



MUMBWABILE YOUTH

POLICY BRIEF

Local Value Addition as a Climate Adaptation Strategy for Smallholder Farmers in Zambia

Evidence from Mwembeshi Area, Chibombo District

Prepared by:

Mumbwabile Youth Multi-Purpose Society

Funding Partner:

Zambia National Commercial Bank (ZANACO)

Research Partners:

Zambia Institute for Policy Analysis and Research (ZIPAR)

Publication Year: 2025

1. Executive Summary

Smallholder farmers in Zambia are increasingly facing economic challenges arising from climate change. Irregular rainfall patterns, prolonged dry spells, and fluctuating agricultural productivity have made rural livelihoods more vulnerable. In addition to these climate-related risks, many farmers struggle to access stable markets that offer fair prices for their agricultural products.

To explore innovative approaches to strengthening farmer resilience, **Mumbwabile Youth Multi-Purpose Society**, with funding from **ZANACO**, implemented a practical research project examining the role of **local value addition in improving farmer income stability and economic resilience**.

The project established a **small livestock processing facility in Mwembeshi area of Chibombo District** and examined how value addition could improve the livelihoods of smallholder farmers producing chickens and goats.

The findings indicate that **local agro-processing initiatives significantly improve farmer income stability, strengthen rural market access, and create employment opportunities within rural communities.**

The evidence suggests that **value chain development should be integrated into national climate adaptation strategies**, particularly those aimed at supporting smallholder farmers.

2. Climate Change and Rural Livelihoods

Agriculture remains the backbone of rural livelihoods in Zambia, employing a large proportion of the population. However, the sector is highly vulnerable to climate variability.

Smallholder farmers in particular are exposed to climate-related risks due to:

- dependence on rain-fed agriculture
- limited access to financial resources
- weak agricultural value chains
- poor market access.

Climate variability reduces agricultural productivity and disrupts farmer income streams. When farmers experience reduced harvests or livestock losses, their ability to generate income declines significantly.

Strengthening **economic resilience within rural agricultural systems** is therefore a key component of effective climate adaptation.

3. Research Approach

The Mwembeshi research initiative examined how **local value addition through livestock processing** can strengthen rural farmer livelihoods.

The research involved:

- establishment of a **small livestock processing facility**
- participation of **smallholder chicken and goat farmers**
- farmer surveys and interviews
- market analysis of livestock value chains
- monitoring of farmer income changes.

The research was conducted between **2023 and 2025** in Mwembeshi area of Chibombo District.

4. Key Findings

4.1 Value Addition Improves Farmer Incomes

Farmers participating in the livestock value chain reported **higher and more stable incomes** when selling processed livestock products compared to selling live animals.

Processing livestock products enabled farmers to capture a greater share of value within the agricultural supply chain.

4.2 Market Access Is a Major Constraint for Farmers

Before the project, many farmers relied on middlemen who controlled access to urban markets and determined livestock prices.

The establishment of the processing facility enabled farmers to access **structured markets**, improving price transparency and market participation.

4.3 Value Addition Strengthens Climate Resilience

Improved income stability helps farmers cope with climate-related shocks such as droughts or reduced crop yields.

Farmers who benefit from stronger market systems are more capable of adapting to climate variability because they have greater financial stability.

4.4 Value Chain Development Supports Rural Employment

The livestock processing facility created new economic opportunities within the community including:

- livestock processing jobs
- product packaging
- transportation and logistics
- small business opportunities linked to the value chain.

This contributed to **local economic development and employment creation**.

4.5 Women and Youth Participation

The initiative also demonstrated that value chain development can promote **inclusive rural development**.

Women and youth farmers participated actively in livestock production and value chain activities, highlighting the potential of value addition initiatives to support gender equality and youth employment.

5. Policy Implications

The findings from the Mwembeshi initiative highlight several important lessons for policymakers.

Climate adaptation strategies should move beyond focusing solely on agricultural production and also strengthen **rural market systems and agricultural value chains**.

Improving market access and supporting value addition initiatives can significantly enhance the economic resilience of smallholder farmers.

6. Policy Recommendations

6.1 Invest in Rural Agro-Processing Infrastructure

Government and development partners should support the development of **small and medium-scale agro-processing facilities in rural areas**.

These facilities can improve market access for farmers while strengthening agricultural value chains.

6.2 Integrate Value Chain Development into Climate Adaptation Policy

National climate adaptation strategies should incorporate **economic resilience approaches**, including agricultural value chain development and rural enterprise promotion.

6.3 Expand Access to Finance for Rural Enterprises

Financial institutions should develop financing programs that support **rural agro-processing enterprises and farmer cooperatives**.

Public-private partnerships can play an important role in expanding rural investment.

6.4 Strengthen Farmer Cooperatives

Supporting farmer cooperatives can help smallholder farmers coordinate production, negotiate better prices, and access larger markets.

6.5 Promote Gender-Inclusive Agricultural Markets

Policies should ensure that **women farmers have equal access to value chains, training programs, and financial services.**

6.6 Support Youth Participation in Agricultural Value Chains

Agricultural value chain development offers opportunities to engage young people in rural enterprise development and employment creation.

Programs aimed at supporting youth entrepreneurship in agriculture should therefore be strengthened.

7. Conclusion

The Mwembeshi research initiative demonstrates that **local value addition can serve as an effective climate adaptation strategy for smallholder farmers.**

By improving market access, increasing farmer incomes, and strengthening rural economic systems, value addition initiatives can enhance the resilience of rural communities facing climate variability.

Integrating agricultural value chain development into climate adaptation policies represents an important opportunity for promoting sustainable rural development in Zambia.

Mumbwabile Youth Multi-Purpose Society
Lusaka, Zambia

Email: info@mumbwabileyouthsociety.com

Website: <https://mumbwabileyouthsociety.com/>

Cybia Mwelemuka



MUMBWABILE YOUTH