



An Analysis of the Production of Cassava as a Food Security Option for Zimbabwe

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	i
CHAPTER ONE.	1
INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background	1
1.2 The Concept of Food Security	2
1.3 The Food Security Problem (Problem Statement)	4
1.4 Overview of World Cassava Production	11
1.5 The Current Food Security Options for Zimbabwe	12
1.6 Rationale for the Production of Cassava in Zimbabwe	15
1.7 Objectives	19
1.8 Methodology	22
1.9 Outline	23
CHAPTER TWO	24
THE ECONOMIC AND AGRICULTURAL POLICY ENVIRONMENT	24
2.1 Introduction	24
2.2 The Zimbabwe Programme for Economic and Social Transformation (ZIMPREST)	24
2.3 Zimbabwe Agricultural Policy Framework (ZAPF)	26
2.3.1 The Agricultural Sector Investment Programme	27
2.4 Analysis of the Fit Between the Project Concept and Policy	29
CHAPTER THREE	31
THE STUDY AREA	31
3.1 Introduction	31
3.2 Location	31
3.3 Physical features	32
3.4 Demographic Aspects	32
3.5 Climate	33
3.6 Agricultural Activities	35
3.7 Conclusions	36

CHAPTER FOUR	38
A DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED PILOT PROJECT ON CASSAVA	38
4.1 Introduction	38
4.2 The Planning Framework	38
4.3 Description of the Project	40
4.4 Proposed Developments	44
4.5 Organization and Managerial Systems	46
4.6 Activities	47
4.7 Costs and Financing	49
4.8 Conclusions	50
CHAPTER FIVE	52
THE FEASIBILITY ANALYSIS OF THE PROPOSED CASSAVA PROJECT IN ZIMBABWE	52
5.1 Introduction	52
5.2 Technical analysis	52
5.2.1 Botany	52
5.2.2 Climatic Aspects	55
5.2.3 Soil Factors	56
5.2.4 Diseases	56
5.2.5 Varietal Selection	56
5.2.6 Planting Orientation	57
5.3 Analysis of the Marketing Environment under the Purview of Stockfeed Production and Human Consumption	57
5.3.1 Consumer Analysis	57
5.3.2 Marketing Analysis	59
5.3.3 Procurement Analysis	60
5.4 Financial analysis	60
5.4.1 Cassava Enterprises - Farm Investment Analysis	62
5.4.2 Stockfeed Factories	64
5.4.3 Financial Analysis - Government Perspective	65
5.5 Sensitivity Analysis	66

5.6	Economic analysis	68
5.6.1	Approach	68
5.6.2	Results	70
5.7	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats .	71
5.7.1.	Strengths	71
5.7.2	Weaknesses	71
5.7.3.	Opportunities	72
5.7.4.	Threats	72
5.8	Benefits	73
5.8.1	Higher standard of living	73
5.8.2	Employment	73
5.8.3	Nutrition and Food Security	74
5.8.4	Revenue	74
5.8.5	Soil Conservation	74
5.8.6	Higher Overall Crop Production	74
5.8.7	Provision of Forage	75
5.8.8	Increased Export Earnings	75
5.9	Conclusion	75
CHAPTER SIX		77
CONCLUSIONS		77
6.1	Conclusions and Policy Implications	77
Bibliography		82
Annex 1		88
Annex 2		89
Annex 3		92
Annex 4		93
Annex 5		95



ABSTRACT

**AN ANALYSIS OF THE PRODUCTION OF CASSAVA AS A FOOD SECURITY
OPTION IN ZIMBABWE**

by

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Access to food is a basic human right and therefore the insurance of food security to its people is a fundamental objective of every Government. However, as we approach the next millennium the food security situation of most developing countries is projected to decline. This is mainly attributed to civil strife, disasters and a rapidly increasing population.

Over the past three seasons the production of the main staple, maize, in Zimbabwe has consistently been below normal. Zimbabwe which was once dubbed the "Bread Basket of SADC" is now struggling to produce adequate food for national consumption. Secondly, the price of maize (Zimbabwe's staple) has risen significantly over this period making it beyond the reach of most households. This has jeopardised food security. A concerted effort is required at the national level in order to avert the disastrous consequences associated with food insecurity which may arise from the recent

trends.

Several mitigation measures which include food aid, regional food security and national food security programmes have been put in place. In this vein and within the SADC Region, Zimbabwe has been tasked to spearhead the development of the agricultural and natural resources sector. In Zimbabwe, food security is such a serious issue that a Strategic Grain Reserve has been put in place specifically to address this problem. Furthermore the policy of agricultural diversification has been adopted, inter alia, as a food security strategy and in response to the trends of the past three seasons.

Zimbabwe is an agro-based economy with over 70 per cent of her population residing in rural areas and thriving on agriculture. In this context and within the purview of the diversification process, the production of cassava is viewed as a strategic option for achieving food security in terms of direct human consumption and as a cheap stockfeed. The production of cassava for these purposes is not new and peculiar to Zimbabwe. Cassava is widely produced worldwide for human and animal consumption.

This study attempts to analyse the feasibility of producing cassava in Zimbabwe for food security purposes. A two pronged approach is employed in pursuing this goal. The primary thrust is to produce cassava for human consumption. The secondary thrust involves the production of cassava for use in stockfeeds. This assumes that this will result in the provision of cheaper stockfeeds hence cheaper meat. The project will initially be confined to Mashonaland Central and West Provinces. It is planned along the logical framework approach. The purpose of this project is to increase cassava

production in Zimbabwe so as to meet the overall goal of food security. The total cost of the project is US\$499 200 (Z\$19,24 million).

The feasibility analysis of the project looks at issues such as social aspects, technical aspects, economic and financial aspects. The cost-benefit analysis was used to assess economic and financial viability. The project passed all these tests and in addition has a host of other social and economic benefits to justify its implementation.

The main conclusions arising from this study are that it is feasible to produce cassava in Zimbabwe. Secondly, owing to its multiplicity of uses cassava offers great potential as a food and industrial crop. However, cassava should be produced as a side crop in order to be fully compatible with the current socio-economic aspects related to smallholder farming in Zimbabwe.