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Large-scale Agricultural Investments and Institutions in Zambia: Patterns, Possibilities and Barriers

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Table of Contents

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Abstract

Large-scale agricultural investments in sub-Saharan Africa have attracted significant attention, yet the national institutional and policy environment within which they play-out remain poorly understood. A national-level analysis is important in understanding prospects for smallholders, agriculture and rural development This paper combines policy assessment and interview data to investigate governance dynamics in Zambia and the institutional environment within which they are situated. While corporate interest, donor and regional support and public policy interplay as drivers to LaSAIs, our analysis suggests that national and regional factors are the most significant. We show that whilst possibilities for LaSAIs are created by the state, the state also limits their potential through ensuing forms of self-referential policy-making processes and institutional structures, raising questions for social-economic sustainability. The demand on land and water accompanied by government and donor resources heightened tensions among investment promotion, agriculture development and environmental related institutions, raising debate around capacity and social-economic and environmental impacts at a local level. By unpacking different actors and their roles underpinning investment, this paper argues that the top-down nature of governance of land, labour and water resources is problematic for long-term sustainable agriculture and rural development. Moving towards a more multi-level and cooperative governance approach is essential in creating a more locally-rooted agro-vision for Zambia's agriculture and rural development.

Key words: Governance; land-grabbing; institutions; sub-Saharan Africa; Zambia.

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1 Introduction

Large-scale Agricultural Investments (LaSAIs) by various actors in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) have dramatically increased in the past decade, challenging rural livelihoods among small-scale farmers (smallholders) (Dawson et al. 2016). These organise in varying contexts, scale and production systems, including collaborations between small-scale producers and large-scale plantation based investments that position the former into contract farmers (Wendimu et al. 2016). Whilst the poverty reduction impacts of LaSAIs are vigorously debated (Deininger 2011, Borras et al. 2011), supporting large-scale commercial farms remains an important development agenda in many SSA countries (Cotula et al. 2010). Donors, international actors and national governments encourage strong links between LaSAIs and smallholders for transforming agriculture and enabling poverty reduction (Deininger 2011), but social commentators point to the problems associated with this agribusiness-driven concentration (Larson et al. 2016).

One distinctive feature of concern among development actors is that LaSAIs often coincides with poor governance systems (German et al. 2013), unclear property rights (Deininger and Byerlee 2012) and heightened multi-level competition between national players in determining land access (Burnod et al. 2013). At local-level, negative implications for smallholder livelihoods have been reported (Kusiluka et al. 2011), whilst welfare outcomes remain highly contested (Bellemare 2012). These have, in particular cases, been aligned to displacement and risks of loss of natural resources (Lunstrum 2016). Previous studies have mainly focused on the role of international investments (Sassen 2013) often using narratives of land and water grabs focused on sugar-industry expansion and agro-fuels (Hess et al. 2016). This paper adds to the strand of literature that concentrates on the national context particularly trends, drivers and governance processes. Understanding how national institutional and policy elements shape LaSAIs is essential if long-term goals of sustainable agricultural and rural development are to be realised.

This paper examines national institutional[1] and policy dynamics, patterns and drivers of LaSAIs in Zambia. It explores potential tensions between policy and

[1] Institutions and organisations are used interchangeably as structures for human interactions (North, 1990).

development actors involved in LaSAIs, and implications for institutional coordination and collaboration. This study: 1) explores national institutional dynamics and stakeholders involved in LaSAIs; 2) examines trends and patterns of LaSAIs and the factors influencing investments; and 3) explores institutional coordination and collaboration in LaSAIs.

2 Case Study and Methods

2.1 Zambia

Zambia has been described as a frontier for the expansion of agriculture and as an important agro-investment destination in SSA (Deininger 2011). The Zambian government perceives agriculture as offering prospects for rural development and employment creation. LaSAIs are considered crucial in powering agro-expansion and realising these objectives as highlighted in policy documents (Table 1). Zambia's majority population (60%) are rural-based – characterised by acute poverty levels (77%) – and heavily dependent on agriculture (GRZ 2013). Significant proportion of land under customary tenure (94%) and unsuccessful land reform attempts, have seen Zambia witness a surge in LaSAIs (Nolte 2014).

Having suffered decades of heavy state intervention, Zambian agriculture has witnessed growth in various commodities (e.g. soya bean) riding on donor and investor interest (Gasparri et al. 2016). These possibilities have however been jeopardised and stifled by the national institutional and policy dynamics that determine resource access and influence investment outcomes and challenge capacity and coordination between and among public institutions. While the government has emphasised agriculture and rural development in its policies, divergences between and among government ministries and multiple investment promotion/entry points lead to difficult pathways and challenges collective governance.

2.2 Study Methods

2.2.1 Data Collection

Qualitative methods were used to understand drivers to LaSAIs and to provide descriptions of coordination and capacity issues, drawing on stakeholder views and perspectives as they relate to policies, institutions and actors shaping investments in Zambia. Expert interviews were conducted with diverse national-level informants to

capture and collate a range of voices and stakeholder narratives (see Appendix 1 for list and coding structure). Wide-ranging informants were purposively selected drawing on an understanding of the sector-based review of secondary sources including policies, national investments plans, academic papers and government reports (Bowen 2009).

Through a snowballing technique (Strauss and Corbin 1990) thirty-three semi-structured interviews were conducted at national, regional, district/sub-district levels. National-level interviews focused on institutional and policy related matters, drivers/trends, and experiences of investments, including coordination elements whilst district/sub-district interviews concentrated on planning and development issues.

To understand policy dynamics within the national context, a policy assessment was conducted to provide insights into elements that facilitate investments and agro-expansion (Table 1).

Table 1: Policy documentation selected based on possibility to influence agriculture/investments (Government of the Republic of Zambia, GRZ)

Document	Description
Revised Fifth National Development Plan (RNDP)	Medium-term national development plan
Vision 2030 (V2030)	Long-term national development plan
National Agricultural Policy (NAP)	National Agricultural Policy
National Investment Plan (NAIP) – 2014-2018	National Investment Plan
National Irrigation Policy and Strategy (NIPS)	National Irrigation Policy and Strategy
National Energy Policy (NEP)	National Energy Policy
National Water Policy (NWP)	National Water Policy
National Resettlement Policy (NRP)	National Resettlement Policy

2.2.2 Analysis

Policy documents were analysed for content using the inductive grounded theory approach (Cresswell 1998), paying attention to policy measures that could potentially enhance/constrain LaSAIs. Interviews were analysed and coded inductively to identify varying themes and categories of international, regional and domestic

factors that shaped investments, paying attention to trends, patterns and collaborations/coordination as well as perceptions (Bazeley 2007). Data were analysed manually and through Nvivo. In evaluating study objectives, assumed subjective responses were treated as data and contextualised in terms of source and implications for the study (Strauss and Corbin 1990; Kumar 2005).

3 Results

3.1 Stakeholders in Large-scale Agricultural Investments

Documentary analyses and expert interviews reveal various stakeholders that shape agro-investments in Zambia (Figure 1). We draw on this list to explore stakeholder interests and influence in LaSAIs.

First are government institutions who, motivated by prospects of agriculture and rural development, play a dominant role in promoting commercial investments. They develop and implement policies in agriculture and related sectors (e.g. energy, water, land) and have exploited abundant resources. Through their power to determine resource availability, access and utilisation, they drive rules and guidelines for investors. Second, we identify multilateral and bilateral donor agencies that constitute an important source of funding and technical assistance. Driven by value-chain development, they fund public irrigation schemes and private agriculture projects. Donors are also engaged in infrastructure development with much support influencing policy on irrigation management transfers and formalisation some through private-public partnerships. Related to this are regional funding entities (e.g. Africa Water Facility) that facilitate water/irrigation development projects.

Third are domestic and international NGOs who focus on poverty/development imperatives, land and tax justice, and livelihood/environmental impacts of LaSAIs. These emphasise social-environmental sustainability in investments (Phiri et al. 2015). However, NGOs are concentrated at sector and local-level and their influence is low. An Officer at Zambia Land Alliance explains this in terms of the regional focus of strategies for implementation of protocols around LaSAIs accompanied by *"missing country-specific strategies which challenges NGO efforts"* (Q3:10.05.16).[2] Fourth, private actors including national farmer bodies (e.g. Farmers Union) encourage

[2] Coding structure shows interviewee code and interview date (see appendix I)

investments and negotiate policy for business (e.g. sector minimum wage). Meanwhile, research think-tanks/institutions have focused on impacts of investments and how the country can work to maximise gains and ensure sustainability but translation into policy remains slow.

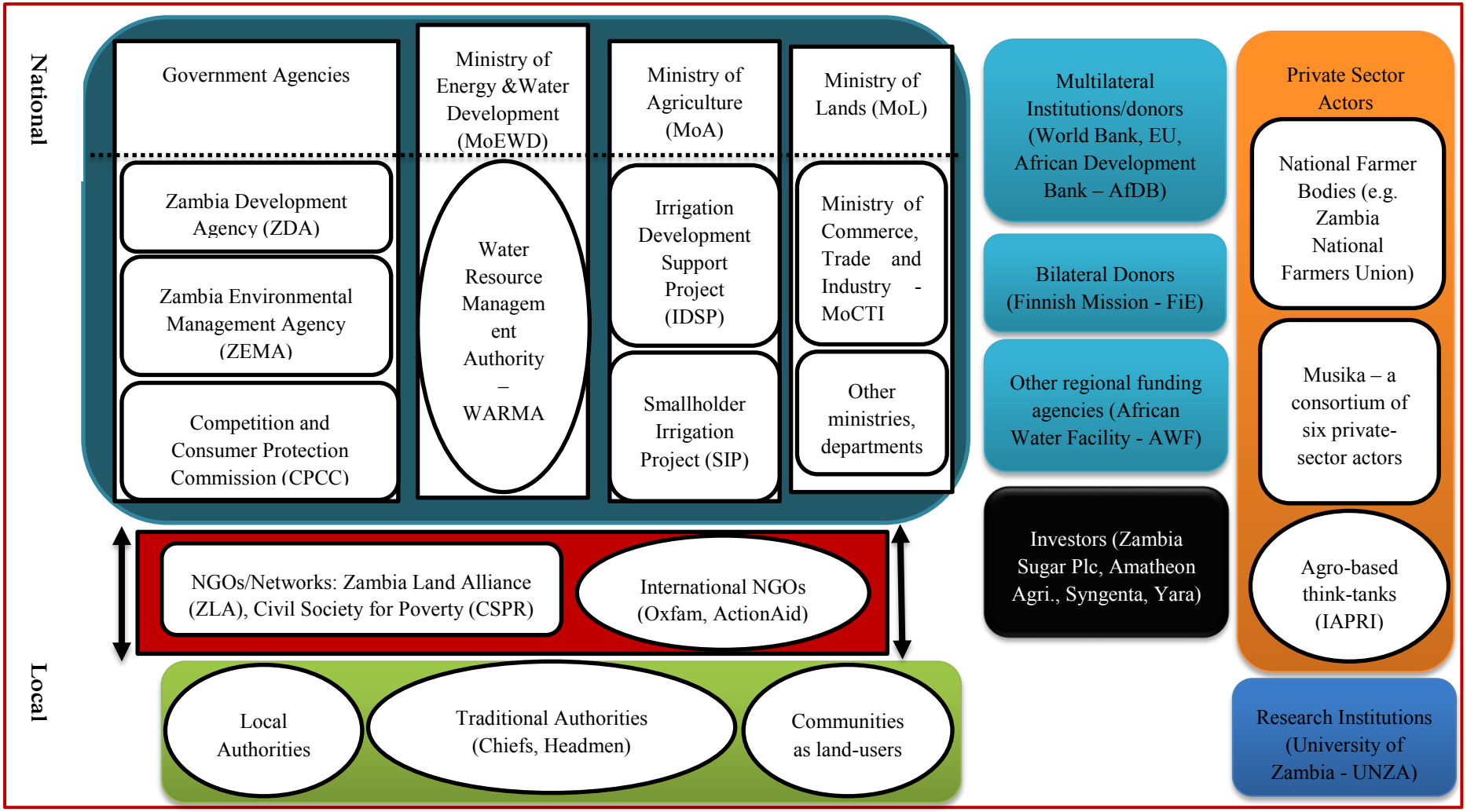

Figure 1: Institutions and stakeholders in LaSAIs in Zambia, based on interview data.

Motivated by regional welfare gains, local and traditional authorities administer land, a position enhanced by increasing demand for land. Local communities have little representation in national committees and suffer from limited capacity to evaluate consequences of investments. Dual land tenure presents multiple pathways for land acquisition: through government imposition as custodians of national development agenda, local and traditional authorities or private individual citizens as dealers. In practice however, land acquisition often bypasses local actors, where they have participated, reports of advancing personal gains or lack of wider community consultations have followed.

Low education, lack of resources and power places communities in weaker negotiation position. Their exclusion can mean negative commitments to rights and local livelihoods as observed by a program officer at ZLA that, *"some investors exploit legal opportunities that permit them to acquire land"* which is most often held by custom (Q3:10.05.16). In this regard, private sector actors have been important in shaping agricultural investments, reinforcing calls on *"government to limit its involvement in agriculture"* and implicitly exerting a new industrial agro-vision. Pathways taken by investors thus highlight varying motivations. The absence of strong legal enforcements creates inadequacies in regulation, whilst enhancing state power and influence in negotiations (Burnod et al. 2013).

3.2 Investment Trends and Patterns

LaSAIs have increased since 2000 (Figure 2), but this encompasses other sectors including mining. An Investment Promotion Officer at ZDA reports *"resource, market, (e.g. buying-off companies) and efficiency seeking strategies among foreign companies"* (Z7:16.16.15). Agro-investments were also observed in primary production and output markets (e.g. transport, storage) inducing growth in other export commodities such as wheat and soybeans.

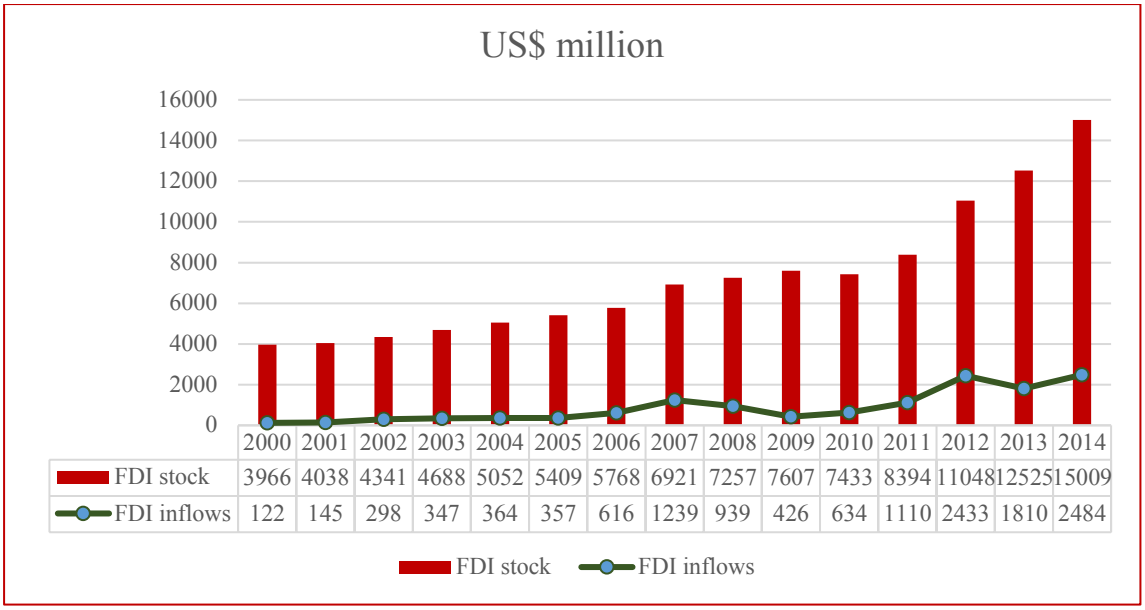

Figure 2: FDI and stock inflows to Zambia (Derived from the Zambia foreign investment and investor perception surveys).

Interviews identified five trends in LaSAIs (i) diversification by existing and entry of new companies into agriculture; (ii) increased demand for land, water and electricity; (iii) increased receipts to ZRA; (iv) growth in soy and other food crops shaped by wider private-enterprise growth; and (v) growth in agro-processing. One outcome according to an Economist at the National Farmers Union is that in the past 5 years, *"Zambia has been self-sufficient in wheat inducing success in poultry and soya beans"* (R4:15.12.15). Despite entry of new investors (Figure 1), relatively few large companies are engaging in agricultural investments at significant scale. The consequence of this has been reduced FDI stock in agriculture (US$400.7 million), ranking third after mining (US$11,586.70) and manufacturing (US$1,216.50) in 2014 (BoPSC 2014).

Respondents however describe investments as *"big and shifting sector dynamics and altering smallholder engagement"* (N5:10.12.15). This enhanced an agri-business concentration and reorganised agriculture, land-use patterns and livelihoods. There is a clear spatial dynamic, with *"investments concentrated close to the main road and rail networks"* and accentuated by *"limited rural infrastructural development"*; infrastructure is only now emerging as a clear national policy issue (G2:18.12.15). Within this account, *"translating attracted investments thus far into*

specific national and sector aspirations" remains problematic as observed by a respondent at Oxfam (Q2:05.01.16).

The ZDA is the main government institution responsible for investment promotion. However, multiple investment entry points that advance individual guidelines (e.g. MoA, ZNFU) have presented challenges for investments coordination and monitoring. Investment planning seems to have been left to chance, perhaps regarding FDI as a quick fix. However, this highlights the challenges of conceiving development in terms of foreign-investments. From the poverty reduction debate, any meaningful agricultural transformation will require a clear-cut strategy for smallholder inclusion or policy for alternative pathways which again is contingent on the national settings.

3.3 Agricultural Investors

The picture regarding who is investing and in what commodities remains unclear, especially as some interviewees made contradictory statements about investors and scale. For instance, a Policy Analyst at ZDA said there were *"no links with Brazilian investments"* but that there was Chinese presence in agriculture, nonetheless not on a significant scale (Z8:16.06.15), also corroborated by an Agricultural Expert from Africa Development Bank (K2:18.06.15). However, an investment promotion officer at the same institution suggests *"massive and increasing Chinese investments"* (Z7:16.06.15). Poor monitoring and coordination systems makes it more difficult to synthesise sector specific data and trends that could point to actual investments flows, although NGO efforts are now emerging (Land Matrix 2016).

3.4 Factors Affecting Investments

Two key elements featured frequently in interviews as important in shaping investment commodity focus. The first is diversification that emphasises a departure from maize and the need to expand non-traditional agro-exports through high value irrigated crops such as sugar, bananas, wheat, citrus and barley (K3:16.12.15). The second relates to biofuels, viewed as *"presenting a real empowerment opportunity for growers and for rural economies"* (P1:05.01.16). However, the massive promotion of biofuels has had disappointing results, compounded by public fears for instance that *"Jatropha might take over the land intended for food crops"* (Z1:29.06.15). Diversity in

players and unclear commodity focus show that drivers to LaSAIs at national-level are more complex and warrant further scrutiny.

4 Factors Driving Large-scale Agricultural Investments

LaSAIs in Zambia are driven by an array of factors: international, regional and national (Figure 3). Agro-expansion is identified as inevitable, given a steady neoliberal policy pathway conditioned by national political and economic factors.

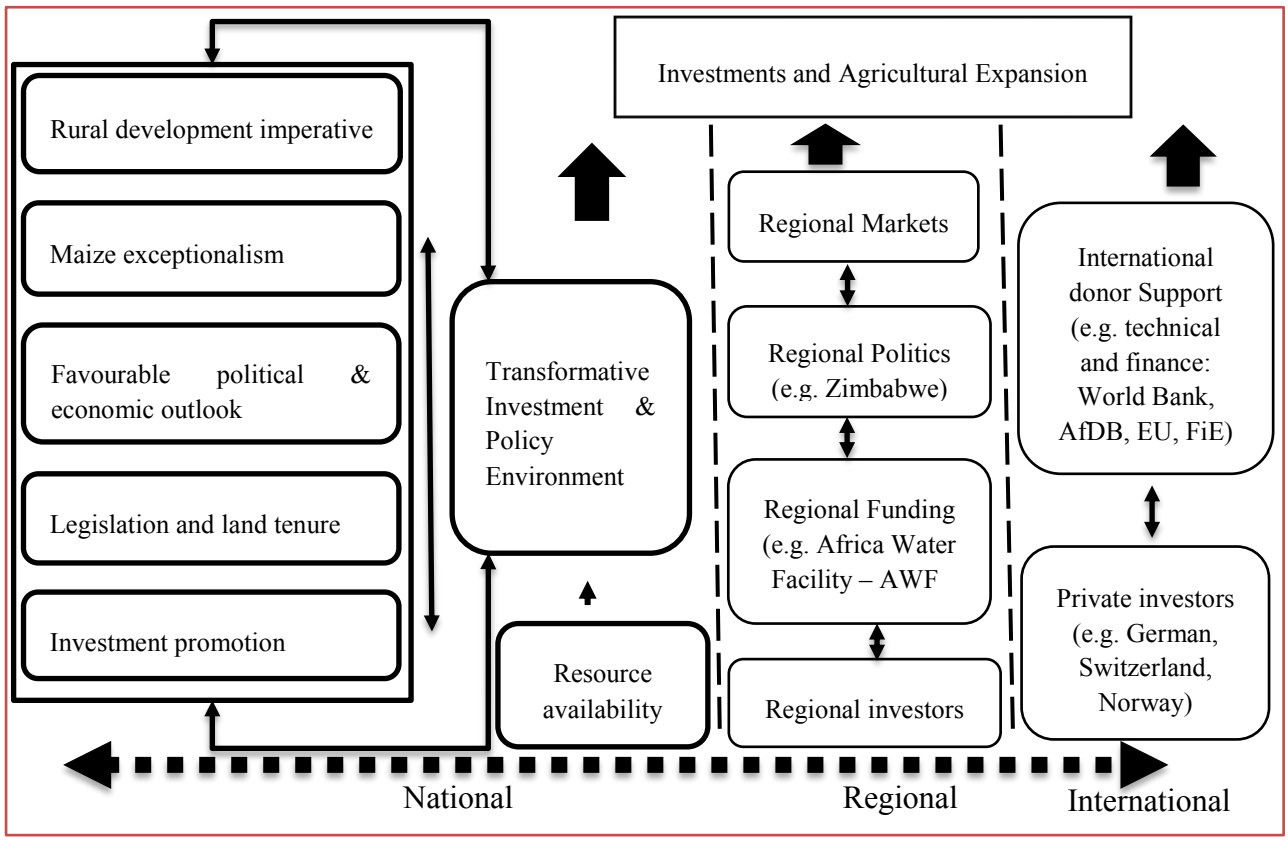

Figure 3: A framework for understanding drivers to agricultural investments and expansion in Zambia. Arrows show interacting levels (Derived from interview data).

4.1 Positioning International Funding Agencies in Zambian Agriculture

Agricultural expansion has been shaped by international funding agencies and donor commitment at bilateral and multilateral level (Figure 1). Driven by prospects of agricultural expansion, donors boast irrigation, agriculture and out-grower schemes. The emergence of the national policy on LaSAIs (GRZ 2013; 2006) comes alongside this support. Availability and access to large but cheaper credit adds another perspective, and public officers that are buoyed by the possibility of actualising agro-programs have a clear message for potential smallholders: *"maintain your imaginary*

land boundaries but let us do business" remarked a senior official in the MoA (Z1:29.06.15).

Donor and public projects have advanced under various banners including rural development, empowerment including climate-smart agriculture. As part of upscaling smallholder irrigation, donors aim to open 1,300ha, including additional 5000ha and 2900ha for Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme (GAFSP) (AWF 2016).

Table 2: Selected donor agriculture/irrigation initiatives

Scheme	Est. size (ha)	Location
Sioma	57.8	Western
Buleya-Malima	85	
Zenga	100	
Sinazongwe	400	Southern
Magobbo	2000	
Manyonyo	3000	
Nega Nega	2000	
Kanakantapa	595	Lusaka
Lusitu	276	
Momboshi	5000	Central
Musakashi	1432	Copperbelt

Author compilation (various sources including AWF 2016; GRZ 2016; 2013).

Within climate-smart agriculture, the AWF aims to complete feasibility in 25 irrigation sites by 2018 bringing an additional 9560ha under irrigation with the broader climate adaptation related strategy targeting 200,000ha by 2030 (AWF 2016). Additionally, international private actors are actively participating in agricultural production and processing but not at a dominant scale. However, efforts such as those by AWF challenges how we might understand the role played by regional factors in influencing prospects for agricultural expansion.

4.2 Regional Dynamics, Markets and Politics

Analysis of our data reveals three patterns. First, is that regional investments have been expanding and in regional markets (e.g. COMESA, SADC) which provide an immediate alternative to turbulent international markets. An informant at the World Bank corroborates thus: *"regional markets are big and that investors do not necessarily need to respond to international markets"* (K3:16.12.15), with potential noted in DRC and Great Lakes Region (N5:10.12.15). The second relates to regional

funding and support towards agro-expansion through irrigation and water resource development such as the AWF. The AWF has already funded projects such as in Lufunsa, an additional "*$1.2 million is earmarked for feasibility studies in over 20 irrigation sites"* (Z1:29.06.15). The third is associated with political and economic tensions in countries such as Zimbabwe and DRC which has resulted in farmers prospecting for investment opportunities in Zambia (K3:16.12.15). Zambia has capitalised on this situation despite an unclear policy rationale or systems for governing investments.

4.3 Domestic Factors and the National Context

4.3.1 Maize exceptionalism: cause and driver of diversification

Since independence (1964), public policy has effectively defined agriculture in terms of maize expansion. With reference to climate variability, the government is concerned that "*increasing dependency on maize and on rain-fed agriculture could lead to serious livelihood and rural struggles"* (G3:14.06.15). LaSAIs have been encouraged in move away from maize, discounting food security as the driver. Despite efforts towards stronger links between LaSAIs and smallholders, expert interviews reveal a culture among smallholders that sees maize as agriculture and vice-versa. A respondent at the national farmers union says "*we would like farmers to diversify but they are addicted to maize"* (N3: 04.12.15). However, culture is not the only problem for attempts at diversification amongst smallholders, given sustained public expenditure on maize and the considerable land constraint that limits crop rotation potential.

One key issue that featured prominently in interviews is that agriculture/economic diversification as currently advanced seems to exclude smallholders, focusing on agro-processing which prioritises commercialisation and value added processes and intermediaries. An Official at a local NGO argues that "*diversification is important but currently this is not at small-scale level or conducted in a way that feeds into to large-scale processes"* (Q5:07.01.16). The government is aware of these challenges and argues that whilst it seeks more participation in LaSAIs and value-chains, smallholders should take the lead as one senior official at the MoA remarked: *"we are not inviting ZaSPlc [the largest sugar producing corporation in Zambia] to run these schemes"* (Z1:29.06.15). CSOs like Oxfam believe that it is

important to develop *"a clear plan for value-chain inclusion for small farmers"* as a basis for ensuring endogenous growth that genuinely translate into *"poverty reduction and rural transformation"* (Q2:05.01.16).

4.3.2 National Politics and the Rural Development Imperative

LaSAIs reflect government's policy on rural development which illustrates a public discourse based on faith in FDI that features frequently among national stakeholders. Experiences in other sectors such as mining however show that this is not always guaranteed. The size and quality of employment opportunities induced by LaSAIs – through diverse production arrangements such as outgrower schemes – have largely been disappointing with fewer than expected smallholders participating.

The argument among some donors is that smallholders face challenges of finance for land investments due to collateral as well as of land tenure. In influencing public actions, donors have used inclusive growth in rural and agricultural development (K2:18.06.15; K3:16.12.15). The organisation of groups of farmers in outgrower schemes and on a large-scale *"both in terms of commanded land-area as well as level of investments"* are seen as providing a social-economic imperative as opposed to individual and small-scale (Z1:29:06.15). however, conceiving smallholders as producers linked to downstream value-chains raise concerns about which social-economic settings limit or enable value-capture by farmers (Bolwig et al. 2010).

Prospects for rural development in SSA closely relate to the contentious issue of taxation. The so-called "progressive politics" projected through measured public pronouncements, concessions to foreign companies and shaped by the Investment Promotion and Protection Act (IPPA) have enabled preferential treatment of certain companies and sub-sectors (e.g. sugar). One outcome has been a reduction in treasury contributions as an Inspector at the Revenue Authority corroborates: "*much as there might be inflow of huge FDI, tax yields are not proportional"* (Z6:22.12.15). The perception that corporations often claim unprofitability, despite appearing to be huge investments in theory, has instilled a sense of insignificance of investments among some actors and a feeling that rural livelihoods and economic benefits requires a rethink "*particularly from government systems on taxation"* (G4:15.06.15). Without

multi-level linkages between institutions, prospects for rural development remain uncertain, whilst the pressure on rural lands builds up.

4.3.3 Legislation and Land Tenure System

Although Zambia has a dual land tenure system (customary and statutory), the majority of Zambians dependent on agriculture utilise customary land. The controversial Lands Act 1995, not only eased previous restrictions on foreign access to land but also made possible the conversion of customary to state land. Reforms, together with private-sector interest, has increased the conversion of customary to state land, with scarcities already reported in some rural areas such as in Chief Naluama of Southern Province (D3:27.11.16). Preliminary assessment shows that around 40-43% of customary land has been privatised (Sitko and Charmberlin 2016). Donors are now concerned that "*this resource scarcity is not fully acknowledged"* (K4:10.12.15), exposing contradictions within public policy discourse on resource abundance.

LaSAIs in rural areas further benefit from government efforts to subsidise expansion through infrastructure (e.g. roads, electrification, irrigation structures including telecommunication). Consequently, "*unreachable pieces of land 4-5 years ago are now accessible and up for grabs",* remarks an Officer at the MoL (Z4:15.12.15). The role of traditional authorities in facilitating land access has widely attracted attention. Our respondent at MoA remarks: "*chiefs are very cooperative"* (Z1:29.06.15), presenting customary land as an investment frontier.

Exploiting crucial legal gaps around customary land, chiefs are seen as being problematic in facilitating land acquisition among diverse investors without clarity/transparency on rural livelihoods. With significant smallholder farm-lands already trapped in land deals, donors believe that "*[t]raditional rulers have been careless in allocating land to investors and the impact of that might be evident in the next few years"* (K3:16.12.15), with some senior officials in the MoL arguing that *"these deals may be illegal"* (Z4:15.12.15). Similarly, a policy analyst at ZDA believes conflict could significantly be reduced if "*traditional leaders provide guidance to investors"* (Z8:16.06.15). However, this focus on chiefs should not exonerate other parties including, as one NGO explains*, "the government through statehouse and local private 'land-grabbers' for own and on behalf of foreigners"* (Q3:10.05.16). The centrality of

chiefs and how they respond to government's demands, and negotiate with investors will determine livelihood realities for rural communities.

4.3.4 Favourable Political and Economic Outlook

Political and economic stability extant have been cited as important in guaranteeing investments and productivity but opinions are split. Respondents identified political and economic policy stability as the preeminent driver of investments as opposed to investment concessions. Others tie investment flow to "*right macro-economic fundamentals projected in continued economic growth"* (G2:18.12.15). A growing middle class was also identified as spurring demand growth and impetus for agro-investment expansion but many fear that the "*recent deterioration in the economy could precipitate reversals"* (K3:16.12.15). There are fears that high dependence on imported agricultural inputs could results in escalating import bills and diminishing margins (N4:15.12.15). However, the national relationship between LaSAIs and the economic outlook remains unclear but this closely relates to a wider policy context.

4.3.5 Transformative Investment and Policy Environment

Interviews with policy experts reveal that LaSAIs have benefitted from the government policy on commercialisation and diversification of agriculture. This stems from broad economic liberalisation and what has been described as *"favourable and fair economic and investment policy context"* (G2:14.06.15) (Table 3). In the past decade, there has been a striking policy shift in favour of LaSAIs and foreign investment. To explore factors fostering LaSAIs, a policy assessment was conducted paying attention to priorities and emphasised elements in relation to LaSAIs.

Table 3 summarises the extent to which key drivers to LaSAIs have emphasis placed on them in key policy documents. Diverse cross-sector policies facilitate water and land-use development for LaSAIs. In particular, irrigation expansion through infrastructure development and agricultural mechanisation and commercialization are widely recognised as a driver to LaSAIs in policy documents. Linked to this is expansion of area under cultivation and facilitation of water access for irrigation. Nationally irrigation expansion is viewed as suitable strategy for agricultural expansion, commercialization, rural development and poverty reduction. For instance, the NAP seeks to triple crop-land to close to 1 million hectares by 2030 whilst ensuring increased smallholder productivity through expansion of irrigated outgrower schemes.

Of special interest is the NRP which provides for resettlement and most importantly facilitate agricultural land-use expansion, elements that remain contentious. Whilst most policy documents seek to expand agriculture and attract foreign investments, there is a striking silence on capacity-building of public institutions in policy documents and government rhetoric that can ensure safe-guards and processes aligned to social-economic and environmental sustainability.

Table 3: Drivers to LaSAIs as identified from selected policy documents

	NWP	NIPS	V2030	NEP	NAP	NAIP	RNDP	NRP
Drivers to LaSAIs	1994	2004	2006	2007	2011	2013	2014	2015
High-value crops and value-addition								
Economic and agricultural diversification								
Rural development, job-creation, empowerment and poverty reduction								
Irrigation expansion and infrastructure development								
Production, productivity and mechanisation								
Farm-block development and commercialisation								
Rural and investment promotion								
Investor-friendly policy environment								
Expand area under cultivation								
Private sector participation and competitiveness								
Water access for irrigation/agriculture								
Agricultural land-use and utilisation								
Diversification of energy sources								

Coding: Black=emphasized; Grey=not emphasized; White=Not mentioned.

Central to this policy shift are broader but often contradictory narratives of resource endowment as a driver of LaSAIs. Zambia boasts 42 million ha (58%) of land as medium to high potential for agriculture and vast underground (over 1.7 million m^3) and surface (237.3 million m^3/day in an average year) water resources (GRZ 2006). In addition, many see the discounted sector minimum wage negotiated by strong farmer-based lobby institutions such as the ZNFU as presenting access to cheap labour which adds to this context. This policy, perceived as *"an easy solution on the part of government for employment and poverty reduction"* (G4.15.06.15) has tended to exploit electoral gains to the neglect of wider economic investment gains, farmer experiences within the agro-industry. These pieces of legislation remain disjointed and appear uncoordinated in terms of implementation.

4.3.6 Investment Promotion

Zambia has vigorously promoted investment in agriculture under the auspices of economic diversification using fiscal and non-fiscal economic concessions (ZDA 2016). One complex feature about investments promotion in Zambia is existence of multiple entry points (e.g. various ministries, ZNFU) alongside ZDA compounded by weak institutional set-up and capacity. Many intended policy consequences have neglected local participation. For example, at the heart of the ZDA Bill (2006) and the Investment Act (Chapter 385) lies investment promotion and guarantees which have seen government enter into Investment Promotion and Protection Agreements. Thus far these have eluded wider consultations but have a clear foreign focus. One outcome has been low revenue collection. One reason for low taxation is the challenge of revenue collection, especially where "there are already many fiscal incentives or tax exemptions" (Z6:22.12.15). There has been limited follow-through agro-investments with the sector (2007-2014) ranking third at 25% rate of actualised investments compared to mining (53%) and manufacturing (27%) (Namutowe 2014). Sector promotions have been characterised by investor disinterest as stated by an officer at ZDA that "*investment in agriculture have been slow despite promotion"* (Z9:06.16.15). Meanwhile the agency's emphasis on pledged volume of investments and possible impacts (e.g. employment) has led to divergences between theoretical claims and reality (Z7:16.06.14). The thought among most NGOs is that whilst agro-FDI is necessary, concessions have wasted opportunities to generate wider economic

benefits, agricultural transformation and poverty reduction or at least "*have not helped the country achieve sector-specific objectives"* (Q2:05.01.16).

5 Institutional Coordination and Collaboration in Large-scale Agricultural Investments

To explore institutional dynamics, collaboration and coordination issues at the core of agricultural expansion (Figure 4), we asked respondents who the key public institutions are, and then mapping and probing their perspectives on relationships and interactions in the context of LaSAIs (highlighted as R1-R9).

Our analysis reveals a deficit in inter-sectoral cooperation and coordination, challenging investment implementation. Whereas many national actors are aware of the diverse capacity and coordination challenges, efforts to improve coordination and broad-based capacity remain limited due to three main reasons.

5.1 Multilateral Institutions and Donors vs Ministry of Agriculture

In evaluating public projects, donors have raised concerns about weak government systems seen in bilateral links as well as low interest and ownership levels on the part of public officials, "*when government institutions are not holding project funds"* (K1:18.06.15) (R1). There appears to be a lack of policy guidance with respect to the implementation of LaSAIs, irrigation/formation of management boards. For instance, despite government rhetoric about agricultural expansion and investment promotion, "*irrigation expansion has been advanced only by a single unit in the MoA"* and due to capacity, causing project delays. One donor recalls how the Manyonyo Sugar Irrigation Scheme took 3-4 years to develop and 2 years to appoint a management board (K1:18.06.15).

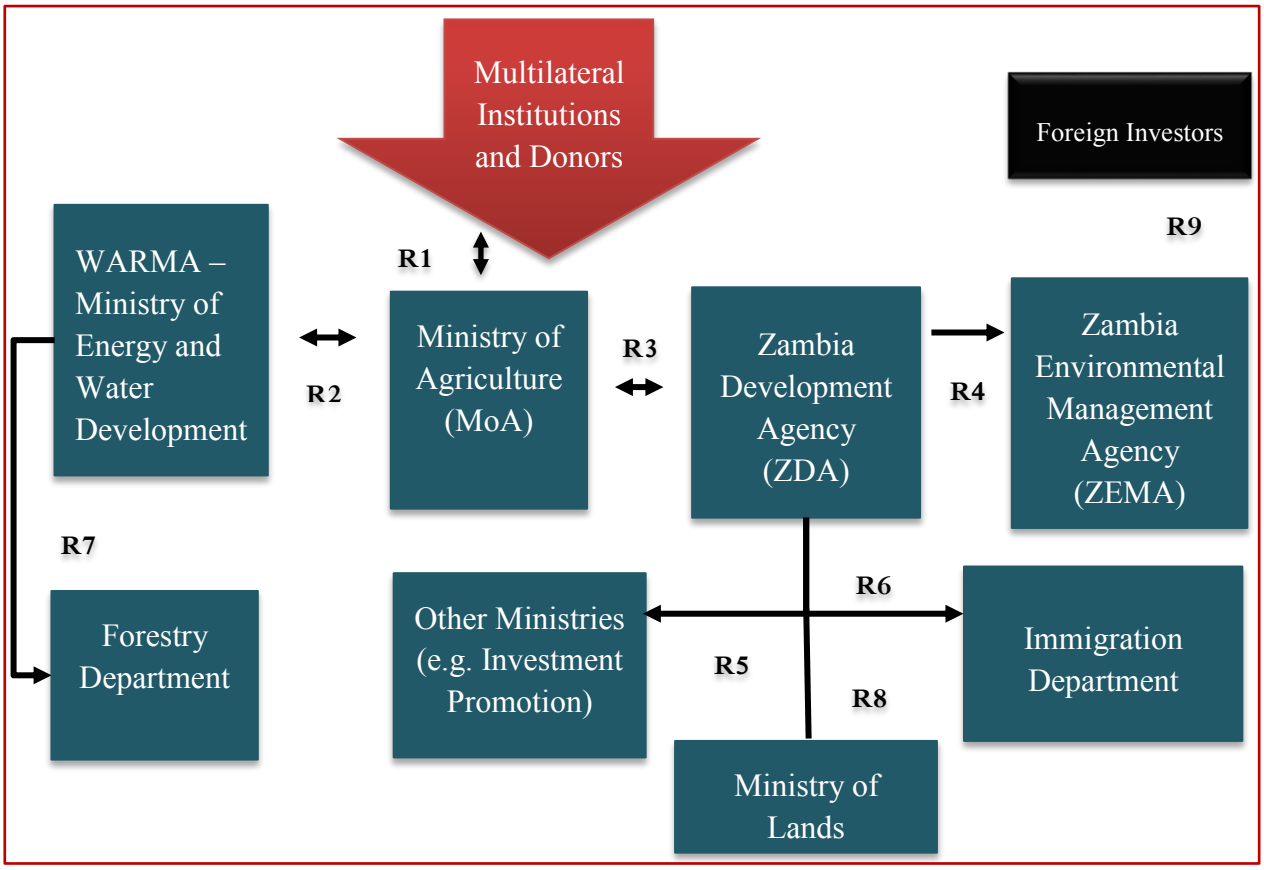

Figure 4: Stakeholder interactions and collaborations.

Some policy experts in the MoA suggested that donors harbour preconceived views about the value and inevitability of investments in large farms, a vision that implies that ministries should facilitate rather than hamper such investments. In contrast, respondents in the MoA believe "*problems and challenges are better known and understood by local experts"* (Z3:04.01.16). A case in Mkushi where a syndicate of six large-scale commercial farmers have come against smallholders is emblematic of wider tensions. Policy experts in the MoA allege that donors stress volume of investments and conjure figures of potential employment opportunities; the implicit message from donors is: *"they are bringing investments… have borrowed huge sums…you should not stifle investments"* remarks a senior official in the ministry (Z3:04.01.16). But MoA sources argue that there are serious water resource management issues, with "*over-subscribed water rights"* in this area (Z3:04.01.16), corroborated by WARMA (Z12:12.01.16). An Oxfam respondent stated that Mkushi has "*now become a bad example on LaSAIs and water resource management"* (Q2:05.01.16).

Donors and public officials are however agreed on policy challenges associated with agro-expansion. Some of these relate to unclear guidelines on commercialisation of farm-blocks and setting of outgrowers. Consequently, irrigation/agriculture support programs are being implemented in a vacuum as our respondent at the MoA illustrates: "*[w]hen dealing with donors, I have no policy reference and am often accused of making things up"* (Z3:04.01.16). Poor policy consultations and practice is even more problematic as an Officer at Oxfam says that "*an agricultural policy for example does not demonstrate that [architects] consulted experts in mining and vice-versa"* (Q2:05.01.16). One consequence has been inability to perceive agriculture in an integrated manner and lack of coherence and interlinkages between sectoral policies (Kalaba et al. 2013).

5.2 Within Public Institutions

For a long period of time, water resource development has been associated with hydro-power generation (28% of country's water resources) and not agriculture (2%), explaining why the water authority (WARMA) falls under the ministry of energy (MoEWD). First, there is a perception in the MoA that WARMA prioritises commercial as opposed to smallholders (R2) with increasing interest in agriculture raising tensions between the two ministries about control and authority over the resource. The MoA further believes WARMA is stifling projects: "*when (MoA) makes an application to WARMA (water) it is as good as government. That is more than enough (for WARMA) not to interfere"* remarks an irrigation expert (Z3:04.01.16). One consequence has been overlaps of responsibilities as WARMA has focused on boreholes and dams whilst MoA designs dams and at times even receives applications for water rights. With this, there is uncertainty about which institution is responsible for what, "*making donor resources even more challenging to channel"* (Z3:04.01.16). In response, WARMA believes smallholders benefit more from water resources because abstracting below 500 m^3/day is free. And that "*hydro-electricity has received attention due to recent power deficits"* but that applications from agriculture are still leading (Z12:12.01.16). On criticisms of poor water resource management, WARMA explains that *"(their) role is to regulate usage"* but admit that it has come late with most *"activities already established in certain delicate locations (e.g. Mkushi)."* On reflection, WARMA believes the problem lies elsewhere: "*rampant deforestation that reshapes*

hydrological cycles" (R7) compounded by "*unplanned physical infrastructure development by local authorities"* (Z12:12.01.16).

Whilst some of these challenges relate to mutual mistrust between various ministries, the environmental authority (ZEMA) was specifically identified as problematic. Monitoring and regulatory failures were attributed to limited human resource capacity, lack of equipment such as vehicles for inspections and political interference. Interviewees gave examples of where appropriate investors were refused permission to operate whereas some rejected by the Environmental Impact Assessment were issued with certificates (R4) (Z8:16.16.15; N5:10.12.15). Present only in 4 out of 10 provinces with about 40 inspectorates, ZEMA's response to environmental matters has been slow, with only recent capacity to monitor agro-chemical utilisation and disposal. To many, ZEMA was *"naive in advancing environmental concerns"* (G4:15.06.15).

Funding and increasing attention to resources has heightened contestations between various implementing entities. This relates to threats on job security by some officers and disagreements on who should implement projects (R3) (Z1:29.06.15). On investment promotion, ZDA for instance believes they *"know the investment climate better"* accusing other ministries/departments of "*lacking the mandate"* (R5) (Z7:16.16.15). The MoL reports tokenism by ZDA in monitoring investor activities and land-use dynamics in the country (R8). Whilst agreeing that the MoL has no monitoring capacity of investments, our informant remarks that "*the ministry cannot allocate (land) at the same time monitor land-use dynamics"* and believes ZDA has failed (Z4:15.12.15). Meanwhile an anti-investor public narrative has emerged particularly against inward migration and perceptions that these were displacing local businesses exposing the role played by ZDA. But ZDA believes that the Immigration Department has not been "*serious in screening who comes into the country"* (Z8:16.06.15) (R6). This however links to a broader issue of investor perception.

5.3 Investors as part of Wider Taxation and Economic Development

As alluded to earlier, taxation as it relates to FDI is a thorny issue, raising the need for monitoring and coordination capacity in government systems (R9). Despite what appears to be an abiding faith in FDI, there is a lingering suspicion of investors, particularly Chinese investments despite not being significantly involved in agriculture.

Investors have been accused of "*declining to declare bigger profits"* (G4:15.06.15). Some of these issues relate to lack of robust systems, leading to information asymmetry in terms of the nature and character of investments and their impacts.

Broadly, LaSAIs in Zambia expose national policy and institutional weaknesses, a serious lack of cross-sectoral partnership and collaboration in ministries. Scale, implications and impacts of LaSAIs' seem not to have been fully grasped and the policy – that facilitates investment and agro-expansion rather than build sustainability – has not helped either. Collaboration and coordination weaknesses suggest systems are insufficiently built for challenges related to investments and any further resource-use and agro-expansion will require a rethink.

6 Discussion

This paper sought to explore patterns and drivers of LaSAIs in Zambia and the institutional context within which investments play-out. Possibilities for LaSAIs have been produced but are limited by national institutional processes through diverse policy tensions and contestations among development actors. National agriculture policy and development processes shape and/or are shaped by trends and patterns of LaSAIs and determine outcomes at local level through coordination and collaborations (Figure 5).

A clear push for large-scale farms enable various stakeholders to influence the dynamics of LaSAIs in Zambia (Figure 1). However, the public dominance in agro-expansion (Deininger and Byerlee 2012) comes alongside poor capacity and weak institutions (Lavers and Boamah 2016; Nolte 2014). More widely across Africa, collaborations of governments and donors are powering infrastructure for agricultural commercialisation (Steinbrecher and Paul 2013). Within the agriculture sector, these have advanced an agro-industry perspective advocating strong links between LaSAIs and smallholders (Deininger 2011), although multi-stakeholder and multi-sector interaction that enhances institutional strengthening and coordination remains less developed (Stringer et al. 2014). This situation is troubling given weak legal institutions that have created possibilities for diverse actors to influence land acquisition, thereby jeopardising rural livelihoods (Dawson et al. 2016). Whilst businesses exploit investment protection agreements, a clear tension exists between commercial interests and the need to ensure rural participation (Vermeulen and Cotula 2010). In

the absence of well-defined property rights and enforceable institutional and regulatory framework, social and environmental risks for smallholders are evident (Deininger and Byerlee 2012). In Zambia, reorganising agro-production and rural landscape risks leaving smallholders behind (Cotual 2012).

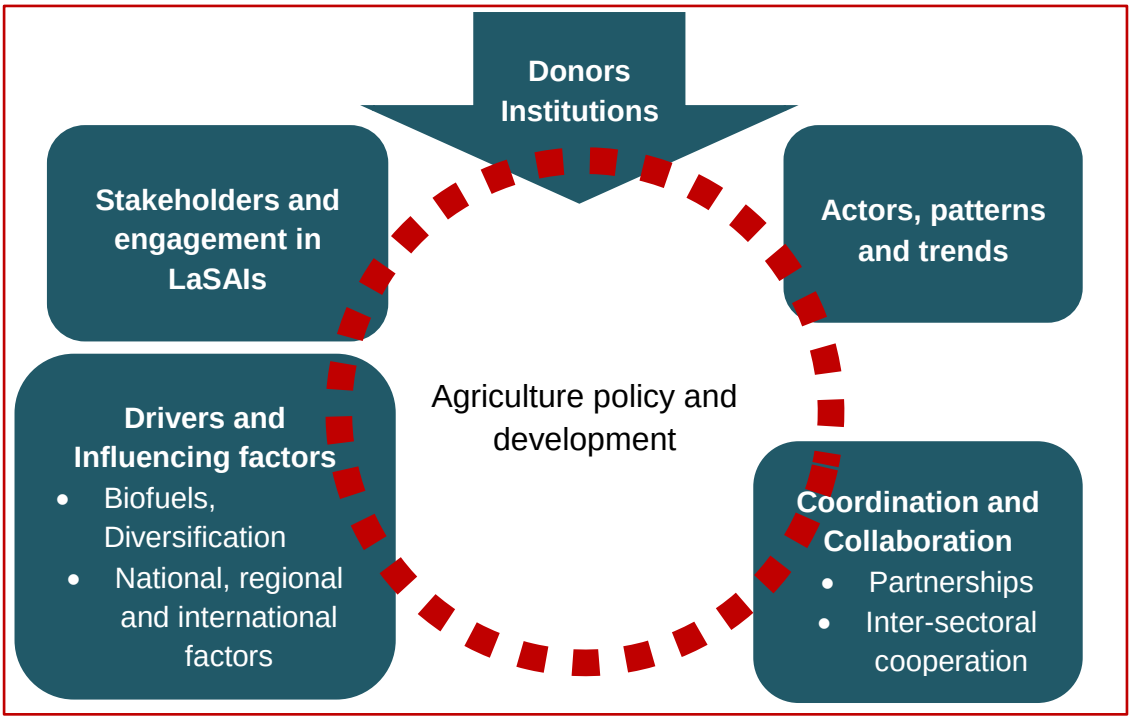

Figure 5: Influence of national institutional processes and dynamics in LaSAIs.

Wide attention recently focused on the role played by China and Brazil in African agriculture (Scoones et al. 2016). But regional players (e.g. South Africa, Zimbabwe) also play an important role (Hall 2011). A lack of monitoring and coordination systems makes predictions difficult. Investment concentration on commercially dominated commodities suggest transitional challenges for smallholders in the emerging commercialised agriculture as the new agro-vision (Peters 2013). Given resistance among smallholders to adopt new high value agricultural commodities (e.g. wheat), the extent to which farmers see new crops in this vision as the basis on which to build sustainable livelihoods as well as willingness to work under contractual arrangements becomes crucial (Di Matteo et al. 2016). This is compounded by the fact that governance structures and production systems for outgrowers for instance within LaSAIs remain variable, but crucial for outcomes (Deininger and Byerlee 2012). Although articulated 'agriculture for development' narratives (Deininger 2011) raise prospects for macro-level benefits, poor smallholder

buy-in suggest that investments could jeopardise rural livelihoods and lead to dispossession (Amanor 2012; Lunstrum 2016).

Existing evidence of drivers of LaSAIs in SSA are often framed within the global context making national-scale evaluations difficult (Borras et al. 2011). Our study emphasises national and intra-regional dynamics as opposed to international (Cotula 2012), including those under south-south cooperation (Gasparri et al. 2015). Whilst donor and government efforts remain important, this regional participation including less known players such as those from Zimbabwe echoes the significance of intra-regional dynamics in driving agricultural expansion (Hall 2011). In wider Africa, growth in agriculture is, when aligned to smallholder commercialization, broadly viewed as being more effective at reducing poverty than growth elsewhere (Kalibata 2015). Unlike Pedersen's (2016) report from Tanzania, it appears to be the case in Zambia that donors are forcing policy pathways such as those on agro-models and control of funds (Harrison and Chiroro 2016). These visible power relations illuminate whose interests are advanced and implications, but efforts continue to be foisted on weak institutions without a clear strategy for agricultural and rural transformation, as well as smallholder participation (German et al. 2013).

Commercialisation, diversification and biofuels remain compelling factors LaSAIs in Zambia (Vermeulen and Cotula 2010). A resulting investments concentration on commodities such as sugar that often respond to local and regional demand (Hess et al. 2016) has meant that the level of smallholder interaction with these crops remains peripheral (Dubb 2015). Where interaction and integration have occurred, political rhetoric around outgrowers for instance remained oblivious to micro-level experiences such as threats of appropriation of land, water and other assets (Vermeulen and Cotula 2010).

The foreign oriented policy on agriculture subordinated coordination and consensus building on resource governance in public institutions (Peters 2013). The Land Reform Act created opportunities for not only foreign ownership of land but also enhanced influence of various actors in terms of land allocation, access and utilisation (Burnod et al. 2013). Within competing actors, outcomes for LaSAIs in rural areas in particular greatly depend on how traditional authorities shape their negotiations with investors as well as manage divergences with government, but in many instances this has been difficult (Nolte 2014).

Increased attention to land and water, accompanied by public and donor resources has, as a consequence, promoted tensions between and among various public institutions (Burnod et al. 2013). Whilst actors face difficulties in organising and implementing investments, a deficit in inter-sectoral cooperation and coordination is evident (Kalaba et al. 2013), raising the need for enhanced inter-linkages and coordination of efforts. Within SSA, poor stakeholder engagement and the consequences of sectoral approaches to governing inter-linked resources (e.g. water, land) have been reported (see Atela et al. 2016 with respect to Kenya). In Zambia, these elements have heightened sectoral politics and resource control. The claim that the MoA is best suited to control water resources as opposed to MoEWD is manifest of resource-based tensions and could be interpreted as desire to monopolise government/donor resources, raising fears that resulting power struggles and stakes in control of resources might prevent reforms (Faye 2016).

7 Conclusions

LaSAIs situate in varying contexts across SSA. This paper contributed to a more thorough discussion about how investments play-out within the national context and how these are filtered or modified by different actors. The centrality of the public policy in LaSAIs points to prospects of poverty reduction, rural development and agricultural transformation. Our study still invokes the question of whether the national institutional and policy context is sufficient to adapt and coordinate investments. The picture is mixed. The push for large farms continue to exert pressure on agricultural resources and rural livelihoods, but also to the neglect of the institutional relationships and partnerships. LaSAIs consolidate the emergence of a policy that reshapes the national political and institutional context and re-organises land and agricultural dynamics in favour of agribusiness concentration and smallholder commercialisation. Combined with corporate influence, increasing investments ultimately puts pressure on rural resources which raises the need for multi-level institutional strengthening to attach a long-term perspective to land ownership and development. Within ‘agriculture for development’ perspective, government should go beyond the current business to move towards creating genuine spaces for local participation which would provide greater development results for rural populations. Evidently, the relationship between LaSAIs and rural development remains highly contested and complex, despite broad optimism about agribusiness growth. The *a prio*ri case for LaSAIs and rural

development need to be revisited in order to further understand not only how investments ‘touch’ investment destinations, but also sectoral and local experiences that shape livelihoods for the participating rural poor. This should include how agro-industries are structured and organised, conditions and determinants for smallholder involvement.

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Appendix 1: Interviews June 2015 – February 2016.[3]

Interview codes: Z = public institutions; G=research institutions; P=private-sector experts; Q=NGOs; N=farmer organisations; K=donors; and D=district/sub-district.

Code	Position/Institution	Date	Place
Ministries/departments/agencies			
Z1	Snr. Official a – MoA	29.06.15	Lusaka
Z2	Policy Analyst – MoA	04.01.16	
Z3	Coordinator b – MoA	04.01.16	
Z4	Snr. Official – MoL	15.12.15	
Z5	Officer – MoEWD/WARMA	07.01.16	
Z6	Director (Non-Mining Unit) – ZRA	22.12.15	
	Snr. Inspector – ZRA		
Z7	Investment Officer – ZDA	16.16.15	
Z8	Policy Analyst – ZDA	16.06.15	
Z9	Official – MoCTI	11.2015	
Z10	Snr. Investigators (2) – CPCC	18.12.15	
Z11	Snr. Inspector – ZEMA	14.12.15	
Z12	Engineer – MoEWD/WARMA	12.01.16	
Research think-tanks/institutions			
G1	Officer – Centre for Trade Policy&Devpt.	08.01.16	Lusaka
G2	Research Fellow, IAPRI	18.12.15	
G3	Research Fellow, IAPRI	14.06.15	
G4	Professor, UNZA	15.06.15	
Private agricultural experts/consultants			
P1	Agriculture/Sugar Expert – AnChiCon	05.01.16	Lusaka
International/national NGOs			
Q1	Officer – ActionAid	21.12.15	Lusaka

[3] Respondent's names are concealed to guarantee anonymity.

Code	Position/Institution	Date	Place
Q2	Officer – Oxfam	05.01.16	
Q3	Officer – ZLA	10.05.16	
Q4	Officer – CUTS	09.12.15	
Q5	Snr. Official – CSPR	07.01.16	
Farmer-based national bodies/organisations			
N2	Official – ZNFU	04.12.15	
N3	Official – ZNFU	04.12.15	
N4	Economist – ZNFU	15.12.15.	
N5	Officer – Musika	10.12.15	
Multilateral/bilateral institutions/donors			
K1	Official – Finnish Embassy.	18.06.15	Lusaka
K2	Agricultural Expert – AfDB	18.06.15	
K3	Agricultural Specialist – Wold Bank	16.12.15	
K4	Official – EU	10.12.15	
District/sub-district			
D1	Agricultural Officer	11.2015	Zimba
D2	Member of Parliament	11.01.16	Mazabuka
D3	Chief	27.11.16	