

Concept Note

The new national land policy: what does it mean for land, water and food security in Zambia?

Webinar 29 Sep 2021, The Nordic Africa Institute

Background

In May 2021, the Government of the Republic of Zambia officially launched the National Land Policy. This was a milestone given that Zambia had not had a national land policy since its independence in 1964. The objectives of the land policy include *inter alia* the mainstreaming of climate change, natural resources and environmental protection in land administration and management for sustainable development. This policy objective is to be actualized through measures such as (i) ensuring that policies, plans and programmes that relate to land management confirm to prescribed principles and guidelines on environmental protection and conservation (ii) promote the establishment and implementation of integrated land use plans at provincial, district and chiefdom levels, for the preservation of key environmentally sensitive features, customary sites, historic and cultural heritage and (iii) strengthen legislation for the maintenance and enhancement of public and local community access to land along the lakes and rivers and other natural resources.

While it is stated in the National Land Policy that Zambia's dual land tenure systems will be streamlined with its formulation, resulting in positive impacts on the management of natural resources and environmental protection, it is not explicit how this will be achieved. The Lands Act of 1995 recognizes leasehold and customary land tenure systems. Under leasehold tenure, titleholders utilize the land in accordance with national statutory law while under customary tenure systems, local communities have systems for access and utilization of land and other natural resources based on chiefdom wide norms and practices. Both tenure systems have faced challenges of (i) allocation of land on vital aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems due to inadequate enforcement of legislation, which leads to natural resources depletion and environmental degradation (ii) human encroachment into public lands such as protected areas causing habitat destruction and land degradation (c) climate change, which affects land by making it unsuitable for certain land uses due to degradation. Thus, it is anticipated that the new National Lands Policy will enhance management of natural resources management and environmental protection, and address these challenges.

Expected outcome

The Nordic Africa Institute is planning a webinar to discuss the governance of various natural resources in Zambia and implications of the new National Land Policy on their sustainable management. Specifically, the webinar will explore the nexus between land governance and water resources, forest resources, agri-food production and regional planning. Climate change and gender will be integrated as cross cutting themes.

Webinar discussions will explore issues on land rights and the use of water and Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) in customary areas. As customary land tenure is increasingly formalized, what is going to be the future of customary land and water rights among local users? What does that mean for foreign land ownership and large scale agri-investments? Is there mounting pressure for change to leasehold tenure in order to promote agricultural investments? What mediating influence will the increase in climate variation and changed climate context have on land –and water–use and its governance? Although Zambia promulgated the Urban and Regional Planning Act in 2015, which provides for local authorities to jointly (with traditional leaders) plan for land use in customary areas, to what extent has this happened? Has the increased climate variability/change affected agricultural productivity of smallholder farmers resulting in deforestation and internal migration? This webinar aims to discuss on the above-mentioned land, water and food security aspects in light of the new national Land Policy.