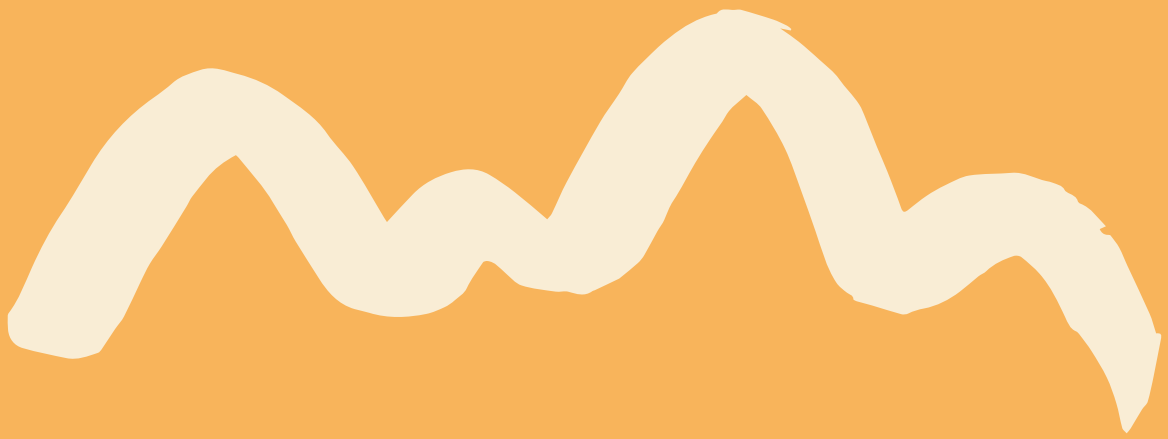
RURAL SYNERGIES



Zambia

Building bridges between social and productive inclusion policies

With the technical cooperation of:

Universidad de los Andes Colombia | Facultad de Economía

IFAD Investing in rural people

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Harnessing the synergies between social protection and agriculture in Zambia

KEY MESSAGES

The promotion of coherence and articulation between social and productive interventions simultaneously targeting the same group of poor smallholder farmers can trigger synergistic effects that are greater than the standalone impacts that the programs would have had if they had been implemented separately. The complementarity can also contribute to increasing the resilience of households in the face of external shocks or crises, an argument that is particularly relevant in contexts such as the one we are currently facing as a result of COVID-19.

The pursuit of greater coherence between social and productive interventions must not only be premised upon achieving tighter articulation between programs run by different entities, but by first ensuring that each individual program is designed and implemented adequately. Achieving synergies between social and agricultural interventions is as much a matter of intra-program coherence as it is about promoting cross-program coherence. Poorly designed or implemented programs will, from the very start, defeat the objective of achieving synergies.

Zambia's CASU project met its objectives on a number of dimensions including farmers' adoption of conservation agriculture practices, productive outcomes, market participation and earnings accrued to program participants, and household food security and nutrition. By contrast, the HGSF program may be considered to have met its objectives only partially: the program's school meals did attract children to school and improve their diet, while its local purchase component likewise helped boost farmers' production and sale of legumes. But the two components of the HGSF seem to have worked at cross purposes, triggering unintended effects that ended up prejudicing the farm households that took part in the program.

These results highlight the need for action to improve coherence not only between programs but also within individual programs. Even a well-designed intervention can easily break down if it is not implemented effectively, with adequate support and monitoring, at every stage of its operations. The fact that the combination of CASU and HGSF led to positive impacts on many outcomes, often higher than the effects of each program on its own, suggests the potential for strong synergies if adjustments are made to the HGSF program, including the introduction of complementary interventions to support farmers' post-harvest and marketing activities and more deliberate, intentional linkages between the program's own components and these other complementary interventions.

Ensure multisectoral arrangements and planning to enhance coherence and articulation in program design and implementation. This includes ensuring that market access programs such as Purchase for Progress (P4P) provide effective communication and consistent and timely support to enable farmers and cooperatives to meet the output targets set in the contracts. Agreements to design two complementary programs should be followed with continued efforts to maintain permanent communication flows and active collaboration between their operational staff throughout implementation, within technical committees or other similar arrangements including at operational field levels throughout the duration of the programs.

HGSF may consider targeting those with the potential or actual surplus production and storage capacity to meet the program's local purchase requirements. Timely execution of purchasing operations finely tuned to the prevailing market conditions are key to allowing smallholders to tap into the benefits of participating in the supply chain. Combining the HGSF with agricultural programs like CASU presents high potential for benefits, but must be designed and implemented in a coordinated manner, paying particular attention to targeting and coverage aspects, as well as smallholder capacity building, in order to fully harness the potential of synergistic effects.

ZAMBIA ENJOYED STRONG ECONOMIC GROWTH BETWEEN 2004 AND 2014, WHICH BENEFITED SMALL SEGMENTS OF THE URBAN POPULATION. BECAUSE GROWTH WAS ACCOMPANIED BY INCREASED INEQUALITY, ITS EFFECTS ON POVERTY REDUCTION WERE LIMITED. IN 2015, 58 PERCENT OF ZAMBIANS WERE BELOW THE INTERNATIONAL POVERTY LINE OF $1.90 PER DAY AND THREE QUARTERS OF THE POOR LIVED IN RURAL AREAS. TO CONTAIN INEQUALITY, BRING PEOPLE OUT OF POVERTY AND IMPROVE THE LIVES OF THE MOST VULNERABLE, THE GOVERNMENT OF ZAMBIA COMMITTED TO EXPAND SOCIAL PROTECTION EXPENDITURE IN THE 2019 BUDGET BY 18 PERCENT FROM THE PREVIOUS YEAR, FOLLOWING A SERIES OF CONSECUTIVE EXPANSIONS OF THIS SECTOR. NEVERTHELESS, IN 2019 ZAMBIA STILL SPENT ONLY 0.7 PERCENT OF THE COUNTRY'S GDP ON SOCIAL PROTECTION, LAGGING BEHIND THE REGIONAL AVERAGE.

Agriculture provides the livelihood for the majority of Zambia's rural poor, making coordination of agricultural interventions and social protection programs a necessity more than a choice. However, agricultural and social protection interventions have traditionally targeted different populations in virtue of their distinct policy objectives — stimulating agricultural growth and reducing poverty and food insecurity, respectively. Evidence shows that agriculture is the sector with the highest potential for generating pro-poor growth, but numerous factors may keep poor households excluded from taking up new opportunities in agriculture. Missing markets for credit and insurance discourage or prevent the uptake of more productive technology, often trapping households in low-risk, low-return choices. Constraints to accessing productive assets such as land, as well as inputs, services and markets can also prevent greater production and profit. In turn, social protection interventions have the potential to break poverty traps, by easing liquidity constraints and improving farmer's ability to take on and manage risks. By doing so, social protection can help remove the bottlenecks that keep smallholder farmers from contributing to and benefiting from economic growth.

Evidence and increased awareness of the potential synergies between social protection and agriculture has led Governments to bring these two sectors closer together to support pro-poor growth. Since 2011, Zambia's school feeding program, which started in 2003, gradually transitioned to a Home Grown School Feeding (HGSF) intervention. Managed by the World Food Program (WFP) in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Zambia's HGSF is an example of combining social protection (reducing poverty and food insecurity) and agricultural objectives (stimulating production and income), both embedded in the Seventh National Development Plan and the National Food and Nutrition Strategic Plan, under the umbrella of a single program. HGSF combines the provision of nutritious cooked meals to almost one million schoolchildren with the public procurement of supplies for the meals from local farmers. In addition to feeding and encouraging children to attend school, HGSF provides market access to a few thousand smallholders across the country, typically organized in aggregates such as producer groups and cooperatives. Given the wide range of objectives the program pursues, it is imperative to design its two program components (school meals and public purchase from local farmers) so that they create a coherent set of incentives for the beneficiaries. Programmatic coherence requires limiting potentially conflicting interactions between programs or program components, while actively exploiting complementarities and synergies between distinct agriculture and social protection schemes.

The Conservation Agriculture Scale-Up (CASU) project was operational between 2013 and 2017. It covered 31 districts, 11 of which were in common with HGSF. The project was implemented by FAO, with the collaboration of the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA). CASU aimed at improving farming by training leader and follower farmers on conservation agriculture practices, mechanization and business management. In its original design, CASU was meant to coordinate project geographical coverage and targeting criteria with the HGSF program so as to trigger complementarities between the two to further optimize benefits. In some areas, HGSF farmers would receive productive support through the CASU project; likewise, CASU beneficiaries would benefit from the market access offered by HGSF's purchasing component. However, coordination of HGSF and CASU posed many challenges in terms of cross-program coherence and synergies. Despite the well-meaning attempt at the program design stage, coordination at the implementation stage often failed to materialize. Common targeting, for

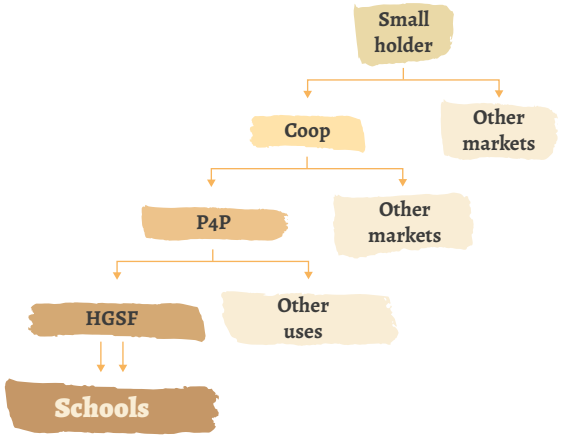
instance, was pursued only down to the level of agricultural blocks (sub-district unit), but not at the household level.

PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION

Zambia's HGSF program uses WFP's Purchase for Progress (P4P) platform to procure the commodities that make up the school meals. The HGSF food basket is limited to cereals, pulses and cooking oil, of which only pulses (beans and peas) are procured directly from Zambian farmers. HGSF provides one hot meal per day to every child enrolled in pre-primary and primary schools in the targeted districts throughout the school year. Cooperatives act as aggregators and sell produce they collect from their members in different markets, one of which is WFP's P4P platform, which in turn uses the purchased produce partly for HGSF and partly for in-kind assistance, either in Zambia or abroad. The supply chain of the HGSF program is illustrated in Figure 1.

CASU, in turn, was an agricultural intervention with the overall objective to reduce hunger, improve food security and income by increasing crop production, diversification and productivity. Extension officers of the MoA were trained in conservation agriculture practices, mechanization and business management and transferred the training to the lead farmers, who in turn passed it down to follow farmers. CASU follows the three principles of conservation agriculture: 1) minimum mechanical soil disturbance; 2) maintenance of soil cover; and 3) crop rotation, which have been shown to increase productivity, build resilience to climate shocks and protect the soil. A total of 21 000 lead farmers were enrolled in the CASU project, each of whom was responsible to conduct demonstrations for 10-15 follow farmers.

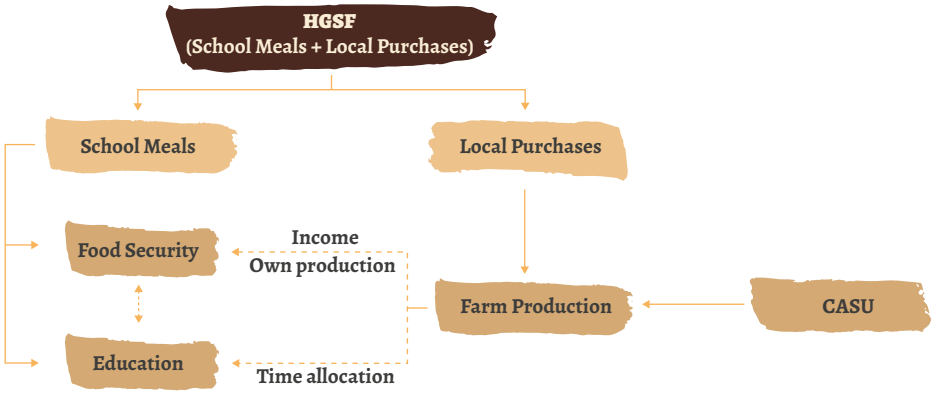
Figure 1. HGSF supply chain



PROGRAMME THEORY OF CHANGE

Figure 2 illustrates the theory of change by denoting the HGSF and CASU programs. The Figure depicts the pathways through which the programs are meant to exert their influence on farm production, food security and educational outcomes, both separately and jointly by complementing each other.

Figure 2. Theory of change for the HGSF and CASU programs



Note: The continuous arrows indicate a direct effect, while the dashed arrows indicate an indirect influence. The double-headed arrows indicate a mutual influence.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

1. Impacts:

The impact evaluation found the following results from the implementation of the CASU and HGSF programs:

- **CASU:** The project increased farm production and food security without having significant effects on schooling (attendance or drop-out rates). Harvests increased for virtually all crops (except for beans), along with livestock accumulation and production of livestock by-products. CASU also raised revenues from crop sales and market participation of beneficiaries. In terms of children's time allocation, CASU increased the time they dedicated to on- and off-farm activities, as well as that spent in school and studying. Importantly, participation in CASU was also associated with improved children's and women's dietary diversity, and with increased consumption – both from purchases and from own production – of maize and other crops.

- **School meals:** The provision of school meals through the HGSF program met the objective of diversifying the diet of school-going children, while also improving the dietary diversity of other household members, probably through spillover effects as shown by the increase in the dietary diversity scores for women. Meals also contributed to attracting and keeping children in school, which shows in the increase in attendance rates and the reduction of drop-out rates, as well as the improvements in literacy and grade progression. Besides being sizable for the average beneficiary, the improvements in food security, nutrition and educational outcomes induced by the school meals concern the vast majority of children in a district and have the potential to trigger long-term developmental processes through human capital accumulation, specifically in health and education.

- **HGSF:** The program created a market for legumes and increased farmers' revenues from these crops, given an increase in their production and sales. However, if the analysis broadens to gauge the HGSF's impacts on the farm-household economy as a whole, the evidence suggests that the stimulus for increased beans production came with a number of unintended effects. HGSF increased the share of beans growers and sellers as well as revenues from sales of beans. This, however, was accompanied by a smaller number of farmers growing maize and a drop in the average amount of maize harvested. The harvest of other crops also declined. The HGSF program reduced herd size and the share of farmers owning livestock. Gross income dropped too, mainly as a result of a reduction in livestock and wage income. More disconcertingly, HGSF decreased dietary diversity (for both women and children), while increasing household food insecurity. The program had no effects on drop-out rates or school attendance among primary-school children. These findings lend support to the idea that the local purchase of legumes through the P4P platform may have had unintended detrimental impacts, which neutralized the positive effects of the school meals on food security, diets and education. One indication of the conflicting impacts generated by the market access component of the program is given by the fact that HGSF households saw their total gross income drop, which in turn may help explain why they also experienced a reduction in their food and educational expenditure.

- **Combination of CASU and HGSF:** When farm households participated in both programs, they tended to exhibit positive impacts on a large number of farming and food security outcomes. In particular, combining the conservation agriculture training and productive support with the HGSF program led to increased crop production and sales. For some crops, the improvements were larger than from CASU alone, hinting at possible sinergistic effects from participating in both programs simultaneously. The beneficiaries of the combined CASU and HGSF treatment arm accumulated more livestock and produced more livestock by-products – sometimes more than those in the CASU-only arm. Farm households in the combined treatment had higher revenues from crop sales than households taking part in either standalone program. As a result, total gross income increased considerably more in the group of households receiving both programs, as compared to those in the CASU group. In terms of food security, while the HGSF households showed mixed effects, these often turned positive when combined with participation in CASU. By contrast, the combination of HGSF and CASU did not manage to reverse the negative effects that were observed among HGSF households: linking CASU to the HGSF still produced sizable negative impacts for primary school-aged children.

- Overall, the CASU project met its objective of stimulating adoption of conservation technologies, thereby boosting farm income and improving food security among beneficiary households. The HGSF program likewise met its objective of creating a market for legumes and raising household revenues from these crops, but this came with a number of unintended consequences on crucial aspects of household welfare or other sectors of production. While the meals component, which had positive impacts across the board, had universal coverage of the schools in a district, local food procurement affected only the few hundred farmers that supplied the pulses for the meals in that district. Results that show the effects from participating in both programs were better than participating in either standalone intervention provide evidence of synergies taking place for specific outcomes. CASU farmers had higher incentives to adopt the conservation techniques and produce more thanks to their access to the HGSF's public purchasing; likewise, meeting the HGSF's demand for legumes was made easier for farmers receiving the productive support offered by CASU.

- **Distributional impacts:** The microsimulation study found that CASU and HGSF had a slightly equalizing effect. The benefits from program participation (as well as the losses, in the case of the market access component of the HGSF program) were spread across the entire income distribution. This supports the notion that the programs targeted neither the poor nor large-scale farmers, but smallholders generally. In fact, the poorest were to some extent excluded, likely due to their land constraints or inability to, for example, join a cooperative because of lack of resources.

Figure 3. Summary of program effects

	CASU	HGSF	Both	Meals
Farm production	**++**	**+/-**	**++**	
Crop production	+/-	+/-	+/-	
Crop sales	+/-	++	+/-	
Livst. production	++	--	++	
Tot. gross income	o	--	++	
CA adoption	**+++**	**o**	**+++**	
FNS	**+++**	**---**	**++**	**++**
Schooling	**o**	**o**	**---**	**++**

+++ Majority of impacts are positive; - - - Majority of impacts are negative
o No Impacts; +/- Mixed impacts.

2. Implementation challenges:

- **Targeting:** One question that clearly emerges is whether the farmers who engaged in contracts with the HGSF local purchases were in a position to adequately respond to the demand stimulus, without sacrificing other sectors of farm production (other crops or livestock activities, for instance) or compromising their own welfare (food security, schooling). They could be facing supply-side constraints such as limited access to land, variable inputs, technology and knowledge as well as limited market information and lack of operating capital. HGSF farmers did not increase the use of land in order to meet the P4P demand for legumes. Instead, land was merely reallocated from maize, other crops and livestock to beans production.

- **Production:** If the land constraint cannot be relieved and farmers have no choice other than reallocating resources, there are two ways to ensure that the increased revenues from beans sales more than compensate for the forgone earnings from maize

production. This may occur by increasing either or both: quantities of beans produced and sold or the prices paid for the beans. Given the land constraint, an increase in the production of beans that compensates the farmer for a reduction in the cultivation of maize necessarily implies an increase in bean yield through more intensive use of fertilizers or the adoption of more capital-intensive and labor-saving technologies. In the qualitative study, increased crop yields were perceived to be due to CASU, which enabled farmers to use better farming methods, introduce crop rotation and hybrid cowpea seeds, and increase their productivity, while the land planted with maize remained the same."

- **Prices:** The second way to increase revenues from the sale of beans would require the HGSF program to offer higher prices to farmers for their beans. In Zambia, maize yields in terms of output per hectare are four times as large as bean yields, which could not be met by P4P. The price of maize in the study control areas was statistically higher than in the HGSF areas, but only by a factor of 2.

- **Operations:** Both of the above fixes assume that farmers are able to sell the desired amount of produce to WFP at the convened price. However, the qualitative study found that some farmers were not able to sell the desired quantities to WFP because the produce did not meet the quality standards to start with or deteriorated in the warehouse, due to inadequate storage conditions or prolonged storage times related to delays in collecting, inspecting and paying for the produce. As a result, farmers sold part of their produce through alternative channels at lower prices than those offered by HGSF, because of the lower quality or the prevailing price at that point in time.

- **Coordination:** One key coordination challenge is how to develop supply chain systems that give smallholders access to the range of pre- and post-harvest services that they require in a timely manner, at the same time that they enhance their access to remunerative output market opportunities, as the HGSF program intended to do. It is important to get both the institutional and operational arrangements as well as the incentives and price signals given by programs of this sort right, in order to induce market-based development.

- **Incentives:** The negative impacts on schooling observed in the combination of CASU with HGSF should not be attributed to the programs' effects on the productive domain, where income increased and cross-programme synergies occurred. Other mechanisms might have been at work, related to how program-induced incentives to pursue production and welfare objectives affected each other within the household. For instance, non-farm businesses were reported to expand in the locations where both programs were operating and farm households could benefit from a diversity of income streams. Intra-household bargaining power, too, could play a role in the way income is spent. When women have more control over income, they are more likely to spend it on improving their children's schooling and feeding (Prichard et al., 2018). The analysis carried out in Zambia does, in fact, show some evidence that women's decision-making power was significantly lower in the group of households that was participating both CASU and the HGSF, relative to the rest of the population.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Ensure proper targeting of productive interventions.
In deciding the beneficiaries of the HGSF purchases, planners should target smallholders with productive potential or who are already producing a surplus in the required crops in order to meet the market demand. If farmers with limited capacity are chosen as the target population, supply side constraints, such as production or post-harvest quality control, must be taken into account at the planning stage of the program. If not properly addressed, these constraints can lead to inefficient resource reallocation within the farm economy and, consequently, to detrimental welfare impacts.

2. Design HGSF programs with complementary interventions aimed at easing or circumventing supply-side constraints.
This should yield benefits to the farmers selling produce to HGSF that outweigh the actual or opportunity costs from participating in the program, while ensuring they meet the quantity and quality standards set by the program. These support interventions are best achieved from combining HGSF with other livelihood support interventions, with a view to enhancing synergy between both. The CASU project, or other agricultural livelihood programs currently operating in Zambia, is a good example of promoting complementarity between social and productive programs supporting smallholder farmers. Such complementary measures could include:

- Easing access to land, to allow farmers to allocate more of it and other resources to meet the extra demand from HGSF, without having to reduce the land dedicated to the production of maize and other crops. This would allow to avoid trade-offs in food crops and preserve crop diversification.

- Provide complementary inputs and services to farm households enrolled in a social protection program like the HGSF, such as inputs like seeds and tools, subsidized fertilizers, training on farming, food conservation and marketing techniques or use of mechanized tools, as well as insurance or cash grants, to name a few.

- Offering a higher purchasing price, which speaks to the need to improve implementation and finetune the timing when P4P collects the produce from the cooperatives.

3. Providing adequate and predictable post-harvest support services, whereby HGSF implementers make sure that the farmers have what they need (pesticides and purchasing capacity) to safely store the produce for the necessary storage time, and the alleged delays in collecting the produce are addressed by stating in advance the time of collection, thereby giving both sides the opportunity to plan ahead. Mechanisms could also be put in place to compensate parties for losses incurred due to their counterpart's inability to comply with one or more elements agreed in the contract.

4. Extending additional marketing support to farmers, considering that they often struggle to meet the quality and quantity requirements of public food procurement. One example relates to the physical constraints experienced by co-operatives and farmers, including supplying the bags that they use for their initial harvest to transport to aggregation centers.

Another example involves the transportation costs borne by farmers to collection points, some of which were too distant, and the provision of assistance for storage costs to prevent excessive moisture, infestation and rot as a result of delays by WFP. Other measures could include:

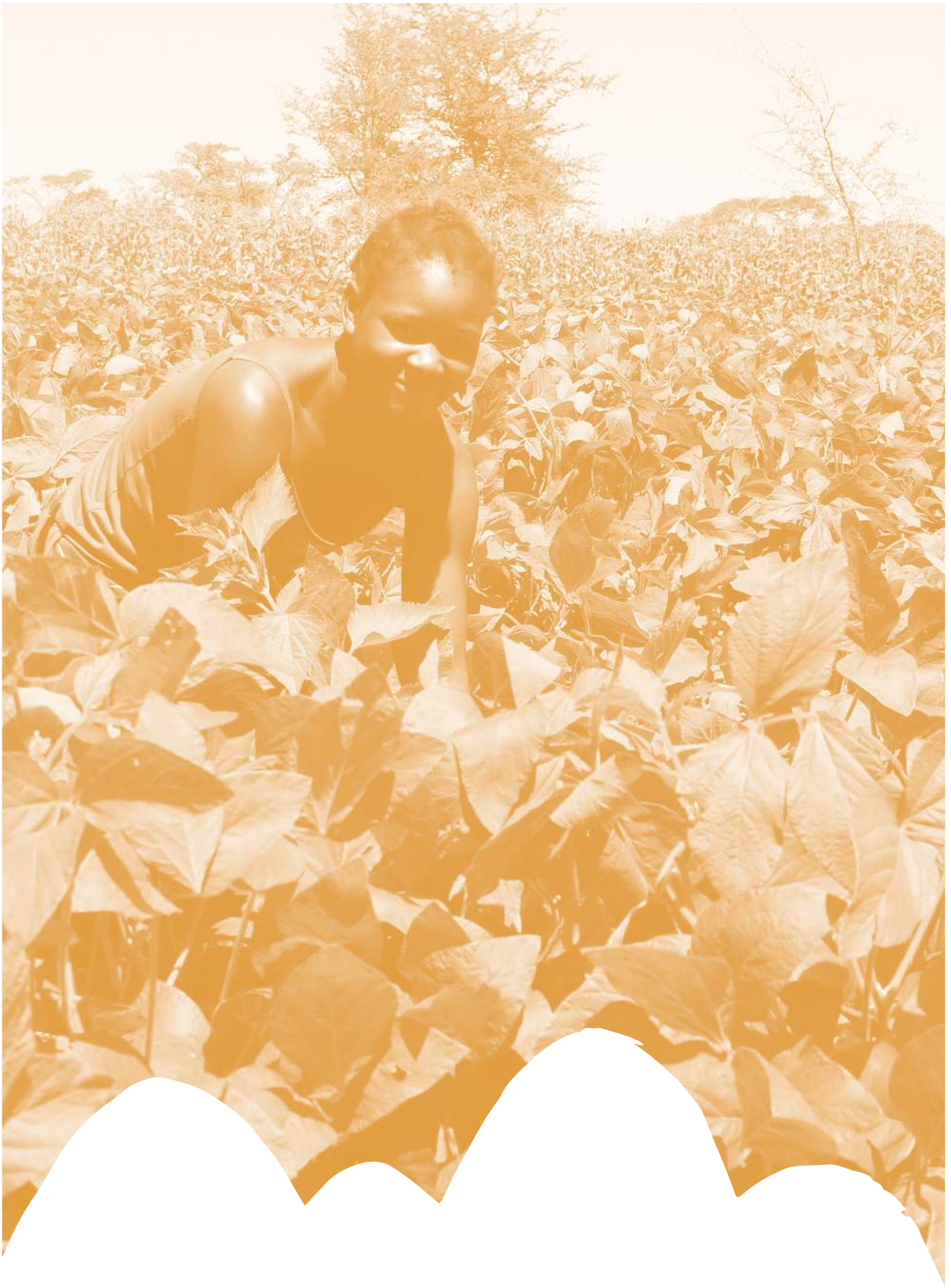
- Addressing payment delays so that the timing of collection consistently aligns with and takes into consideration the harvest season, to ensure that farmers do not sell their produce to traders at lower prices. This may be done through agreements between cooperatives and program implementers "with conditions" for defaults or delays; and

- Revisiting the timing of payments through part payment to farmers upon signature, which should facilitate aggregation and address the uncertainty and risk of price volatility while farmers await full payment, as well as the quality standards that farmers must meet, which imply additional costs and effort.

5. Calibrating the incentives and improving cross-program coherence with the aim of reducing the unintended detrimental effects, such as on schooling, when combining programs like HGSF and CASU:

- Empowering women and increasing their agency and contributions to decision-making in the household can go some way towards curbing some of the unintended negative impacts of the combination of both programs on education. Increasing women's role in both CASU and HGSF might lead to greater female control over income and resources, which increases the chances that the extra money will be spent on food and education.

- Introducing soft conditionalities, for instance in the form of messaging aimed at promoting school attendance.



TECHNICAL SHEET

The Project

Over the past few years, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), together with the Universidad de Los Andes and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) have been analysing the potential synergistic effects of interventions on rural households that involve social protection programmes and productive rural development projects. IFAD and Universidad de Los Andes have implemented this project through the "Conditional Cash Transfers and Rural Development in Latin America" grant (www.sinergiasrurales.info/); and FAO through the project entitled "From Protection to Production: The role of Social Cash Transfers in the Promotion of Economic Development" (PtoP) (www.fao.org/economic/ptop. Some evidence of such synergies and complementarities has been identified, but the evidence has also raised new questions. These inquiries are related to the types of synergies and how to take advantage of them, the correct sequencing of programme rollout, the institutional reforms that need to take place and the political economy behind these options, and thus improve the results of the programmes.

To answer some of these questions, the project entitled "Improving the Coordination between Social Protection and Rural Development Interventions in Developing Countries: Lessons from Latin America and Africa" - which is being developed by the Universidad de Los Andes (UNIANDES), through its Centre for Economic Development Studies (CEDE), and financed by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) - seeks to gather evidence of the benefits of such coordinated interventions.

The goal of the project is to gather evidence for policymakers and donors of the benefits of the coordinated interventions that could provide inputs regarding the appropriate institutional and operational design, and enable them to use these inputs as a basis for improving anti-poverty interventions targeted at rural households, thus helping small farmers to take a proactive part in rural transformation.

The main objective of the project is to try to influence governmental institutions related to rural development and social protection (anti-poverty) policies, so they can take advantage of identified synergies between social protection and productive initiatives. The project was implemented in seven countries, three in Latin America and four in Africa.

Evaluation Methods

An impact evaluation was conducted, comprising both a quantitative and a qualitative study as well as a micro-simulation. The quantitative impact evaluation was designed with multiple treatment arms to capture the complementarities between HGSF and CASU, with only one wave of post-intervention data collected between October 2017 and January 2018. The study identified four treatment arms: one with households that benefitted from both HGSF and CASU; one with households that only took part in the HGSF program; one with households that benefitted only from the CASU project; and a control arm with farm households that benefitted from neither of these programs. The qualitative study was based on the same research design, with data collection taking place around January 2018. In turn, the microsimulation study was based on the estimated impacts from the quantitative evaluation and used Zambia's nationally representative Rural Agricultural Livelihood Survey to simulate impacts if the programs were scaled up to national level. The three studies form part of a mixed method approach to generating evidence. Use of the mixed method approach offers the advantage of triangulating multiple and complementary data sources and findings to provide greater insights and explain results, thereby deepening understanding of the mechanisms at play in enabling the programs to reach their objectives effectively, be it alone or in combination.

[1] **IFAD and Universidad de Los Andes have implemented this project through the "Conditional Cash Transfers and Rural Development in Latin America" grant (www.sinergiasrurales.info/); and FAO through the project entitled "From Protection to Production: The role of Social Cash Transfers in the Promotion of Economic Development" (PtoP) (www.fao.org/economic/ptop).**

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