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The Impact of Trade Reforms on Food Security in Southern Africa: A Synthesis of Country Case Studies

Botswana and Namibia given their semi-arid conditions stabilize their food and nutrition security through food imports. Evidence suggest that South Africa's interventions that reach out to 70% of households have managed to reduce food insecurity to less than 22% of households. However, the government's export interventions have largely promoted the commercial farming sector than the small-scale sector. In Mozambique, reforms have spurred the shift from food to cash crops negatively impacting on food production of smallholder farmers. Similarly, in Zimbabwe, trade reforms have promoted the production of high value crops such as tobacco and cotton. While this benefitted smallholder farmers in the short-term, in the longer term, the reforms resulted in compromised food security, exposure to global price volatilities in both cotton and tobacco, stifled affordable agricultural finance and stiff competition that crowded out smallholder farmers. Trade reforms exacerbated challenges brought about by policy inconsistencies, unpredictable rainfall patterns and policy reversals. Government interventions in agricultural production, distribution and marketing were found to have stabilized food security of some countries under study. Similarly, countries that maintain a stock of grain reserves manage to avert the threat of immediate food importation. This research recommends the strengthening of government interventions in input, production and marketing of agricultural produce and cautions that abandoning such initiatives will worsen food security situation in the region. In addition, the research points to regional trade as imperative for stabilizing food and nutrition security in the region.

Introduction

This research report synthesizes evidence from country case studies on the impact of trade reforms on food security. Between 2016 and 2017, SEATINI undertook a research project on the Impact of Trade Reforms on Food Security in Southern Africa: A Commodity approach. This commodity based research tracked commodities produced by smallholder farmers over a period of at-least 20 years analyzing the changes that have taken place and how producers have been affected overtime by liberalization policies. Seven southern African countries were covered under the study namely, Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The overall objective of the project was to ensure that food security of smallholder farmers is ensured through trade and production policies that incentivize domestic production of staple agricultural commodities. To achieve this, the research project was underpinned by the following specific objectives:

- To analyze agricultural trade and production policies of selected countries in the SADC region,
- To analyze the impact of trade reforms on staple and cash crops grown by smallholder farmers and its effects on livelihoods over a 20-year period in the seven selected countries,
- To establish a food security network that continuously lobbies regional governments to make policies that support the interests of smallholder farmers.

The research study was necessitated by arguments that apart from the devastating impacts of climate change, governments have lost policy space through trade reforms to support smallholder farmers. Binding clauses in the free trade agreements and lowering of tariffs have brought stiff competition from cheap subsidized foreign products stifling domestic production and encouraged commercialization of agriculture at the expense of traditional food crops and exclusion of local small-holder farmers from mainstream economy. Conjecture and surmise further suggested that liberalization has reduced the policy space for countries in the region which is required for investment in domestic agricultural production to achieve food security and sovereignty. The purpose of this study was therefore to provide more evidence for better analysis and comprehension of the linkages and effects of trade reforms and food security. The findings of the research are as synthesized below.

Namibia

At-least 70% of the total population in Namibia depends on agriculture for food and nutrition security, employment and income generation. The country opened its agricultural sector to stiff competition from neighboring countries and EU due to bilateral and multilateral trade agreements. The main local visible products include agricultural products such as livestock (cattle, goats, sheep, pigs and poultry) and crops and horticulture (maize, wheat, cabbage, watermelon, potatoes, tomatoes, onion, grapes, dates, mangoes).

Namibia embraced market-based food systems and market reforms to enhance farm profitability. The country has an emerging free market area enhanced by several policies and legislations that guide and enhance trade in its agricultural sector. It is important to note that Namibia does not have a documented national trade policy though it is on the cards and she relies heavily on bilateral and regional trade spearheaded by cooperation agreements under SADC, SACU, SADC-EPA, SADC Trade Protocol, WTO Agreement on Agriculture (AoA) and others. Namibia heavily depends on trade through which she imports food products especially from South Africa and other regional and global countries to meet the shortfall in her locally produced foods. Meanwhile, Namibia is vigorously working towards self-sufficiency in food production through her Green Schemes. Despite the concerted efforts being made, there are many constraints that face the country which dictate that Namibia continue to depend on food imports.

The bulk of Namibia's exports benefit from existing preferential trade agreements particularly under SACU and European Union (EU) Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA). As a member of SACU, Namibia enjoys free movement of goods, a common external tariff regime and harmonized rules of origin within the SACU region. In June 2016 Namibia, along with Botswana, South Africa, Swaziland, Lesotho and Mozambique signed the EPA for continued duty and quota-free access to the EU market. Namibia's access to the United States market under the African Growth and Opportunity Act was also extended to 2025. In 2015 Namibia signed up to the Tripartite Free Trade Agreement for better access to an integrated market of nearly 600 million people.

Trade reforms in Namibia have had both negative and positive impacts. On the positives, Namibia as a semi-desert country relies heavily on food imports such as maize and wheat from South Africa and this has helped in stabilization of food security and nutrition. Within SACU, Namibia has been able to export beef products to such countries as Lesotho and Swaziland though facing stiff competition from Botswana that has a comparative advantage in beef production. Namibia has also been able to penetrate other

SADC countries due to the SADC Trade Protocol that calls for free trade among member states. The fish industry has experienced a boom over the last two decades and this has helped create employment in the entire fish value chains though competition will be faced from European Union fish industry due to the SADC-EPA trade relations.

On the negative side, opening to trade has drove smallholder farmers out of business including local agro-processing companies leading to huge unemployment levels, and loss of policy independency as it became difficult to enact policies which meet specific needs and interests, especially when it violates regional initiatives. Thus, opening to trade has helped Namibia stabilise its food and nutrition security while it led to the collapse of local production, and drove smallholder farmers out of business and deep into poverty.

South Africa

South Africa's agricultural sector is highly dualistic, consisting of a developed commercial sector and an underdeveloped subsistence sector (a key source of livelihoods). Although the value added of the agricultural sector has declined from 16.6% in 1951 to 2.4% in 2015, the sector still plays an important role in the economy, with backward and forward linkage multipliers of 2.14 and 1.81, respectively. Agriculture has three sub-sectors namely field crops, horticulture, and animal production. Animal production accounts for 50% of the volume of agricultural production followed by horticulture (27%) and field crops (23%). In terms of both area planted and production levels, maize is the leading crop constituting 69% and 79% respectively. This is followed by wheat and soya beans, where production constitutes about 11% and 8% respectively. About 30% of the maize is used by the processing industry while about 98% of the wheat is used directly by millers. Other food products used in the industry include soya beans (97%), sorghum (3%) and groundnuts (3%).

The South African government has made several policy initiatives that impact on agricultural production, trade and food security. These policies include the Integrated Growth and Development Plan (IGDP) for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries whose interventions sought to ease constraints on input supply, production and marketing in the agricultural sector. The Agricultural Policy Action Plan (APAP) 2015 – 2019 is an implementation strategy for IGDP which focuses on enhancing value chain linkages between the agriculture sector and the downstream industries. The National Policy on Food and Nutrition Security of 2014 intends to ensure availability, accessibility, and affordability of safe and nutritious food at national and household levels.

Given that there were a lot of support measures that were provided for under the policy documents; the general expectation is that there would be an observed increase in the percentage of households that are receiving support from government. However, the trends show that although there was an increase in the number of households receiving support from government from 12.1% to 16% between 2009 and 2012, the increase could not be sustained and had been reduced to more or less the same level as in 2009. While this can be considered a policy failure, it is also possible that those that had received support would eventually grow out of the need for support when they become self-sufficient. Thus, other indicators would be needed to show whether they were indeed becoming more self-sufficient.

Through the policy interventions of the government, about 70% of the smallholder farmers are getting government assistance. The government policy interventions have further resulted in 78% of households being food secure. Although the policy interventions instituted by the South African government resulted in the increase in exports, these exports have not largely benefited the smallholder farmers, but the large scale commercial farmers who dominate the agriculture export market. Despite the government's policy intent of equitable access to land, only 0.4% of the households have access to at least one hectare of land. Moreover, most of the households, about 92%, still do not sell their crops implying that they do not benefit from trade.

Malawi

Despite major policy reforms in the 1990s, food security remains a critical policy issue in Malawi. In 2017, the food security situation worsened from the baseline of 6.5 million people that were food insecure in 2016. Policy reforms implemented in relation to agriculture and trade reforms include the devaluation of the Malawian Kwacha and elimination of export levy; the removal of all import and export licensing requirements in 1997; the reduction of maximum tariff rate to 25% in 1999; the floating of the Malawian Kwacha and liberalization of exchange rate in 1994; and repeal of the Special Crops Act and liberalization of the agricultural produce prices and temporary export levy in 1995. The systematic production policy deregulation through agricultural and trade reforms contributed to low productivity and the general increase in food insecurity overtime. Official food imports have increased with Malawi becoming a food importing country. The national average price of maize fall from the seasonally high levels in February, but remain elevated at high levels. The smallholder farmers have remained weakly integrated in value chains and Malawi is not able to fully take advantage of the market access opportunities in trade agreements due to the restrictive non-tariff measures and barriers.

Mozambique

Peasant farmers are the majority in Mozambique's farming sector representing more than 98% of the total number of farmers; the majority of whom are women (89%). According to the 2010 Agricultural Census, Mozambique's 3.2 million small-scale farmers occupy about 95% of the cultivated land. With an average of 1.2 hectares per household, they mostly use traditional and manual farming methods to produce basic food crops (beans, cassava, maize, sesame, groundnuts, and rice). Most small-scale farmers survive at subsistence level due to dependency on rainfall and low yields when weather conditions are not favorable. Indeed, the country is prone to natural disasters such as droughts, floods and cyclones depending on the geographical location. This is aggravated by a lack of access to extension services, appropriate technologies (including irrigation) and storage facilities, basic transport infrastructures, and relevant financial services.

Mozambique is seen by the world's dominant food and agribusiness corporations as a largely un-tapped source for new profit. However, so far, Mozambican land, seeds and food systems have remained mainly in the hands of peasant farmers and pastoralists who feed their families and supply local markets outside of the orbit of corporate global food and agricultural chains. For these companies to grow, peasant agriculture must be replaced with large-scale industrial plantations, and local food systems must be replaced by transnational corporate food chains, from the seeds to the super-market shelves. This is precisely what Mozambique has aimed to achieve through its trade and agriculture reform policies. The focus has been on integrating the country into the global economy through a legal framework that enabled liberalization of the Mozambican economy with agriculture regarded the prime sector for economic growth. To facilitate and encourage foreign and private investment, the country shifted towards commodification of agriculture products in demand on the international market to be produced by medium to large scale agribusinesses in specific areas in the country.

The reforms and policies adopted by Mozambique in relation to trade and agriculture clearly derive from the prevailing development theory pushed by the Bretton Woods institutions, the WTO and international donors. The trade reforms adopted by Mozambique since 2011 to suit its international and regional partners have translated into agricultural policies aimed at the liberalization of the agricultural market and giving support to agribusinesses with the view of promoting cash crops for exports. Specific areas of the country - also referred to as export corridors - have been identified and are being specifically developed to facilitate the production, storage, transportation and exports of chosen products. In this scenario, smallholders, referred to as 'emerging farmers', are described as driving rural transformation; they are to be connected to markets and integrated into value chains that are driven by demand and propelled by agribusiness firms. Basic food requirements continue to be met mainly through imports, as opposed to a diverse diet produced nationally by peasant farmers themselves.

In practice, Mozambique's overarching policy aspirations of poverty alleviation and increased food security did not translate into the reality of family farmers, mostly women whose unpaid labour drives most of agricultural activities. Despite government's efforts to include cross-cutting issues, policy design has failed to consider the structural constraints limiting smallholders from accessing much needed support. Since then, the IMF announced that it would resume aid to Mozambique by mid- 2017 under a new "structural adjustment plan", which will include austerity measures and privatizations. This is likely to mean further market liberalization and removal of the already insufficient government's support towards peasant farmers, and an exacerbation of the uneven power dynamics between impoverished smallholders and large agribusiness.

Zambia

The period 1964-1990 in Zambia, as in many other Southern African countries, was characterized by government interventions in the economy and strict controls over pricing and marketing of agricultural commodities. Because of low growth, the multilateral institutions initiated the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP). The period 1990-2017 has seen a lot of reforms in Zambia, with the SAP in 1991, COMESA Free Trade Area (2000), EU EBA establishment (2001), Zambia Export Processing Zone Authority (2003), the 2005 Private Sector Development Reform Programme, SADC Trade Protocols (2008), in 2009 revision of Zambia Trade Policy, 2013 drafting the National Trade Strategy Paper by the Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry and in 2017 a lot of reforms happened amongst being the Development of the Zambia Trade, Investment and Enterprise Bill and Scrapping off of Farmer Input Support Programme in favour of E-voucher System.

Zambia has in the recent past recorded maize bumper harvests averaging 2 million metric tonnes per season. In the immediate past farming season, the food balance sheet based on the final crop forecasting figures showed that Zambia had a total maize surplus of about 1.5 million metric tonnes. Though Zambia has shown its capacity to grow enough food to feed its population, access to food by low income households remains difficult as prices are usually high for most of the poor people. The Zambian government seems to have hastily implemented the reforms and trade agreements without fully understanding the consequences on the economic status of the country especially its food security.

Despite these maize surpluses witnessed in the recent past, the food security situation remains delicate (IAPRI, 2016). This can mainly be attributed to the inability to produce enough food (maize) at household level due to lack of agricultural service support and technical issues such as unfavorable climatic conditions like El-Nino experienced in the 2015/2016 farming season; disease and insect attacks like the army worms experienced in the 2015/2016 farming season; inadequate incomes and inability to buy food; inadequate market and transport systems to move food from areas of surplus to deficit areas within the country.

The food security status of smallholder farmers is influenced by several factors such as political interference, inconsistent government trade policies, lack of proper infrastructure, and lack of access to finance. Trade reforms had both positive and negative impacts on the food security of smallholder farmers in Zambia. The negative effects seem to be outweighing the positive impacts.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, the Zambian government through the FRA did not entirely abstain from subsidizing the urban population. In the period November 1997 to December 1998, the Food Reserve Agency (FRA) sold approximately 33% of the total demand for urban Lusaka to private companies at below market prices (Johansson, 1998). Earlier in 1992, the government had to reverse some reform strategies such as none participation in input supply and maize marketing following a severe drought in the Southern African region that affected crop production in that year (Johansson, 1998:4). Liberalization has led to the death of agricultural credit in Zambia the impact being more on food security of small scale farmers.

Most of the policies put in place have been ad hoc. While trying to move away from the policies of the past that seemed to promote maize production at the expense of other equally important food crops such as Cassava and Sorghum, the current government policies through the FRA have continued to perpetuate the supremacy of maize over other crops, a situation which is undermining food diversification. In terms of the impact of these trade reforms on small scale farmers, it can be stated that these have affected farm income, employment and wages transfers either positively and negatively. For example, those farmers who are close to market because of good road networks can sell their produce at relatively good prices enabling them to buy other essential needs and pay their children’s school fees and other household needs.

Zimbabwe

It is estimated that 59% of the agricultural output in Zimbabwe is for own consumption. Maize is the most grown crop measured by total production (67%) and area planted (62%) and cotton ranks the second most grown crop. Despite occupying less than 6% in production and area planted, tobacco ranks high in terms of value. Smallholder farmers (A1, old resettlement and communal farmers) are the drivers of agriculture in Zimbabwe. Their number has increased from 0.7 million in 1980 to above 1.3 million in 2010, accounting for 98% of farm households. The sector accounted for 72% of the combined maize, sorghum, cotton and tobacco production between 2001 and 2011. In livestock production, smallholder farmers accounted for 90% of the major livestock that are cattle, sheep, goats, pigs and poultry. Consequently, the sector is the largest employer and an anchor of food security.

Zimbabwe's trade performance expanded rapidly between 1980 and 2015. Trade in goods and services increased from 44% of GDP in the 1980s to 94% between 2010 and 2015 indicating growing openness of the economy. Agricultural production consistently declined over the period 1990 to 2009. Maize production declined from 1.9 million tonnes in the 1980s to 1.7 million in the 1990s and 1.2 million between 2000 and 2009. There were significant shifts from the production and export of cereals to high value crops (Cotton: 1995-2000) and tobacco: 1994-1997 and 2007-2015) driven by favorable international prices, biased private finance and huge demand for foreign exchange.

During the first decade after independence, Zimbabwe pursued a development agenda within the framework of a 'closed' economy. Trade and industrial policies were shaped by import substitution and trade policy strategy that was characterized by state controls. Trade policy during the early period after independence was marked by stringent controls of trade in goods and services, foreign exchange and exchange rate. The second phase of the trade regime following Zimbabwe's Independence in 1980 was marked by protective agenda blended with initiatives to promote exports such as the foreign exchange allocation and the export revolving fund. Following independence, the government recognized the need to expand markets and this was demonstrated by joining of the Southern African Development Co-ordination Committee (SADCC), Lome Convention (for preferential access to the European Union Markets) and the Preferential Trade Area (PTA) for Eastern and Southern Africa. The thrust of the trade policy was not to seek reciprocal market access but rather to seek preferential access for the agricultural commodities that would not easily compete (due to quality) with global produce.

The adoption of ESAP in the early 1990s marked a policy shift towards free trade anchored on export led development strategy. This led to the opening of markets to external competitors which was argued to enhance efficiency and promote specialization in areas of comparative advantage. The free market thrust of the trade policy under ESAP was continued even after the abandonment of ESAP. Zimbabwe sought to consolidate ESAP trade package through deeper regional integration and participation in global trade under the World Trade Organization (WTO). The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) (successor to the 1981 Preferential Trade Area agreement) which offers an increased market for trade in goods, services and capital among its 20 members was viewed an important natural market given Zimbabwe's superior level of development at the time. The country is also a member to the SADC (1992 successor of SADCC) and the thrust of regional integration has been expanded from that of promoting infrastructure development to market integration. Under the SADC and COMESA free trade agreements, Zimbabwe has reduced most of its tariffs on agricultural products. Regional integration through

SADC and COMESA complemented the liberalization agenda as countries were unilaterally liberalizing their trade and foreign exchange regimes with the support of IMF and the World Bank. The liberalization regime for intra-regional trade in goods and services underscore the importance of fairness, and equitable and beneficial trade outcomes. Zimbabwe also pursued bilateral agreements to expand agricultural and manufactured export markets.

Food security remains a critical concern in Zimbabwe. The level of undernourishment which was 42.7% in 1990-92 peaked at 46.3% in 1994-96 and remained at the unacceptably high level of 33.4% of the population in 2014-16. Absolute numbers better signal deepening food insecurity in Zimbabwe as the undernourished population increased from 4.6 million in 1990-92 to 5 million in 2014-16. General rural poverty has also remained high at 76% of the rural households in 2014 while extreme poverty is at 23% (ZimVac, 2014).

Increased incidences of drought and the fast track land reform policy are mostly blamed for the above observed food insecurity phenomenon. However, the analysis shows that agricultural and trade policies framed within the notion of free trade are partly to blame. Policy thrusts emphasizing on opening to foreign trade, deregulation and privatization, reduction on domestic subsidies, promotion of market oriented marketing system have contributed to worsening food insecurity in addition to the effects of climate change. Perennial food deficits have been met by increasing food imports at a time export receipts have been declining implying growing difficulties to meet food needs. Food insecurity from a trade reforms perspective is explained by the shift from food to cash crops by farmers, exposure to volatile world prices, increased uncertainty in production and marketing systems, lack of financing schemes for food crops compared to cash crops, dis-incentivized food production and promotion of import dependency.

Trade and related reforms have not managed to spur food security of smallholder farmers in Zimbabwe. Smallholder farmers are the largest contributors to agricultural produce in Zimbabwe whose food security is undermined by lack of agricultural finance and support schemes. Financial challenges further weaken the participation of smallholder farmers in both the national and global value chains. Protectionism tendencies in the global economies weakened the participation of smallholder farmers in global value chains. This is further constrained by stringent requirements related to sanitary and phyto-sanitary measures.

Botswana

Botswana has had high and sustained rates of economic growth for the past five decades and is generally considered to be one of the best economic performers in Sub-Saharan Africa. Real GDP per capita grew at an average annual rate of 4.4% between 1980 and 2010. The last decade has also seen a significant fall in the incidence of poverty, with the absolute number of persons living below the poverty line declining from around 500,000 in 2002/3 to about 373,000 in 2009/10. Despite these positive economic indicators, many development challenges remain. For example, unemployment levels have remained stubbornly high, the incidence of urban poverty has increased over the last decade and income inequality is growing. Middle-income households (those between percentiles 15 and 75) experienced much more rapid income growth over the last decade than those in the lowest 15 percent. As a result, Botswana has one of the highest levels of inequality in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Almost all of Botswana’s food supplies are imported, with beef being the major local food product. Despite the Government of Botswana's strategy of keeping a stock of grain reserves to ensure adequate supplies cushion the country against immediate food security threat, low birth weight is common in Botswana and contributes to the high infant mortality rate.

Notwithstanding the adverse climatic and soil conditions, the long focus on traditional rain-fed arable farming and the reluctance of farmers to adopt modern farming methods have contributed to a decline in the yield of the agricultural sector. One initiative to ensure food availability has been the creation of safety nets for vulnerable populations such as infants, school children, orphans, pregnant women, older adults and sick people by providing supplementary feeding to such population groups. The National Food Strategy of 1985 and the Food Control Act of 1993 were put in place to ensure food security.

Botswana is an open economy and the country has developed several policy documents which contain measures to inform the country’s trade development strategy: Vision 2016, National Development Plans, National Trade Policy (2009), National Export Strategy, Competition Policy (2005), The Botswana Citizen Economic Empowerment Policy (CEEP) (2012), Private Sector Development Strategy, Botswana Industrial Development Policy (IDP) (2014), and Special Economic Zones Policy (SEZ) (2011). The SADC Trade Protocol (STP) signed in 1996 also guide Botswana’s trade strategies with the overall objective being to assist the region to achieve its economic goals by eliminating barriers to trade and establishing institutional frameworks to enhance such cooperation. Consequently, the STP imposes commitments which they must implement in several areas ranging from cooperation in the removal of Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs), customs matters, Rules of Origin, trade facilitation, among others.

Botswana has also signed an EPA with the EU which commits the parties to enhance trade in goods by phasing out tariffs and customs duties in line with liberalization commitments in the EPA, properly implementing rules of origin, trade defence instruments, non-tariff measures, sanitary and phytosanitary standards (SPS), and technical barriers to trade (TBT), addressing non-tariff measures and promoting customs cooperation and trade facilitation (Article 10).

Whilst Botswana has had objectives of attaining food self- sufficiency in its national development Plans (1-6) since independence, this objective was abandoned around 1996 in its NDP 7 with the broader objective “to improve food security at household and national levels”. This coincided with the establishment of the World Trade Organization in 1995 to which Botswana immediately became a member; and started to pursue the “open market and open economy” agenda where the strategy was argued to ensure food security through imports.

In addition, the objective of achieving food self -sufficiency was not realized over the years because of rainfall challenges and a huge government outlay of resources into the sector, which did not change the situation; the emphasis of food security as an agricultural objective was also highlighted in the revised national food strategy which replaced the national food strategy of 1985; the revised national food strategy stipulates that emphasis would be placed more on technology development, provision of infrastructure, and institutional and human capital development and the strategy would also ensure that border controls are kept at a minimum to promote access to cheaper imported food consistent with WTO, SACU and SADC trade policies.

The change in the strategy by the Botswana government meant that support to farmers for programmes to achieve food self- sufficiency was significantly reduced-as this was seen as a waste of resources; and the salvation was then seen to lie in the importation of food products hence negative terms of trade.

Conclusions and recommendations

The above analysis is contrary to economic theory which postulates that opening trade fosters food security in similar fashion to economic development. On the positive side, food import depending countries stabilises their food and nutrition situations through trade. However, overall, reforms have created food import dependence syndrome that crippled the survival of the financially and resource weaker smallholder farmers in both livestock and crop production. The volatility of global prices has forced smallholder farmers to shift from food to non-food cash crops undermining food security from both the self-sufficiency and self-reliance perspectives. The volatility in global prices threatens the incomes of smallholder farmers to command other needs such as education, health and food stuffs for diversity and balanced nutrition. Smallholder farmers, the major producers of food in southern Africa, cannot thrive without production, marketing and financial support from the government. It was found that countries that pursue sustainable smallholder farmer interventions perform much better in terms of food and nutrition security.

The study found that despite years of significant trade and agricultural reforms, smallholder farmers continue to utilise basic technologies, depend on rain-fed agriculture, lack access to extension services, appropriate technologies, storage facilities, basic transport infrastructure and low-cost finance. These challenges prevailed as government support to smallholder farmers has been diminishing with liberalisation policies that crippled low-cost finance to smallholder farmers. The negative effects of trade reforms are exacerbated by adverse climatic and soil conditions and reluctance to shift technology. Thus, the study reiterates that government interventions such as input subsidies, low cost finance and support prices are critical for incentivising food production.

Regional integration and trade remain one of the key pillars towards ensuring regional food security. As noted, some countries in the region such as Botswana and Namibia depend on food imports from the region for food security. In addition, governments should pursue their public stockholding/grain reserves programmes for food security in manner that that is consistent with regional trade. These programmes are important to avert immediate threat of food insecurity during food importation.

In terms of the WTO negotiations, the study highlights that public stock holding programmes for food security purposes remain important instruments for developing countries. A permanent solution on public stockholding at the WTO is therefore imperative to southern Africa. Similarly, developing countries need more scope at the WTO level for use of subsidies. Southern African countries have committed to provide more support to agriculture under the Maputo Declaration, this however risks violating the WTO rules in the future unless flexibilities have been granted. The restrictions and procedures for implementing subsidies under the WTO will not act in the interest of countries in Southern Africa. Overall trade instruments such as tariffs and export taxis are important for spurring smallholder farmers' production.

Considering the halt at the WTO level and the resistance by developed countries, it is also in the best interest of southern African countries and their developing counterparts to explore alternative policies for food security purposes and promoting smallholder farmers that are compatible with the WTO rules. Such alternatives might include consumption subsidies and development support (infrastructure and rural development).

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Compiled by Admire Mutizwa, SEATINI Zimbabwe, 2017

Cite as: Mutizwa, A. (2017), The Impact of Trade Reforms on Food Security in Southern Africa: A Synthesis of Country Case Studies. SEATINI Zimbabwe