a UK Department for International Development-funded initiative that seeks to address one of the most intractable problems facing small-holder farmers in Africa – how to engage in the market economy and to deliver sustainable intensification of agriculture which avoids negative impacts on the environment. The programme is managed by WYG International Ltd and the Natural Resources Institute, University of Greenwich. For more information visit [www.sairla.nri.org](http://www.sairla.nri.org)

## About Afrint IV/Papaya

Afrint IV/Papaya – Equity and Institutions in Sustainable African Intensification – is implemented by the Department of Human Geography at Lund University in cooperation with the University of Malawi, Sokoine University of Agriculture, the University of Zambia and LUCSUS. It is supported by the Sustainable Agricultural Intensification Research and Learning in Africa programme (SAIRLA).

For more information about Afrint IV/Papaya see [www.keg.lu.se/en/research/research-projects/current-research-projects/afrint/afrint-iv](http://www.keg.lu.se/en/research/research-projects/current-research-projects/afrint/afrint-iv)Afrint IV/Papaya-0

