



Full Length Research Article

**A CREATIVE TENSION BETWEEN SPIRITUALITY AND PHYSICAL NEEDS: A THEOLOGICAL
ECCLESIOLOGICAL EVALUATION OF THE FOOD SECURITY PROGRAMME FOR
THE COUNCIL OF CHURCHES IN ZAMBIA**

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ABSTRACT

This article analyses the food insecurity situation in Africa and Zambia in particular. This article argues that the food insecurity situation that has rocked many countries in Africa is as a result of mismanagement of the farming industry by most governments; and also the church not playing its prophetic role to actively participating in agriculture and food production to enhance food security and dignity of life. The hypothesis is as follows: In place of food insecurity among the rural small holder farmers in Zambia, this article proposes a new point of departure for community development for the Council of Churches in Zambia. The new point of departure is food security through the practice of sustainable agriculture by small holder farmers which the Council of Churches in Zambia should be seen promoting among its member churches. This research attempts to contribute to the search for options that would ensure sustainable agriculture and food production as a life preserving framework for empowering households with food security from a Biblical theological perspective. The article falls within the practical theological academic sphere of theology, and more especially within Theology and Development Studies.

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INTRODUCTION

This article provides a descriptive, analytical, pragmatic and practical theological assessment (normative approach) of the food security program for the Council of Churches in Zambia, which is relevant to the understanding of the churches participation in transformational community development through the promotion of sustainable agriculture. It is therefore argued that the church in Zambia should disengage from its social inactiveness (August 2010) and become the salt and the light of the world (Msangaambe 2010). The researcher believes that a better understanding of the causes of food insecurity in Africa and Zambia in particular can help the church to understand that it has a major role to play in the promotion of household food security. The researchers' motivation to embark on this project emerged from the prevailing hunger situation that has rocked the small holder farmers living in the rural areas, the national interest in food security and the researchers' participation in a food security

project to empower household farmers through food security in Ndola rural in the Copper belt of Zambia. The primary researcher is a director of the Community Development Department of the Reformed Church in Zambia; and the secondary researcher a theologian in Theology and Development Studies at Stellenbosch University.

The Research Problem

The availability of food is a problem of global proportions, particularly in less developed countries. In many respects, we all live in an unfair world. Whatever our talents and, however wisely we plan our lives depend on our destiny; we are guaranteed neither wealth nor success, nor even food. Millions of people work tirelessly to cultivate the soil to ensure food for their families but encounter many problems, such as periods of drought that affect their crops or periods of war resulting in political instability. This food crisis calls for concerted efforts from the government, non-governmental organizations and the church to come together to find lasting solutions for the improvement of the living standards of people from rural areas who depend on agriculture for a living. The church, therefore,

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carries an enormous responsibility to society at large. While guiding people towards salvation, the church has the charge from God to serve society in the inculcation of morals, in information dissemination and as custodian of values in order to ensure sustainable livelihood and human dignity before God.

Research Methodology and Hypothesis

The research was conducted as a practical theological study (Hendriks 2004). The descriptive and analytical dimensions of the research captured the perspective of the causes of food insecurity. The investigation started by looking at available literature to understand the global food insecurity problem and the practice of sustainable agriculture and food production among small holder farmers as a practice to enhance household food security (Zulu 2012: 8 – 15). Secondly, the researcher also studied official documents of the Council of Churches in Zambia (CCZ), the Reformed Church in Zambia (RCZ) and the Diaconia Department (RCZDD). This was to enable the researcher's understanding of how this specific Church participates in community development through the promotion of agriculture and food security at household level (Zulu 2012: 8f). Thirdly, an empirical investigation took place by using a questionnaire and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) to listen to first hand recollection of the farmer beneficiaries involved in a food security project in Maposa community on the Copper belt province of Zambia (Zulu 2012: 136 – 185).

The study as a whole worked with the following hypothesis that in place of food insecurity among households living in rural Zambia, there is need to design a new point of departure for community development for the Council of Churches in Zambia. The proposed new point of departure is food security for households living in the rural parts of Zambia through the practice and promotion of sustainable agriculture. It is argued that the Council of Churches in Zambia, through its member churches and affiliates, should enhance its participation in community development, by moving away from being too dogmatic about its denominational nature and move towards ecumenism. The Council of Churches in Zambia and its member churches should actively participate in the promotion of sustainable agriculture and food production in rural Zambia to enhance sufficient food supplies to families that cannot afford to have access to the right quantity, and quality of food. The logical first step in the investigation starts by looking at the available literature on the problem of global food insecurity and attempts to present an overview of a just and sustainable food production system.

What is more, the article aims at describing Agricultural development and food production which has become important development objectives for most of the countries in Africa. These concerns have arisen as a result of the high levels of malnourishment that impact negatively on people's work performance and general quality of life. Deficient diets can lead to serious health risks or stunted growth. The hypothesis of this research assumes that removing food deficits among the poor communities requires deep changes in existing economic institutions and substantial alternatives in the present asymmetrical social arrangements. Food security which entails access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, health life can only be guaranteed by increased

food production and putting into place good storage facilities (Van Zyl and Kirsten, 1992: 171). Secondly it presents an overview of agriculture and food security in Zambia. The article aims at discussing Zambia's political economy affecting food production, the current food production and food security status, the social economic policy on food production and also agriculture and food production after colonialism. Thirdly, apart from the attempts of and the challenges to government to promote a just and sustainable food production system, the article also aims at describing the Biblical Theological perspective of agriculture and food production as an injunction for the churches participation in agriculture and food production to enhance household food security. The hypothesis assumes that food insecurity happens as a result of not applying the biblical principles of agriculture and food production to enhance household food security and quality of life today.

Promoting a just and Sustainable Food Production System (The World's Perspective)

The purpose of this section is to examine a just and sustainable food production system which enhances household food security. Agricultural development and food production have become important development objectives for most of the countries in Africa. These concerns have arisen as a result of the high levels of malnourishment that impact negatively on people's work performance and general quality of life. Deficient diets can lead to serious health risks or stunted growth. The FAO report (2000) indicates that nearly one third of people in Sub-Saharan Africa suffer from chronic hunger. This is the highest proportion in any region in the world. Fighting hunger in Africa is largely dependent upon the success of the agricultural sector, especially among the small-scale farmers that comprise a vast majority of Africa's rural poor. Although the 'green revolution' of the mid-twentieth century introduced technologies that doubled and tripled crop yields in some regions in the world, African farmers did not experience similar gains.

FAO (2008) predicts that by 2015 there will be a shortfall of 25 million tons of cereals in the sub-Saharan Africa and the number of undernourished people could reach 205 million by 2050. Sobel (1995) describes this situation as a world food crisis. The International Food Policy Research Institute (2009) points out that, at present, one in six people worldwide suffer from hunger and malnutrition - a tragically high proportion. The reality is that many more are unable to sustain a healthy diet. In addition to this, Adam et al. (2009) state that an estimated 1.02 billion people suffer from malnutrition due to problems in the production and distribution of food. The World Bank (1988) indicates that food insecurity exists in countries with a past record of unsuitable micro economic policies and those with disrupted economies as a result of civil disturbances. Zambia is not excluded from this situation. Like many governments in Africa, the Zambian government needs to develop more coherent strategies for sufficient food production because hunger has become a huge intractable problem for the nation. Zambia needs to resolve this problem of food insecurity for poor households in rural areas (FAO 2000) through large scale actions, pursued persistently over many years with adequate resources and skilled personnel. Provision of basic infrastructure and services to farmers are

critical to help the rural poor households boost their production capacities and contribute to food security. The government should have political will towards rural based farmers and give them the much needed support to attain household food security. Political will imply the government's development of policies that will promote a just and sustainable food system. A just and sustainable food system is one which ensures adequate nutrition for all people in a given context. Adequate dietary provision for all the people in the nation is the most elementary test of the moral legitimacy of any system that encourages the production and distribution of food. Production and distribution of food are both critical to attaining distributive justice and to overcoming hunger in a country like Zambia. Food security, self-reliance and insurance considerations all contribute to presumptions regarding large scale dependence on external support. To act on this presumption requires major increases in output in the nation. Within the nation, the most effective way of increasing access to food for the rural poor is by removing barriers to or providing support for their access to land and other resources in order to grow more food for consumption and surplus for selling.

A just food system in a larger political economic system for a country should not only provide adequate food for all, but should also provide it in ways that respect human dignity and enhance human fulfillment. This means that society should also be structured in such a way as to provide opportunity for all who are to do so to earn their food and thus be self-reliant. Particular food systems should thus be evaluated in terms of whether they increase or diminish this opportunity. A just food system is a system that shares its bounties. There are moments in the lives of communities when sharing and giving become imperative despite all efforts at self-sufficiency. In this day, when the structure of agriculture is undergoing transformation in the whole world, nations should pay particular attention to the moral obligation to protect people from being deprived by others of their only means of subsistence which is agriculture (De Gasper 1981:40f). Depriving self-reliant indigenous communities and small cultivators of their land or landless rural wage earners of their only source of employment, affects not only their right to obtain essential commodities for their livelihood but also elementary necessities. It is clearly self-defeating as well as morally unsound to ignore actions or processes which erode existing bases of support and then to ask how the victims can be effectively fed, unless policies are established temporarily as direct measures for eradicating of hunger sooner rather than later.

As justice demands arrangements in which all have equal opportunity to earn their daily food, so justice demands equitable access to resources needed for food production. In the agricultural sector, this means equitable access to land, water, seed, fertilizer, credit, markets and scientific knowledge. Equal concern for all persons demands unequal treatment in situations of inequality. Thus, justice demands preference treatment for small holder farmers. Jansey (1995) argues that a just food system, be it locally, nationally or even internationally, means access to adequate variety of food. This must be seen as a basic human right. A just food system should encourage participation by all stake holders in agricultural activities in order to reduce unnecessary political pressure exerted upon poor farming communities. A just food

system implies participation in production of food by all stakeholders. A just food production systems requires the participation of all stake holders. A participatory food system requires sufficiently broad involvement, especially by the poor rural small holder farmers in the process of decision taking, resource allocation, production, pricing and distribution to achieve adequacy of supply and justice in distribution. In this process, the needs of the poor rural communities are to be considered first and the poor households must have the voice and organizational power to take and influence decisions. Participation by the poor rural people should be consistent as they grow more food themselves to overcome hunger. A participatory food system is one in which national dependency and vulnerability are reduced by attaining national self-sufficiency in basic food stuffs to a maximum feasible extent. Food self-sufficiency offers a country protection against fluctuations on the international market and possible political pressure from food supplying countries. It is, therefore, an expression of national sovereignty and independence as pointed out by De Gasper (1991:41f).

As already noted above, the achievement both adequacy of supply and justice in distribution, requires that the needs of the rural poor households should be considered first. They must have the voice and organisational power to take and influence decisions and participate in the production activity. Rural poor people's empowerment in agriculture and food production means the expansion of freedom of choice and action to shape their own lives. It implies control over resources and decisions. Empowerment of the rural poor people entails the expansion of assets and capabilities of the poor people themselves to participate and negotiate with, influence, control and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives (World Bank 2003).

For the rural poor who have the potential for access to land, fuller participation in production is a priority. For the labouring rural landless, fair participation in the fruits of food production must be made possible. Participation in productive employment or self-backed by equity in remuneration is essential if the urban and rural poor were to achieve equitable access to food resources. Participation on various levels is necessary to help poor people overcome hunger by growing more food themselves and by generating more income to buy food. Neither food rationing nor permanent institutionalization of stamps and free food allocations should be regarded as just ways in which the poor participate in alleviating dietary needs.

However, market mechanisms should ensure that poverty and hunger become much less prevalent and that distributive justice and participation are encouraged. They allocate funds on the basis of effective demand, not human need and the demand for food of the landless. The jobless hungry are not served effectively through these mechanisms. Intervention in the production of food or in employment or non-market access to food is and will remain necessary. In a participatory food production system people engage in meaningful food production to guarantee food security.

An Overview of Agriculture and Food Production in Zambia

According to the World Bank report (1996) and the social research conducted by UNZA (2002: 67), it is revealed that

Zambia's food security situation is serious despite occasional surpluses the country produces during the good crop years. It has become increasingly clear that Zambia is no longer able to feed itself. As a result, chronic malnutrition (stunting growth) has affected about 45% to 47% of the rural households, whilst malnutrition (wasting) has inflicted about 6% of all rural households (World Bank 1996). A fundamental issue that continues to be examined while we investigate what has gone wrong with food production in Zambia relates to the type of technologies and institution arrangements that are being promoted by the Zambian government to increase agricultural productivity. There is an implicit belief that traditional farming methods practiced by small holder farmers are partly to blame for food insecurity in the country. The fact is that small holder farmers can be food secure only if they are able to adapt to the modern farming methods which suit the current climatic conditions and do away with the unproductive traditional farming methods. Mkandawire (1993) argues that in the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) region there is still a thinly disguised contempt for traditional farming systems and technologies. Mixed cropping, for instance (a practice of growing two or more crops simultaneously on the same piece of land) continues to be condemned. Unlike in biblical times, farmers who continue to practice mixed cropping system tend to be branded as conservative, ignorant, obtuse, lazy or not progressive. However, it is important to indicate that many researchers have now come to recognize that mixed cropping is a sophisticated and appropriate farming practice which should be encouraged among the smallholder farmers.

Mkandawire (1993) observes that the Zambian government still believes in the importance of western technologies like the use of tractors, ploughs, high analysis fertilizers, modern seeds, while at the same time, the prevailing customary land tenure arrangements are supported. Traditional technologies, farming systems and tenure arrangements and other institutions continue to be perceived as pseudo-scientific, backward, primitive, valueless, crude, mistaken and a fallacious stumbling block to increased agricultural productivity. In Zambia, for example, the government of the day seems to pay more attention to large scale farmers than small holder farmers. There is no evidence to support the assumption that small holder farmers under customary tenure systems utilize their land any less efficiently or that they are hesitant to invest in land. It is important to look at the wider spectrum of constraints (most of which are externally derived) that inhibit the small scale farmers to increase food production and become food secure as it was among the Israelites during the Bible history. One needs to look at both macro and micro-economic policies governing the food producing sector and how these policies impinge on agricultural productivity. For example, talking of urban bias in resource allocation and how this has affected small scale farmers in Zambia.

Mkandawire (1993) points out that the road networks and transportation in many rural areas of Zambia have deteriorated to such an extent that it has become a common occurrence that maize goes to waste in some districts every year. A good road network is essential for increased food production because it will enable farmers to acquire farm inputs and also transports their commodities to markets. At the same time, they need finished goods to be transported to their areas in order to expand food production for the urban market. It is now evident

that if sustainable agriculture and food security is to be enhanced in Zambia like in biblical time, small holder agriculture will in future have to rely on a thorough understanding of the local farming systems. They will require (systematic) research to increase rural infrastructure designed to improve the overall welfare of the small holder communities.

The Political Economy Affecting Food Production

Professor Anderson, quoted in the *Post Newspaper* of 17 September 2008 (p.12), argues that the global food system is in disarray. Grain prices have more than doubled since 2004 and prices for most other foods have also increased significantly in Zambia and the world at large. Due to unsustainable management of natural resources, emerging negative effects of climate change and sharply rising prices for fertilisers and energy, the world has encountered the most severe global food crisis since the early 1970s. What this implies, is that the national food systems exist in an international context. National food systems are shaped and constrained to varying degrees by the international economic environment. Therefore, a systemic understanding of the international economic dimensions is required to obtain a full picture of the dynamics of hunger which are separate from economic systems and income distribution. The national and regional food systems are part of the international food and economic system. Therefore, to have a more realistic picture of the national food security situation, it is imperative for the government of Zambia through the Central Statistics Office (CSO) to take into account a number of important factors. This will enable them to arrive at an informed true picture of the food situation in the country. Mkandawire (1993) suggests that the following factors should be considered by the government and other stake holders:

- (i) The government and the Central Statistics Office ought to have a clear identification mechanism to identify people who are food insecure. In order to have a broader picture, focus groups who assess household food security should include the following groupings: urban unemployed, casual laborers, landless agriculture workers, people in areas unfavorable to weather conditions for agriculture and food production and people who are poorly served in terms of food transportation and marketing from other areas, pregnant mothers, lactating women, their babies and young children with special nutritional needs.
- (ii) The government has to establish levels of food requirements for good health and nutrition for various groups of people in different areas, ages and occupation.
- (iii) The physical availability of the necessary food to the needy should be examined, either through food production or purchase of food from others.
- (iv) The resources available for people to produce or purchase necessary food should be looked at as well.
- (v) Lastly, it is important to see whether the available resources in the country are efficiently allocated and utilized so as to ensure optimal use of such resources, both at present and in the future.

A proper understanding of these elements of food security by the government through the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives and also the Central Statistics Office (CSO) can

lead to a complete analysis of Zambia's food security problem, especially among rural dwellers, which has reached alarming levels (Mkandawire 1993). It is argued here that the agriculture and food security question is more than just an issue of food availability (the hunger question). It is neither just an issue of the quality and variety of food available (the nutrition question). Instead, we argue that it is possible for Zambia to have a widespread food insecurity problem side by side with plentiful good quality food in the country. This paradox is reflected in the nature of the food sources as well as the country's social formation. It can, therefore, be argued that the apparent absence of food insecurity problems at national level could hide a serious food insecurity problem prevailing at regional and village level. The argument is that the food insecurity problem in Zambia can take various forms and degrees of intensity (*Post Newspaper*: 2008). In order to provide a wider view of Zambia's complex food insecurity problem, various aspects of the country's political economy should be taken into account. This calls for an understanding of the forces that have shaped the country's macro-economic policies, specific agricultural policies and the various social groups in the country.

The Current Food production and food Security Status

This section presents Zambia's food security status in percentages as it stands at the moment. According to *Central Statistics Office* (2000), Zambia is geographically a landlocked country, covering a total area of about 752, 600 square kilometers, 1.6% is water, 7 % is uncultivated land, 40% is wild animal pasture land according to 2000 Census estimates. Zambia is situated on the great plateau of Central Africa. Its vegetation is mainly made up of savannah, woodlands and grassland. The country has a tropical climate with three seasons: the cool and dry season, the hot dry season and the hot and wet season. The paradox is that little rain is experienced in the South where soils are more suited for food production. The heavy rains fall on the less suited acidic soils in the North. This paradox is the main natural constraint on Zambia's food security. The solution to this problem or resource constraint could be looked at in two ways. For the South region, irrigation (less dependent on rain) would be necessary to counteract rainfall shortage. Unfortunately, as observed by Mkandawire (1993), the current status of irrigation in Zambia is very negligible. The constraint of food security could also be affected by the high population growth.

The Impact of Population on household Food Security

Growing at the rate of 2.8% per annum, Zambia's population is regarded as one of the fastest growing in the world. Having stood at about 4 million at independence in 1964, the country's population now stands at 13 million people as reported in the 2010 Census of Population and Housing. In relation to available land resources, the current size of the population should not be a serious constraint on food security at the national level. However, for some peasant communities along the line of rail and some parts of the Eastern province, farmland shortage is a real problem. Even so, this shortage is a question of the prevailing socio-economic structure that has created unequal distribution of land between different social groups, rather than absolutely due to over population in these regions. Historical findings reveal that migration of people

from rural areas to urban areas has led to some parts of the rural population experiencing food shortages in Zambia. The reason is that such communities have lost the young male age group which was contributing to food production for the families. Mkandawire (1993) indicates that analysis of food insecurity should not be confined to the agricultural sector alone but also the socio-economic policies that have determined Zambia's development process and the country's food situation.

Zambia's Socio-economic Policy on Food Production

Zambia became a colony of Britain at the end of the 19th century. During the colonial period, mining was the major industry run by the British South African Company (BSA). A number of copper mines were opened in Zambia and with mining being labour intensive; a lot of people from the villages around Zambia were recruited to work in the mines. The shifting of people from their own villages in the rural areas into the mining industries in the urban areas negatively affected the food supplies of many rural communities. Famine became the order of the day in the rural areas (Mwanza 1981). Worse still, colonial agricultural policies in Zambia were formulated in favor of promoting the operations of the country's mining industry. Agriculture was practiced at a very small scale. Agricultural growth could not be achieved at the expense of labour needs in the mines. The major aim of promoting agriculture was to supply cheap food to the mine workers and not for individual food security (Badwin 1966).

The basic colonial agricultural policies kept Africans away from engaging in large scale agriculture production. Further still, white settlers received fertile land along the line of rail at that time, in Chipata in the Eastern province and Mbala in the Northern province. This was the land taken away from the Africans who were resettled in infertile areas. Most of these people are still living in these areas (Mwanza 1981). Leresche (1993) and Dodge (1977: 16-30) indicate that the end result of this relocation was that people became overcrowded in these areas resulting in over cultivation of the land. Soil became infertile and overgrazing led to soil erosion. The agricultural system was upset and the food security of these communities had been destroyed. It is clear from the above discussion that the colonial socio-economic policies did not have food security for local people as an important objective. If there was any colonial food security policy for the local people, it must have been intended for those who worked on the copper mines and other capitalist ventures in the country.

Agriculture and Food Production after Colonialism

Many people argue today that Zambia's agricultural policies since independence in 1964 have been based on a colonial legacy. Instead of pointing at a single explanation of the post-colonial agricultural policies and food security situation, this research will try to examine a wider spectrum of the post-colonial socio-economic policies and practices. It is an undisputable fact that Zambia's post-colonial agriculture has evolved around the mining sector as was the case during colonial rule. In the same way, investment into agriculture, especially among Africans, was neglected during the colonial rule. The agriculture sector has until today received less than 15% investment by government in its post-colonial development plans for the agriculture sector (Kaunda 1962).

Due to less resource allocation by the central government to the agriculture sector, the level of infrastructure development in the agricultural sector has been negatively affected. In this era, without proper transport, marketing and institutional infrastructure, specific agricultural projects cannot succeed. Zambia's post-colonial investment policies have also been focused more on the urban areas than the poor rural areas. This has resulted in a disproportionate share of the economic and social infrastructure put in urban areas at the expense of the poor rural population. As the rural population tries to have their fair share in these facilities, rural urban migration has been high since independence in 1964, resulting in a high rate of urbanization. Actually, Zambia is regarded as one of the most urbanized countries in the world (World Bank 1990). In the early years of independence, Zambia experienced a serious rural urban immigration resulting in a fall in small scale oriented agricultural production. A lack of social infrastructure in the rural areas pushed small holder farmers out of rural areas into urban areas. Education was no exception. After attaining independence in 1964, the government invested more in the education sector and less in the agricultural sector. The schools never trained students for tasks, especially those related to farming that could tie them to rural areas. The end result was the fall in agricultural output and food supply across the country (World Bank 1990). This gloomy picture of agriculture and food production has contributed to most people being food insecure. This calls for the church today, like in the Bible history, to empower poor rural households with agriculture skills to enable them to grow enough food to feed their families. The church's contribution to food production is critical in Zambia today because the majority of people, especially in the outskirts, are wallowing in poverty.

The Theological Understanding of Agriculture and Food Production

The argument in this article is that sustainable agriculture that enhances food security cannot only be attained technologically or scientifically but also by applying the biblical theological perspective. The article argues that the world today has to listen to what God is saying regarding agriculture and food production that should enhance food security for the people of this century. According to Devereux (2001: 13) the subject of agriculture and food production has been the topic of discussion for a long time now. The biblical story in Gen. 41: 1-57 of Joseph at the Pharaoh's court, predicting seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine is an early example of agriculture and food security planning in practice. Some years later, the Israelites who fled from the Pharaoh through the desert were provided with manna from heaven. This has been cited by Prof. Sir Hans Singer as an early example of food aid. The Bible provides enough guidelines to apply in agriculture and food production which can enhance household food security. As a matter of fact, the Bible in the Old - and in the New Testament addresses the subject of sustainable agriculture; and food production is referred to. This gives believers the mandate theologically to participate in sustainable agriculture and food production today to improve upon household and national food security (Zulu 2012: 69 – 71). From the Bible-point of view, food is important *because it sustains human life*. In the Old Testament, food as an image *is representative of God's providence, sustenance of creation and a proper order of life* (Prov. 12:11). The New Testament

offers a more complex understanding of the subject of food security as *it highlights the tension between spiritual and physical food*. The quest for spiritual food in the Bible is equated to the quest for physical food. In this article then, special attention has been given to physical food security in healthy tension with spiritual food. In the biblical history of salvation it is possible to see the relationship between food and liberation on the one hand and food and the fulfilment of God's promise on the other hand. The whole history of Israel can be understood as a process of liberation and peace-making (salvation). Yahweh is the provider and sustainer of life; and Christ came so that humankind could have life and life in abundance.

The Old Testament view of Agriculture and Food Production

According to Larsen (1977:14) food played an important role in biblical times. Larsen argues that in the Old Testament, food played a major role in the life of an orthodox Jew. According to Ryksen, (1998:117) the word bread or food in (Hebrew-*lehem*) is used throughout the Old Testament. Food is one of the many biblical images that, when traced through the Canon, presents a picture of salvation history and biblical doctrine in microcosm. The Bible in the Old Testament (Ex 16:31 and Deut.8:16) reveals that, when the Israelites journeyed through the desert, they became hungry and that God sent manna from heaven to feed everyone. The Bible tells us that enough food was provided for all and they ate and were relieved from hunger and starvation (Ex 16:1- 32). The Bible in Proverbs 12: 11 clearly points out that God desires for all people that they should have enough food to eat and therefore live. Growth in food production needs to meet the demands of population growth (not to exclude people's responsibility in birth-control). That is God's mandate for His people. This is seen in Genesis chapter 15 which tells a story about Pharaoh and Joseph who prepared for the food deficit period by preserving enough food to cushion hunger.

The Jubilee (Land Usage)

The Bible (1984, Lev. 25: 23) also presents the clearest expression of the Jubilee or land use for production of food. In this text it is clearly stated that ownership of the land belongs to the Lord. The context of this affirmation is the regulations for the Sabbatical year and the Jubilee year. These are years in which the Lord's sole true ownership of the land is acknowledged. This dual aspect of Israel's theology of land (divine gift and divine ownership) provides a helpful way of classifying some of the basic principles that affected Old Testament ethics. The Jubilee (*yobel* in Hebrew) came at the end of the cycle of the seven sabbatical years. Lev. 25: 8 -10 specifies it as the fiftieth year, though some scholars believe it may actually have been the forty ninth year that is the seventh sabbatical year. Some scholars suggest that it was not a full year but either a single day as an event within the fiftieth year or an intercalary month after the forty ninth year, within the same calendar effect as our system of leap years (Keck 1994: 621f). In the sabbatical year, there was to be a proclamation of liberty to the Israelites who had become enslaved by debt and a restoration of the land to families who had been compelled to sell it due to economic need some time during the previous fifty years. Instructions concerning the Jubilee and its relation to the procedures of the land and slave redemption are

pronounced entirely in Leviticus 25. But this is also referred to in chapters 26 and 27 of Leviticus. It is an institution that has inspired much curiosity in ancient and modern times and in recent years it has come into prominence in the writings of those committed to radical Christian social ethics, according to Keck (1994:621).

Interpretation of Food and Agriculture in the New Testament

As is the case with the Old Testament, the word food also fills the entire New Testament world. The word food (Greek - *artos*) sustains human life and it forms part of human solidarity. It is also symbolically used to refer to Christ as the food from heaven. According to De Gasper (1981: 31) there are many indicators that refer to the aspect of food from the New Testament perspective which include the following:

Food and Hope

The ecumenical longing for sustainable food supplies for the world society is reinforced by the biblical images of food in the future of human kind. God comes and lives among humans, physically through the incarnation of His son Jesus Christ, who took pity on the hungry and fed them. Jesus promised a future kingdom of feasting, of full communion (Matthew 14: 13 – 21).

Food and Work

De Gasper (1981: 31) observes that from the book of Genesis to Revelation, the Holy Scriptures witness that food should not be taken for granted. Food is a sign of God's grace upon his creation.

Food and Grace

According to De Gasper (1981:31f) the ecumenical approach to a more participatory society can be enriched by viewing the relation between food and grace in the Bible,

Food and Faith

The faith, life, death and resurrection of Jesus have profound implications for Christians who live in an environment which has, in many ways, aggravated and exploited the world food crisis.

The Needs of the Rural People the Zambian Perspective

The needs of the rural people in Zambia are many which include the following:

- Land ownership among the majority of small holder and emergent farmers is held in common with inherited rights. In other words, land tenure arrangements under traditional agricultural systems in Zambia are still under customary law. This puts emphasis on the inherited rights of men to have access to land in order to grow food for their families. This type of land tenure system excludes women and female headed households from having inherited rights to the use of land. It is common knowledge that in Zambia,

like in most African countries, women carry out the main agricultural activities than the men (Jansen: 1983).

- The existing small scale farmers who are the majority in the farming sector presents a huge potential, which if mobilized with appropriate technological packages, can increase food production in the country, which in turn can improve food security and reduce poverty in the country.
- Transformational development that is sustainable and community based focusing especially on the needs of children.
- According to Nsemukila (2003) water is an essential commodity for daily survival of households. The commodity has proven to be scarce in some parts of Zambia. As a result, households spend more time fetching it hence wasting their productive time.
- Shelter is one of the fundamental human rights. Every person deserves to be housed in decent and safe accommodation. The Zambia National Housing Policy produced by the ministry of local government and housing (1996) stipulates that priority should be given to housing development in rural areas. In the policy, it has been recorded that 15% of the total national budget each year needs to be allocated to improving housing in the rural areas. Sadly, this has remained a policy on paper, as housing in most of the rural areas in Zambia still consist of grass thatched houses (Zambia Policy on Housing 1996).

A Swot Analysis of the Food Security Program for the Council of Churches in Zambia

Strength

- Land availability for farming in Maposa community.
- There is very strong farmer support in Maposa community by the RCZ Diaconia department.
- Provision of certified seed by the project is a boost to farmers.
- Availability of project support staff like the development facilitator.
- Good networking environment with other similar organizations in Ndola rural.

Weaknesses

- Lack of bicycles for mobility for the Agriculture Volunteer Workers to monitor the farmers.'
- Project support time is too short considering the number of house hold beneficiaries in the area.
- Lack of Agriculture Volunteers incentive leads to volunteer turnover.
- Distance to the project affects monitoring by Management.
- Lack of government extension officers in the area to provide technical support.

Opportunity

- Good marketing for the crop surplus by Food Reserve Agency.
- Presence of government extension agriculture officers in the district.
- The availability of beneficiaries who needed support from the project.

- Willingness of the farmer beneficiaries to learn new things.
- Agriculture shows conducted in the area are very beneficial to the farmers to share knowledge.

Threats

- Unstable price for farm inputs hinders farmers to grow more food.
- Land tenure insecurity hinders farmers to expand their agricultural activities.
- Unpredictable weather pattern in Zambia is affecting small scale farming.
- Dependence syndrome by the farmer beneficiaries in the project.
- There is no political will from the government of Zambia for small holder farmer support.

Challenges of the church

If the church is to maximize the agriculture and food production as a community development strategy, the following challenges must be addressed:

Strengthening Project Management and Implementation: While the Community Facilitator can ably discharge his/her responsibilities on the food security project, as an agriculturalist. Capacity building of staff in some aspects of project management and in particular in planning, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) can add value to the churches intervention.

Partial adoption of Sustainable Agricultural Practices: In spite of the many advantages that are associated with sustainable agricultural practices such as increased farm output, productivity and environmental sustainability, not all conservation farming methods that are taught to target farmers are adopted. The most difficult conservation farming methods farmers find difficult to adopt include:

Minimum tillage: It requires use of a special hoe called 'Chaka' hoe (which has a combination of a hoe and pick).

Organic and animal manure: Organic manure in the form of agro-shrubs is not adopted because farmers feel; trees take too long to grow. Animal manure needs to be provided.

Crop rotation: This farming practice requires leaving land fallow for some time so that it could be made fertile again. Most small holder farmers find it difficult to implement due to limited land.

In adequate number of goats for pass-on-gifts: Most of the farmers who receive goats are unable to pass-on-the gifts of goats to other members of the community. The challenge is that the "he-goats" is always shared by many farmers who received the "she-goats". In addition, giving only one "she-goat" per farmer lowers the reproduction and multiplication rates for the she-goats, and thereby increasing the time required from farmers who get the goats to pass-on-the gift. The standard practice used by players with a lot of experience in promoting livestock among small-scale farmers such as Heifer International is to give a minimum of 5 she-goats per household.

Provision of training in agro-forestry without credit support for the purchase of agro-shrubs: Farmers who fail to adopt agro-forestry because in most cases the project does not provide credit for that purpose. This is a sharp contrast with training in crop diversification which is supported by provision of seasonal credit in the form of beans and maize seeds.

In adequate provision of grain storage facilities in some communities: In most cases, donors provide support to construct storage shades in selected places, leaving out some communities.

Establishment of Savings Schemes without regard to the Small Business Group Dynamics. In most cases, the Savings Groups established could have membership of more than 20 members. Experience on the ground has proven that the larger the group, the less cohesive, and the less cohesive the group is, the higher the chances of misunderstanding and business failure. Another notable challenge with the Savings Groups is its lack of having an agreed timeframe during which they can generate surpluses before they started sharing the profits.

Small-Size of Holdings: One of the key challenges that make it difficult for farmers to adopt some conservation farming practices such as crop rotation is the small size of holdings.

The above challenges should be addressed in the next phase of the Ndola Rural Food Security project. This will ensure that the gains in terms of improving the livelihoods and in particular the food security of small-scale farmers are consolidated.

Conclusions

This article provided a descriptive and practical theological assessment of the food security program of the Council of Churches in Zambia, relevant to the understanding of the churches participation in transformational community development through promotion of sustainable agriculture. A better understanding of the causes of food insecurity in Africa in general and Zambia in particular can help the church to understand that it has a major role to play in the promotion of food security in households, a nation and even at continental level. The background of this article is the prevailing hunger situation that has rocked the small holder farmers living in the rural areas of most countries in the 3rd world nations. The availability of food is a problem of global proportions, particularly in less developed countries. In many respects, we all live in an unfair world. Whatever our talents and, however wisely we plan our lives depend on our destiny; we are guaranteed neither wealth nor success, nor even food. This article as a whole worked with the following hypothesis that in place of food insecurity among households living in rural Zambia, there is need to design a new point of departure for community development for the Council of Churches in Zambia. The proposed new point of departure is food security for households living in the rural parts of Zambia through the practice of sustainable agriculture. It is argued that the Council of Churches in Zambia, through its member churches and affiliates, should enhance its participation in community development, by moving away from being too dogmatic about its denominational nature and move towards ecumenism. The

Council of Churches in Zambia and its member churches should actively participate in the promotion of sustainable agriculture and food production in rural Zambia to enhance sufficient food supplies to families. The logical first step in the investigation was to present an overview of a just and sustainable food production system. The article described the agricultural development and food production which have become important development objectives for most of the countries in Africa. These concerns have arisen as a result of the high levels of malnourishment that impact negatively on people's work performance and general quality of life. Deficient diets can lead to serious health risks or stunted growth. The hypothesis assumes that removing food deficits among the poor communities requires deep changes in existing economic institutions and substantial alternatives in the present asymmetrical social arrangements. Food security which entails access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, health life can only be guaranteed by increased food production and putting into place good storage systems (Van Zyl and Kirsten, 1992: 171). Secondly an overview of agriculture and food security in Zambia has been presented. The article discussed the political economy affecting agriculture and food production, the current food production and food security status in Zambia and also the countries social economic policy on agriculture and food production after colonialism. Thirdly, apart from promoting a just and sustainable food production system technologically and scientifically this article further describes the Biblical Theological perspective of agriculture and food production so as to enhance household food security at household level. The hypothesis assumes that food insecurity happens as a result of not applying the biblical principles of agriculture and food production so as to enhance household food security.

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