

In the Midst of Global Anti-Tobacco Farming and Smoking Campaigns: How Resilient and Sustainable are the Tobacco Farming Co-operatives in Southern Africa?

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Abstract

Cognizant of the harms registered through tobacco farming and consequently smoking on the environment and human health, the world is witnessing campaigns against both tobacco farming and smoking. These campaigns are expected to affect the tobacco sub-sector, which contributes to the economies of the leading tobacco-producing countries, namely Zimbabwe, Zambia, Tanzania, Malawi, and Mozambique. The campaigns have in some countries been followed by governments' partial engagement or total disengagement from providing inputs, credit, extension services, and price support. To protect this subsector, tobacco farmers, inter alia, had to engage agricultural and marketing cooperative societies (AMCOS). However, the extent to which AMCOS engagement by farmers has been realized is empirically unknown. Amid these campaigns, understanding how resilient and sustainable tobacco cooperatives have been, remains imperative. Resilience building supports people and institutions in adapting to new circumstances, hence sustainability. This article analyses the resilience and sustainability of Tobacco co-operatives using a documentary research method. In this article, resilience has been analyzed based on (i) networks, (ii) innovation, and, (iii) the role of the state. Varied degrees of government support to the tobacco sub-sector have been identified. Contract farming has been exploited to fill the gap where the minimal role of the state has been registered. Despite the global anti-smoking campaigns, tobacco production is on the increase in southern Africa. Resilience and sustainability have been observed to vary country-wise. Due to tobacco's economic value in these countries, the campaigns cannot bear significant positive results in the absence of alternatives to tobacco farming.

Keywords: Anti-Tobacco campaigns, resilience, sustainability, contract farming, Tobacco Farming Co-operatives

Introduction

Undeniably, tobacco farming and its products, including cigarettes have been globally shouldering significant socio-economic aspects. Notably, innumerable countries' economies have been prospering from tobacco farming and tobacco use. Despite that, the harm that tobacco farming and use do to health is irrefutable, in this context, tobacco remains an essential public health issue, significantly causing preventable illnesses and death globally (Pengpid & Peltzer, 2020; Salti *et al*, 2015; Munthali & Xuelian, 2020).

Against this background, the world has been witnessing fierce anti-tobacco farming and smoking campaigns. Notwithstanding that, tobacco farming is reported to register an increase in terms of both tobacco leaf cultivation and production (Drope, 2018; WHO, 2021). This has been observed despite the global initiatives to control production due to its reported harmful aspects, these initiatives have been going hand in hand with machining alternatives for tobacco workers, farmers and sellers under the implementation of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC),

(WHO, 2021). The sub-Saharan region in Africa is particularly reported to have tobacco farming booming (Paul, 2021; WHO, 2021; Appau & Drope, 2019). The increase in tobacco leaf cultivation and production is reported to be associated with forming tobacco co-operatives in Southern Africa, an area which is reported to hold a significant share of tobacco leaf cultivation and production. Zimbabwe, Zambia, Tanzania, Malawi, and Mozambique are amongst the countries reported at the forefront in terms of tobacco production. The literature, (Makoka *et al.*, 2017; Magati, *et al.*, 2019; Gilmore, *et al.*, 2015) though seems to paint a very beautiful picture of the cultivation and production of tobacco, the story on the ground has never been that rosy. The subsector is reported to have been constantly attacked by global campaigns against tobacco use; on the other hand, the co-operatives themselves seem to lack leadership skills. But also, it has been observed that some governments have recently even decided to less involve themselves if not disengage from providing inputs, credit, extension services, and price supports to these cooperatives. It is in this context that how resilient and sustainable the tobacco cooperatives have been in connection to tobacco production in the midst of anti-tobacco farming and smoking necessitates a thorough empirical analysis.

Tobacco farming is reported to negatively impact the environment on numerous fronts, including, but not limited to, enormous use of water, extensive deforestation, and contamination of both water and air systems (WHO, 2017; Mishra *et al.*, 2012). According to The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, (2014); smoking, second-hand smoke inclusive, has always been associated with disease and disability as it harms almost every organ of a human being. Globally, a sizeable number of people have been living with a disease resulting from smoking. Smoking has been a cause of diseases as such cancer, stroke and heart disease, diabetes, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and lung diseases. Smoking also has been confirmed to escalate the risk for certain eye diseases, tuberculosis, and immune system problems, specifically rheumatoid arthritis (Mishra *et al.*, 2012).

Tobacco farming and smoking of cigarettes are linked to numerous negative economic, health and social consequences which normally have effects on both smokers and non-smokers at differing magnitudes (Madanhire, & Mbohwa, 2019). The negative consequences emanating from both tobacco farming and smoking have seen global campaigns against tobacco farming and smoking intensify. The world as responding to the global tobacco epidemic witnessed the introduction of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) in 2005. (WHO FCTC, 2021). This is a framework outlining how countries can cooperate on tobacco-related actions and policies. The framework aims to “protect people in all countries from the health, social, environmental and economic effects of tobacco”. As proposed in WHO FCTC, (2021), Taxation has also been used by health and finance authorities as a form of tobacco control, an approach which has afforded to register a higher degree of success.

The global campaigns against tobacco farming and use have been very stiff, among others, the global theme for the 2023 World No Tobacco Day (WNTD) celebration which is pioneered by WHO and other public health champions is: “We need food, not tobacco”. This is coming in at a time when tobacco farming is seen to propel food insecurity in some countries and also in the context of little awareness of the impact of tobacco farming on the economy, health and the environment. The aim of the campaign is to raise awareness of what crops are considered to stand as alternatives to tobacco. In this context, tobacco farmers are encouraged to grow nutritious and sustainable crops. The 2023 WNTD also aims at exposing the efforts of the tobacco industry in interfering with endeavours in substituting tobacco farming with sustainable crops on the understanding that the tobacco subsector has a serious contribution to the global food crisis (WHO, 2023). The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, (2014) claims that when awareness amongst people of the health impacts of using tobacco is enhanced it is likely to do well for both global health and well-being. This is well connected to getting closer to the reduction of death of almost a billion

people from the consequences of smoking or ingesting tobacco and chewing. Similarly, such advocacy is likely not only to lead to the reduction of the health impacts of tobacco but also in challenging other impacts from tobacco on equality, education, the environment and economic growth, and— whose effects have been registered in several countries' development.

The intensity of anti-tobacco farming and smoking campaigns seems to have been further heightened by the UN Sustainable Development Goals, under Target (3A). The inclusion of this target follows an observation that tobacco and its products pose a noteworthy problem towards sustainable global development. Under Goal 3 – the intention is to further intensify tobacco control through “*Strengthening the implementation of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control in all countries, as appropriate Means of implementation for the targets*”. Globally, the reduction of tobacco use is seen in the context of playing a key role towards efforts to attain the SDG target in a reduction of premature deaths associated with non-communicable diseases (NCDs) by one third comes 2030. Leave alone SDG 3, many other SDGs out of the 17 goals have been observed to have direct or indirect relation to tobacco control. Notably, the most related ones are Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere. Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries. Goal 12: Ensure sustainable production and consumption patterns. Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

It should be however noted that the same tobacco has been observed to serve certain economic purposes in countries involved in tobacco farming hence the need to protect the tobacco industry. Some of these are found in developing countries whose economies have been strongly depending on tobacco as a cash crop. These countries including Zimbabwe seem to have in place some mechanisms to protect the industry. To quote Lown *et al* (2016) “*Tobacco is our industry and we must support it*”: In such countries, issues of resilience and sustainability with regard to the tobacco sector are regarded

as essential. In these countries in order to build resilience and sustainability, tobacco farmers in their quest to walk away from poverty since time immemorial have been working jointly through agricultural and marketing cooperative societies (AMCOS). (Muhanga and Mangasini, 2021).

Obviously, resilience building provides people and institutions with support when dealing with changes and adapting to new circumstances hence achieving sustainability (Vicari & Borda-Rodriguez, 2014). Innumerable factors have been identified that impact cooperative resilience, the most important according to Vicari and Borda-Rodriguez, (2014:2) are:- “(i) membership, (ii) collective skills, (iii) networks, (iv) innovation, and, (v) role of the state”. Co-operatives that are capable of dealing with shocks and limitations normally have been exhibiting these factors more frequently. In order to comprehend the degree to which co-operatives have coped and addressed their challenges and limitations this analysis focused on networking, innovation and the role of the state.

This article analyses the resilience and sustainability of Tobacco Co-Operatives in Tanzania, Malawi and Zimbabwe, as little is empirically known and documented on how resilient and sustainable these co-operatives have been towards the promotion of tobacco farming despite the anti-tobacco farming and smoking.

Materials and Methods

This review employed a documentary analysis (documentary research method) to collect information which was relevant to this article. The documentary method connotes a desk review study which allows researchers to categorize, examine, and interpret written publications; it examines documents comprising information that are relevant to the subject under investigation (Muhanga & Malungo, 2017).

The search strategy for this study employed keywords or search terms such as “tobacco co-operatives, co-operatives in Africa, co-operative subsector in Tanzania, Malawi, and Zimbabwe, Tobacco Co-ops in Africa, contract farming, resilience and sustainability, cooperative resilience and sustainability, anti-

tobacco farming, anti-tobacco smoking”. The documents which were relevant to this review were selected and underwent quality assessment and data extraction. The documents that were reviewed included those reported along with the keywords relevant to this study.

In this article, resilience has been analyzed based on (iii) networks, (iv) innovation, and, (v) the role of the state. Borda-Rodriguez & Vicari, (2014:1) argue that “*heavy government interference, lack of leadership and low levels of skills are some of the factors that have for decades weakened and in some cases caused the failure of co-operatives in Africa*”.

Results

A total of 1345 publications were identified from the search, 791 publications qualified for abstract screening, and the other 530 full-texts were screened for eligibility. It was 41 articles that reflected the theme of this review. The study found Resilience building has been supporting people and cooperative societies in the tobacco sub-sector in adapting to new circumstances, hence sustainability. This article has analysed the resilience and sustainability of Tobacco co-operatives in southern Africa. In this article, it has been identified how resilient the cooperatives have been based on (i) networks, (ii) innovation, and, (iii) the role of the state. Varied degrees of government support to the tobacco sub-sector have been identified. It has been found that contract farming has been exploited to fill the gap where the minimal role of the state has been registered. Despite the global anti-smoking campaigns, tobacco production is on the increase in southern Africa. Resilience and sustainability have been observed to vary country-wise.

Discussion

Co-operatives in Africa: An Overview

Recently, co-operatives have been viewed with the potential towards fostering socio-economic development hence walking communities away from poverty (FAO, 2012; Münkner, 2012; Vicari & De Muro, 2012). It is in this context that, national and international organisations have developed considerable interest in comprehending the renaissance exhibited by co-operatives in the least developed

part of the world, Africa in particular. This is a region where co-operatives have been reported to have undergone periods of mismanagement, interference by governments and some signs of failure (Develtere *et al.*, 2008). Despite that, co-operatives are reported to stand as strategic players towards inclusive and sustainable development in countries in Africa (Develtere, *et al.*, 2008). Obviously, for co-operatives to contribute effectively towards poverty reduction there is a need for co-operatives to develop as businesses which are sustainable and capable of surviving in challenging environments, which are sometimes faced by economic, political, social, and climate crises. The global anti-tobacco farming and smoking campaigns have notably considered both as a challenge and threat towards tobacco farming and consequently tobacco co-operatives, particularly amongst the lead tobacco-producing countries of Zimbabwe, Zambia, Tanzania, Malawi and Mozambique.

Borda-Rodriguez & Vicari, (2014:1) argue that “*heavy government interference, lack of leadership and low levels of skills are some of the factors that have for decades weakened and in some cases caused the failure of co-operatives in Africa*”. But later, these cooperatives, particularly the tobacco cooperatives, were at some point observed to have been abandoned by the governments in terms of provision of inputs, credit, extension services, and price supports for numerous reasons. It can however be observed that co-operatives in Africa, including the tobacco co-operatives, are driving towards a noteworthy renaissance. To quote Pollet (2009: 1) “*Co-operatives in Africa are about to enter a phase of renaissance, but need a favourable legal and institutional environment, greater visibility, a stronger voice, further diversification, improved governance, better management, solid horizontal networks and strong vertical structures, in order to make this a reality*”. It is worth noting that for tobacco cooperatives the “noteworthy renaissance” that these cooperatives are heading to, leaves a lot of questions that need answers. This renaissance is seen as hard to attain in the context of the ongoing global anti-smoking campaigns.

In the advent of liberalization, particularly around the 1990s, Wanyama, (2013) reports

that cooperatives in Africa were seen to have developed as “genuine member-controlled and business-oriented organisations” this afforded to improve the welfare of the vulnerable people. The situation with respect to co-operatives in Africa at that time presented a “mixed-picture in terms of performance” (Francesconi & Wouterse, 2011), this is certainly that there are success stories, but failure too. It is in this context that a considerable understanding in terms of what enables tobacco co-operatives to survive in the face of global anti-smoking campaigns remains imperative.

Tobacco Farming, and Tobacco Co-operatives in Southern Africa: A Situational Analysis

Tobacco farmers, just like any other farmers, have been organizing themselves into co-operatives, inter alia, to meet their common social, cultural, and economic needs and aspirations. These include the need to improve households’ incomes hence fulfilling farmers’ quest to walk away from poverty through agricultural and marketing co-operatives societies (AMCOS) (Mhembwe, & Dube, 2017; Francesconi & Wouterse, 2011). However, cooperative presence in Tanzania, Malawi and Zimbabwe, generally is reported by Pollet, (2009) to be significant, though poorly documented.

It is in the records that, globally, between 2012 and 2018, the area under tobacco cultivation decreased by 15.66 per cent; but it was reported to increase by 3.40 per cent in Africa. In the same period, globally there was a decrease in tobacco leaf production by 13.9%; but Africa recorded an increase by 10.6 % (Appau, *et al.*, 2019; Paul, 2021). The leading tobacco leaf-growing country in Africa is Zimbabwe (producing 25.9 % of Africa’s output), followed by Zambia which produces 16.4%, then Tanzania whose production stands at 14.4 %. The other tobacco leaf-growing countries are Malawi and Mozambique whose production stands at 13.3% and 12.9% respectively (Muhanga & Mangasini, 2021).

Due to innumerable challenges facing tobacco farming and tobacco co-operatives in Africa in general (Francesconi & Wouterse, 2011; Borda-Rodriguez and Vicari, 2014;

Pollet, 2009), co-operatives have been striving to emerge as resilient socioeconomic organisations. There are chances that the more co-operatives are likely to flourish as resilient socioeconomic organisations, the higher the chances of contributing towards sustainable and inclusive development. Borda-Rodriguez and Vicari, (2014:4) claim that resilience connotes “an organisational ability to develop some degree of adaptive capacity, that is, the ability to learn and adequately respond to crises”.

Tobacco farmers have been observed to involve themselves in CF arrangements through their AMCOS with an expectation that this will result in resilience and sustainability (Oya, 2012). The tobacco subsector is reported to benefit from contract farming, this is very particular when the need for substituting the state was obvious after neoliberal reforms in the agrarian sector in Africa. This is when the states disengaged themselves from providing inputs, extension services, credit, and price support. It is worthwhile to note that this is observed to mark the emergence of the private firms’ initiatives to fill the same roles in an efficient manner through contract farming.

Tobacco Farming, Tobacco Co-operatives & Contract Farming in Tanzania

Tobacco has remained one of the most important export crops in Tanzania, while the country accounts for only 0.2 per cent of the world’s tobacco production, its production has been increasing steadily. The contribution of tobacco to the total export earnings from traditional export crops in Tanzania increased from 12.5% in 2005/06 to 37.9% in the 2011/12 season, and for three years (2009/10 – 2011/12) tobacco has been a leading export crop in the country. Over 85 per cent of tobacco grown in Tanzania is exported, earning the country an average of US \$ 38 million per season. Records from the Tanzania Tobacco Board (TTB) indicate that tobacco contributes significantly to employment on farms and in processing industries. The sector provides employment for more than 150,000 households in the production sector and more than 40,000 in processing. The contract farming models in the tobacco industry in Tanzania have the potential to transform the

farming sector, and if adopted by investors in other export crops it would contribute significantly to reducing social tensions between smallholder farmers and investors. Unlike many other sectors, the investors do not compete with farmers for land and production, which is a contentious issue at the moment. Instead, investors in the tobacco industry provide technology and a market for farm produce on a contract farming basis (Mayuya, 2013; Bank of Tanzania 2018; Ndomba 2018).

Despite the economic benefits of tobacco, the negative impacts of its production on the communities and individual households involved in the production process have been widely documented (Kidane *et al.*, 2015). Apart from environmental destruction and health hazards, the main concern is an increase in impoverishment among families engaged in the production of tobacco. Such impoverishment is related to poor input (fertilizer) procurement and distribution systems which have resulted in mounting debts on Primary Farmer Co-operative Societies. The debts are passed on to producers in the form of low producer prices and delayed payments.

Tobacco Farming, Tobacco Co-operatives and Contract Farming in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe is reported amongst the countries leading in growing and exporting tobacco in the world, it ranks third largest in terms of tobacco production with the USA and Brazil at the front. Xinhua (2016) reports that Zimbabwe is the leading country in tobacco cultivation in Africa, it also ranks 6th globally, where Virginia flue-cured, burley and oriental tobacco are the types of tobacco grown. It is estimated that about 95% of tobacco grown in Zimbabwe is flue-cured tobacco, which is famous due to its flavour.

Tobacco is reported to have a significant contribution to Zimbabwe's economy. It is in the records that by the year 2017, this crop contributed 11% of the country's GDP, also it had 3 million out of the 16 million people in Zimbabwe whose livelihoods depended on tobacco cultivation (Xinhua, 2018). It is due to low labour costs and high yields that Zimbabwe has become the leading producer of quality tobacco compared to Brazil and the USA. It

is estimated that almost half of Zimbabwe's tobacco crop has been exported to the European Union. Unlike Tanzania, Zimbabwe's tobacco production is largely dominated by Large-scale commercial farmers (LSCF). LSCFs use modern machinery, overhead and drip-line irrigation, and also provide permanent wage labour. The involvement of smallholder farmers in the tobacco sector in Zimbabwe is very marginal compared to LSCFs. Tobacco inputs are supplied by buyers on credit to farmers. In Zimbabwe, tobacco is sold via tobacco auction floors. Auctioning tobacco in Zimbabwe dates back to the 1950s.

It is around the 1990s that numerous companies began to involve themselves in contract farming in Zimbabwe. Before that, the state was mainly responsible for regulating the marketing of agricultural products and this was made possible by various statutory marketing boards. In 1992, through the World Bank's supported Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP), the government in Zimbabwe embarked on the deregulation of agricultural marketing. It was during this time that liberalization programmes for the key agricultural products began. This has been noted to have enlarged opportunities for companies to involve themselves in contract farming. Currently, innumerable companies are into contract farming in Zimbabwe involving small-scale farmers growing more than 10 crops, tobacco inclusive.

According to Poulton & Hanyani-Mlambo, (2009), contract farming in Zimbabwe has been encouraged and supported by the state and several other agencies. This is reported to stand as the basis of a highly successful expansion of smallholder cotton farming from the 1980s (Scoones, *et al.*, 2016). Literature (Moyo, 2014) documents on the importance of tobacco production and the role of contract farming, in the post-land reform era since 2000 has been identified from the literature.

Tobacco Farming, Tobacco Co-operatives, and Contract Farming in Malawi

Tobacco farming, notably, has a long history in Malawi way back to the early 1920s (Prowse, 2013). Although, it was only towards

the late 1970s that a stable and rapid increase in production was seen. It was observed that Tobacco production was firmly under the control of the government up to 1989, whereby producers of tobacco were required to acquire a license from the Tobacco Control Commission (TCC). It was only landowners and estates met the eligibility criteria towards application for the production license. Additionally, for growers to sell tobacco leaves directly on the auction floor were required to produce at a certain scale (Nsiku & Botha, 2007). Essentially this arrangement excluded a lot of small-scale farmers and also those who had rented land from tobacco production. It was in the year Malawi embarked on a structural adjustment program with the assistance of the World Bank and the IMF designed to re-establish financial stability and set the basis for sustainable economic growth. The SAPs aimed among others at liberalizing the economy and facilitating the development of the private sector. In the agricultural sector, reforms under the SAPs included allowing smallholder farmers to produce cash crops and liberalizing the marketing of agricultural outputs and inputs. These measures contributed greatly to the rapid expansion of tobacco production since 1995. Malawi is ranked among the top 15 tobacco-producing countries in the world.

Tobacco in Malawi is produced in both large estates, concentrated in the central plateaus of the country, and in small landholdings throughout the country. These smaller farms average about 2.5 acres (10,000 m²), about a third of the size of small tobacco-producing farms in the United States. For small farms with less than 1 acre (4,000 m²) in tobacco cultivation, four out of five farms have a negative income. The other farms have an average agricultural income of MK 3,000 or about 20 US dollars 28.

Much of Malawi's tobacco is sold through global leaf processing companies Universal Leaf Corporation and Alliance One International. The primary buyers of Malawian tobacco are Philip Morris International and British American Tobacco. Tobacco growers in Malawi have three options for selling their products. Tobacco growers can sell their products on auction floors through tobacco clubs. The unit price is higher when sold at auction, but producers must have at

least 100 kilograms. Growers can also sell their tobacco directly to the Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation (ADMARC) though this practice fell out of favour after economic liberalization in the early 1990s.

In Malawi, tobacco production by smallholder farmers has passed through various production approaches including individual small-scale producers selling to intermediate buyers who were allowed by Law to auction the tobacco; tobacco production clubs' system which involves several smallholders working collectively to produce and sell tobacco under contract farming arrangement.

In this partnership, farmers are provided with a comprehensive input package, covering maize and tobacco. The growers are provided with capital to employ adult labour and maize ration to support their food requirements. The companies provide technical expertise to supervise and manage the enterprise and an administration team to manage the financial investment and oversee loan repayment. Both farmers and Companies benefit from the partnership. Companies are assured of increased high-quality flue-cured tobacco (production actually doubled) and loans are fully recovered. The growers benefit from higher yields and greater profits.

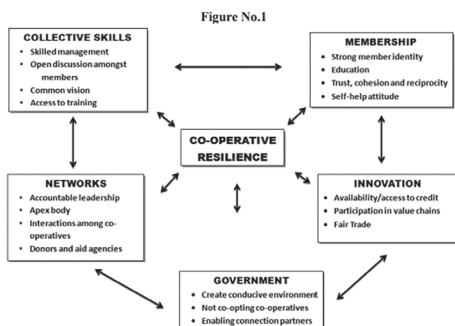
Contract Farming Towards Resilience and Sustainability of Co-operatives: Theoretical Issues

Organisational resilience can be identified in terms of an organisation's ability to develop a set of dynamic capabilities in order to adjust to shocks, mitigate their effects and cope with the consequences while simultaneously taking advantage of opportunities emerging from a crisis (Limnios & Mazzarol, 2011). The literature presents both positive and negative aspects in connection with contract farming (Warning & Hoo, 2000). The tobacco subsector has been among the sectors which are reported to have been benefiting from contract farming. It is obvious that contract farming has the potential to substitute for the state in the wake of neoliberal reforms in the agrarian sector. Apparently, as the state disengages from the provision of inputs, extension services, credit,

and price supports, private firms can enter to fill the same roles and are expected to do it more efficiently.

By applying the principles of New Institutional Economics, Warning & Hoo (2000) assert that contract-farming schemes can impact the distribution of income. It is in this view that contract farming schemes are regarded as the principal-agent game in which a firm (the principal) works with a grower (the agent) to produce a crop. The firm chooses growers with whom it would like to contract and sets the contract terms.

The ability to withstand and cope with shocks is generally described as resilience (Innes and Booder, 2010:205). Organisational resilience can be identified in terms of organisation's ability to develop a set of dynamic capabilities in order to adjust to shocks, mitigate their effects and cope with the consequences while simultaneously taking advantage of opportunities emerging from a crisis (McManus, 2008; Limnios and Mazzarol, 2011).



The framework in Figure 1 indicates that resilience is rooted in five key factors, 1) membership, 2) collective skills, 3) networks, 4) innovation and 5) role of the state. The absence or presence of these factors can either weaken or trigger resilience.

Networks

It is considered that the capability to set up networks as a critical factor towards co-operatives' success. Networks among others are essential since they are potential to facilitate access to resources and knowledge. Those networks that are considered horizontal involve gathering homogeneous co-operatives in

unions. The intention is to: (i) fulfil contracts; (ii) intensify bargaining and marketing power; (iii) provide services to primary co-operative members; (iv) share opportunities and risks. On the hand, vertical networks are those established among co-operatives in the same supply chain but more often with other market players and external agents. Münkner (2012:54) stresses the importance of 'knowledge sharing' among local co-operators and external actors in order to spread new knowledge and enable members 'to have a better understanding of the causes and effects of change, of the ways and means to cope with changes, of better use of available resources and how to mobilise additional resources.' The third type of network can be described as a network of networks (i.e. co-operative umbrellas, peak or apex organisations). Their main tasks range from co-operative development to representing co-operatives with government and other institutions, from lobbying to advocating.

Innovation

In the context of organisations, innovation is concerned with positive changes in productivity, quality, competitiveness, and improved expertise. Innovation enables organisations to improve their technological and economic performance. At the same time, innovation relies on an organisation's capacity to develop adaptive capacities (an organisation's ability to learn and respond to shocks) (Alharbi, *et al.*, 2019). In the cooperative context, innovation can also be driven by the availability and access to credit (i.e. loans) prices and competitive pressures from commodity value chains. Innovation requires the interaction of a number of actors (i.e. government, private companies and development agents), such interactions are particularly important in developing countries where co-operatives have little resources and barely interact with private enterprises across national or international markets.

Role of the Government

A crucial role in developing co-operative resilience is envisaged by the state. It is broadly recognised that in much of the developing world, co-operatives have been managed by governments that have barely empowered

cooperative members. However, for cooperative movements to autonomously flourish and build up their resilience, governments have a great role to play in providing an 'enabling environment'. Some of the factors that can trigger an enabling environment include an economic, political and legal system which recognises co-operatives as autonomous private member-owned forms of business. A cooperative development policy, drawn up in the spirit of internationally identified guidelines An infrastructure environment which can facilitate cooperative activities, from communications to logistics, from transports to information and extension services (Münkner, 2012).

Resilience and Sustainability of Co-operatives in Tanzania, Zimbabwe, and Malawi

Globally, it has been observed that there has been a shift in terms of tobacco cultivation. Africa has been regarded as being the new site for tobacco farming due to innumerable factors, inter alia, including an encouraging regulatory environment, also a rising demand for tobacco. The WHO (2019) reports that the prevalence of use of tobacco between 2000-2025 has been rising, pointing out specifically to the tobacco users under the WHO African Region with a notable estimated increase from 64 million to 73 million amongst adult users covering the period between 2000 to 2018. This is contrary to what has been observed in the same period of time globally, where a decline in tobacco users has been registered, notably from 1397 million to 1337 million. As a matter of comparison, tobacco use in the African Region is relatively less than in other regions, though an increase is being registered in numerous countries in Africa resulting from aggressive marketing strategies by the tobacco industry (WHO, 2021).

Tobacco co-operatives in Tanzania, Zimbabwe, and Malawi have all been enjoying favourable regulatory environments. This signifies that there is significant support that these co-operatives have been receiving from the state.

Malawian-co-operatives have been observed to display a certain degree of resilience, particularly, these co-operatives have managed to both cope with challenges also

create innovative means to deal with constraints. It should be kept in mind that, it is the ability of a particular co-operative to keep pace with core functions at the same time coping with shocks and stresses that tells how resilient it is. This connects very well to the ability of a cooperative to develop adaptive capacity.

This reveals the fact that unions have a key role to play towards the development of resilience in a co-operative. There is a provision of a central hub which facilitates the identification of challenges and limitations, the development of strategies also the translation of ideas and plans into action. Union leaders and managers have always been considered to have the potential to strengthen based on five factors for resilience including women's inclusion and promotion. The unions stand a crucial chance in addressing the limits encountered at the primary society level. This is through provision and/or channelling innumerable services to members which happen to connect to their needs hence it helps in strengthening their commitment to their co-operative. In this context, for example, Unions have been observed to provide training, and repeatedly involve external actors in so doing. This results in an increase in collective bargaining but also skills to individual members.

Unions together with their leaders have been fostering links involving co-operators, international and domestic markets, primary co-operatives, development agencies, commercial banks, and other co-operative unions in the country. Also, there has been some sort of engagement with the government particularly through by representation of co-operatives' interests and lobbying on their behalf. In this respect, although unions have been playing a central role towards co-operative development, definitely for the same cooperatives to function well an enabling legal and policy environment should be created. This avails no escape route for the government in terms of shouldering such responsibility towards flourishing of suitable legislative and policy framework for co-operatives.

Similarly, in Zimbabwe, tobacco co-operatives are seen to exhibit a degree of resilience since there is substantial support that they have been receiving from the state

including the regulatory aspects. The most noted happens to be the Co-operative Societies Act [Chapter 24:05] of 1990. This is an Act that replaces the existing Co-operative Societies Act with a new Act. The scope of this act covers comprehensively the structure but also how the co-operative movement has been functioning and how it relates to the state in Zimbabwe. It is in this act that numerous provisions indicate the formation, registration, regulation, management, functioning, and dissolution of cooperative societies. It indicates how these are attended to following co-operative principles and pursuance of Government policy and self-reliance; for the formation of a National Co-operative Federation; and for the establishment of a Central Co-operative Fund.

Contract farming presents an innovation which has been noted to play a part towards the resilience and sustainability of co-operatives, tobacco co-operatives inclusive. In this context what has been observed is that in the quest to solve the shocks and uncertainties co-operatives in these countries have been employing contract farming to solve such mishaps.

Conclusion

It has been observed that tobacco co-operatives in Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Malawi and Mozambique have displayed a certain degree of resilience and sustainability based on three important aspects of resilience. These include the networks they possess, their ability to innovate and the support received from the state which connotes the role of the state. Despite the global campaigns against tobacco due to its harmful effects, tobacco production has been noted to increase. Co-operatives have also been observed to continue to play their roles too. This signifies that all these have been happening in the face of a political, legal and economic system that views co-operatives as kinds of businesses which are autonomous but also private member-owned.

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