

The role of Sustainable Consumption in Promoting Sustainable Production and Land Management

Executive Summary

Solidaridad Network Foundation has partnered with a number of organisations including the Consumer Unity and Trust Society (CUTS) in Zambia to undertake a project called the Sustainable Landscape Management (SLM) Programme. This project seeks to catalyze and maintain collective action for improved sustainable landscape management in Mazabuka District in the Lower Kafue Sub Basin.

The pressure on the land and water resources in the Mazabuka district is increasingly growing. The projected expansion of Mazabuka town and Zambia Sugar require land for agriculture and urban development, as well as a higher off take of the water resource. The main objective of the Sustainable Land Management Programme, therefore, is to contribute to the long-term sustainable management of the Mazabuka Landscape in the LKSB. The specific objectives are:

1. To create and consolidate a multi-stakeholder platform for promoting SLM
2. To strengthen the capacity of CSOs to lobby and advocate for SLM
3. To develop frameworks for attracting long term investments in landscape management
4. To contribute to improved governance of Mazabuka and the LKSB landscape by 2020.

The expected impact of the project is improved governance of the landscape, which will lead to sustainable development in Mazabuka and the LKSB. To this end CUTS has partnered with Solidaridad to look at how promoting sustainable consumption can help achieve this aim. The Sustainable Landscapes Management Project will be focusing on the sustainable production of five products, namely: fruits and vegetables, soya, aquaculture, sugar and livestock.

This policy brief looks at some of the benefits and challenges of promoting sustainable consumption, examples of where this has worked, and concludes with a list of policy recommendations.

Introduction

As Zambia has continued to grow over the past 60 years, economic activity, production and manufacturing have increased. As the country has gained economic growth, however, its achievements and changes have increasingly begun to come at a significant cost to the environment.

Increasing demands for energy, food, water and other resources in the world have resulted in resource depletion, pollution, environmental degradation and exacerbation of climate change, pushing the earth towards its environmental limits. With humans now consuming more resources than ever before, the current patterns of development across the region and the world over are not sustainable. The global population is expected to rise to 9 billion by 2050¹ and the global middle class is also expected to triple by 2030. This rise in global consumption, therefore, puts unsustainable and increasing stress on the environment and as such, 60% of the earth's ecosystem services have been degraded in the past 50 years. Human well being however does not necessarily rely on high levels of consumption.

One of the key elements for achieving sustainable development is the transition towards sustainable consumption and production. This need was first highlighted at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 and was recently reiterated in the outcomes of the Rio +20 summit.²

Sustainable production and land management is about fulfilling the needs of all while using less resources, including energy and water and producing less waste and pollution.³ It is essential for improving the lives of

¹WBCSD, *Sustainable Consumption Facts and Trends*, http://www.saipatform.org/uploads/Modules/Library/WBCSD_Sustainable_Consumption_web.pdf

² UNESCO, *The Rio Declaration On Environment and Development (1992)*, (Rio de Janeiro: UNESCO, 1992), http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/RIO_E.PDF

³ UNEP, *Sustainable Consumption and Production: A Handbook for Policy Makers With cases from Asia and the Pacific*, http://www.switch-asia.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/RPSC/policy-dialogue/scp-in-asia/SCP-Manual_low-resolution_.pdf

the region's poorest people particularly those who depend directly on the natural resources provided by their environment. It can lead to an improved quality of life and greater employment opportunities complimenting poverty reduction strategies.

Sustainable production and land management cuts across many different sectors and requires the engagement of numerous stakeholders. It requires collaboration between multiple areas and levels within government to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate successful sustainable consumption policies. It requires policy to not just improve production, but also to support consumers to move towards sustainable consumption choices. Therefore everyone in society has a role to play in this transition including governments, educators, the private sector and each and every consumer.⁴

The Importance of Sustainable Production and Land Management in Mazabuka and the Lower Kafue Sub-Basin

The Lower Kafue Sub-Basin (LKSB) comprises the area from the Itezhi-Tezhi Dam to the confluence with the Zambezi River which is where Mazabuka District is located. In addition to the pressure that development has had on land and water resources in the Mazabuka District, climate change will most likely cause higher temperatures which will result in increasing evapotranspiration, and reducing water volumes in the already stressed Kafue River.

Unless coordinated action is taken, the quality and quantity of water and land resources in the Lower Kafue Sub-Basin (LKSB) will continue to lessen and have major consequences for domestic and industrial sectors.

Given that the Mazabuka District is one of the most productive districts in Zambia in terms of agriculture, and is highly dependent on this water resource, there is an urgent need for the Mazabuka district to ensure the sustainable management of its natural resources.

This situation will have a great impact on water and food security in the basin, thereby affecting the

sustainability of the livelihoods of those who depend on the natural resources. In addition to the residents of Mazabuka, Lusaka residents are also at risk of suffering the consequences of this climatic variation. Food produced in the LKSB is largely consumed in Lusaka and 46 percent of Lusaka's water supply is supplied by Kafue River.⁵

What is sustainable consumption?

While substantial environmental impacts from food occur in the production phase (agriculture, food processing), households influence these impacts through their dietary choices and habits. This consequently affects the environment through food-related energy consumption and waste generation.⁶

Promoting sustainable consumption is important to limit negative environmental and social externalities as well as to provide markets for sustainable products. This can come in different forms such as using communication campaigns, education, voluntary labelling and corporate reporting.⁷

Information and awareness raising among consumers through public communications campaigns are commonly used in OECD countries to promote sustainable consumption. In Austria for instance, there has been a yearly Sustainability Weeks event called *Das bringt's Nachhaltig* for the past 13 years, where thousands of retailers throughout the country promote and have special offers on organic, fair trade, and locally made products.⁸

In Australia, the National Youth Affairs Research Scheme (NYARS) sponsored Sustainable Consumption: Young Australians as Agents of Change which enumerated techniques to empower students to change their consumption patterns and act as catalysts for more sustainable lifestyles in the wider community. Additionally, in Germany, the Federal Environment Agency sponsored a consumer organization to build a virtual platform on a broad range of labelling activities in Germany and Europe,

⁴ UNEP, *Sustainable Consumption and Production: A Handbook for Policy Makers With cases from Asia and the Pacific*, http://www.switch-asia.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/RPSC/policy-dialogue/scp-in-asia/SCP-Manual_low-resolution_.pdf

⁵ World Wide Fund, *Kafue Flats, Zambia: Water In The Economy*, (WWF, 2016), http://awsassets.panda.org/downloads/zambia_policy_brief_general.pdf

⁶ UN, *Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns*, <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-consumption-production/>

⁷ OECD, *Promoting Sustainable Consumption*, (OECD, 2008), <https://www.oecd.org/greengrowth/40317373.pdf>

⁸ OECD, *Promoting Sustainable Consumption*, (OECD, 2008), <https://www.oecd.org/greengrowth/40317373.pdf>

where consumers can obtain updated information on over 300 eco-labels and the certification systems behind every label.

Corporate sustainability reporting is also used by companies to inform consumers of their social and environmental values and practices beyond the sustainability characteristics of individual products, which are usually covered by labelling. Such information disclosure is now one of the main mechanisms by which consumers are informed of the environmental and social conditions under which products have been produced.⁹

Benefits and Challenges

Sustainable consumption is beneficial because it helps stakeholders desist from practices that bring about negative environmental impacts from unsustainable farming practices. These include¹⁰:

- Land conversion & habitat loss
- Wasteful water consumption
- Soil erosion and degradation
- Pollution
- Climate change
- Genetic erosion

Sustainable consumption that creates a demand for sustainable production therefore can contribute to the reversal of the negative impacts of unsustainable farming. Consumers are increasingly becoming concerned with environmental, social and economic issues, and increasingly willing to act on those concerns. However, their willingness can at times not translate into sustainable consumer behavior because of a variety of factors. These are often: availability, affordability, convenience, product performance, conflicting priorities, skepticism and force of habit.

Policy Recommendations:

Current efforts towards promoting sustainable production and land management under the 'Mazabuka Sustainable Landscapes Management Program' can be buttressed if we were able to increase consumer demand for sustainably produced goods,

particularly in Lusaka, which presents the largest market for the goods produced in the LKSB. Governments and policy-makers at all levels have a vital role to play in creating the right legal, fiscal and cultural environment for sustainable Consumption and Production. Against this background we make the following recommendations:

- 1.** Integrate sustainable production and consumption into the educational curriculum in Zambia
- 2.** Include a section on sustainable production and sustainable land management in the National Agriculture Policy as well as the Competition and Consumer Protection Act.
- 3.** Develop standards and labels for sustainably produced goods and services through the Zambia Bureau of Standards should develop.

Conclusion

Sustainable consumption and production aims at "doing more and better with less", increasing net welfare gains from economic activities by reducing resource use, degradation and pollution along the whole lifecycle, while increasing quality of life. This can be achieved if we involve different stakeholders, including businesses, consumers, policy makers, researchers, scientists, retailers, media, and development cooperation agencies, among others in these efforts.

⁹ OECD, Promoting Sustainable Consumption, (OECD, 2008),

<https://www.oecd.org/greengrowth/40317373.pdf>

¹⁰ WWF Environmental Impacts of Farming

http://www.panda.org/what_we_do/footprint/agriculture/impacts/

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