

# Policy Alignment for Climate-Resilient Food Systems in Zambia

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## List of Acronyms

AoW1	Area of Work 1
CATSP	Comprehensive Agriculture Transformation Support Programme
CC	Climate Change
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
CLIM	Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Impact Area
DDCC	District Development Coordinating Committee
EMA	Environmental Management Act
GRZ	Government of the Republic of Zambia
HLO	High-Level Outcome
IWMI	International Water Management Institute
JSR	Joint Sector Review
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MGEE	Ministry of Green Economy and Environment
MLSD	Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries Development
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MoE	Ministry of Energy
MoFNP	Ministry of Finance and National Planning
MoWD	Ministry of Water Development and Sanitation
NAP	National Adaptation Plan
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
NGGS	National Green Growth Strategy
NGP	National Gender Policy
PDCC	Provincial Development Coordinating Committee
REDD+	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
S4I	Scaling for Impact
WARMA	Water Resources Management Authority
ZEMA	Zambia Environmental Management Agency
ZMW	Zambian Kwacha

## Summary

Zambia's 2023 National Adaptation Plan identifies agriculture and water as the country's most climate-vulnerable sectors, reflecting the central role of rainfed smallholder production in national employment, rural incomes, and food security. Over the past decade, recurrent droughts, delayed rainfall onset, and rising temperatures, particularly in Southern and Western Provinces have reduced crop yields, strained water systems, and increased fiscal pressure through emergency response and input support programs. Climate risks therefore pose not only environmental concerns but also macroeconomic and livelihood challenges for Zambia.

In response, the Government of Zambia has adopted a set of climate, environmental, and agrifood policy instruments, including the National Policy on Climate Change, the National Adaptation Plan (2023), the revised Nationally Determined Contribution, the Environmental Management Act, and the Comprehensive Agriculture Transformation Support Programme. These frameworks signal strong national commitment to climate adaptation, ecosystem protection, and climate-smart agricultural transformation, particularly in water management, land restoration, and disaster risk reduction.

The CGIAR policy and institutional inventory, validated through a national stakeholder consultation in 2024, shows that policy ambition is clear but implementation capacity remains uneven. Institutional mandates overlap across ministries, coordination mechanisms are weak, climate finance remains fragmented, and monitoring systems lack consistent integration. While climate adaptation is widely prioritized, translation into operational financing instruments, scalable delivery systems, and sustained private-sector engagement remains limited. As a result, policy intent does not always convert into durable implementation at provincial and district levels.

## Key Insights

The analysis identifies three practical demand signals for Scaling for Impact under the Climate Adaptation and Mitigation impact area in Zambia.

First, Zambia has a high concentration of active policies and programs targeting drought resilience, water resource management, disaster risk reduction, land restoration, and climate-smart agriculture. The 2023 National Adaptation Plan, the revised Nationally Determined Contribution, and the Comprehensive Agriculture Transformation Support Programme all prioritize irrigation expansion, improved climate information services, and sustainable land management. This concentration indicates clear institutional demand for solutions that strengthen water security, reduce drought vulnerability, and improve productivity in rainfed farming systems.

Second, while climate resilience is strongly articulated in national strategies, implementation mechanisms remain weak. Dedicated climate financing instruments are limited, coordination between ministries is inconsistent, and private-sector engagement in adaptation investments remains modest. This suggests that Zambia's main constraint is not policy intent but delivery capacity, particularly in financing, coordination, and program integration at provincial and district levels.

Third, institutional fragmentation constrains effectiveness. Responsibilities for climate adaptation, water management, agriculture, and disaster response are distributed across multiple ministries and agencies, often without strong coordination platforms or integrated monitoring systems. Strengthening governance arrangements, data systems, and implementation clarity is therefore as important as introducing new technologies.

Together, these findings highlight concrete entry points for aligning CGIAR research and innovation with Zambia's policy priorities and institutional realities.

## **Background and Rationale**

Zambia's agrifood system is highly sensitive to climate variability and long-term climatic change. As temperatures rise and rainfall becomes increasingly unpredictable, the country faces simultaneous risks of drought, flooding, crop failure, reduced livestock productivity and declining water availability. These climate-induced stresses directly undermine food production, threaten household incomes, disrupt markets and compromise the nutritional well-being of already vulnerable populations. Their cumulative effects extend beyond agriculture, influencing macroeconomic performance, energy demand, social protection systems and overall ecosystem stability.

Zambia's climate vulnerability is also closely shaped by land governance, water allocation dynamics and settlement patterns, dimensions that remain underdeveloped in most policy narratives. Inadequate land tenure security, informal settlement expansion, wetland degradation and weak enforcement of land-use regulations amplify climate risks across rural and peri-urban landscapes. Water scarcity during drought years is further worsened by fragmented water governance frameworks and competition among agriculture, domestic supply, hydropower generation and environmental flows. These underlying structural issues shape vulnerability at household and landscape levels and require deeper integration into national climate adaptation and resilience planning (GRZ 2023; GRZ 2020).

Recognizing these challenges, Zambia has progressively developed a comprehensive suite of climate, environmental, agricultural, economic and social policies. These include climate-specific frameworks such as the National Policy on Climate Change, the National Adaptation Plan and the revised Nationally Determined Contribution; sectoral strategies such as the Comprehensive Agriculture Transformation Support Programme, the National Agriculture Policy, the Fisheries and Aquaculture Policy and the Irrigation Policy; and cross-cutting instruments including the National Gender Policy, the MSME Development Policy, financial inclusion frameworks, biodiversity strategies and the National Green Growth Strategy. Collectively, these instruments articulate Zambia's commitment to climate-resilient development, inclusive growth and sustainable management of food, land and water systems in line with Vision 2030 and the Eighth National Development Plan.

However, insights from the Lusaka national validation workshop held on 3 November 2025 revealed that the existence of strong policies does not automatically translate into systems-level transformation, with implementation remaining uneven across sectors and administrative levels. Coordination mechanisms are often weak or inconsistently applied.

Monitoring and evaluation systems are fragmented, limiting the ability to track progress, learn or guide adaptive management. Climate financing is insufficient and unpredictable, particularly at subnational levels where climate impacts are most acute. Institutional mandates overlap, and opportunities for synergy between climate, agriculture, water, biodiversity and economic policies remain underutilized. Furthermore, gender, youth and social inclusion priorities, though widely acknowledged, are seldom operationalized through concrete programming, budgeting or accountability mechanisms.

The rationale for this report is therefore twofold. First, Zambia requires a clear, evidence-based synthesis of existing policies and institutional arrangements to support more strategic and coordinated decision-making across sectors. Second, CGIAR and its partners need a structured understanding of national priorities, demand signals and policy gaps to guide research, innovation scaling and the design of investment-ready interventions. Aligning scientific evidence and innovation pathways with Zambia's evolving climate and development agenda is essential for accelerating national progress toward resilient and equitable food, land and water systems.

In this context, national policies and institutional programs are treated as primary, but not exclusive, proxies for demand. Their thematic focus, frequency, and institutional anchoring indicate where the Government of Zambia is formally articulating priorities, mobilizing administrative effort, and creating enabling conditions for the uptake and scaling of climate-relevant innovations. Concentrations of policy and program activity are therefore interpreted as expressions of need and intent, while gaps and weak coverage highlight domains where innovation requirements may remain under-articulated or under-served within formal policy frameworks. This interpretation aligns the policy inventory directly with the demand-signaling objectives of AoW1, while remaining within the analytical mandate of HLO1-B.

### **Positioning Within CGIAR Policy Coherence and National Policy Systems (NPS) Work**

This analysis is not undertaken in isolation, but forms part of a broader and growing body of work within CGIAR aimed at strengthening policy coherence, demand signaling, and the alignment of research and innovation with national development priorities. Within the CGIAR portfolio, the National Policy Systems (NPS) initiative has played a leading role in advancing analytical approaches to policy coherence, including comparative assessments of policy alignment, institutional coordination, and implementation readiness across countries and regions.

Recent NPS-supported studies have emphasized the importance of moving beyond descriptive policy inventories toward structured analytical frameworks that assess coherence across sectors, governance levels, and implementation instruments. These approaches have highlighted methodological innovations such as cross-sectoral policy mapping, thematic coding, and explicit treatment of institutional interactions and coordination mechanisms. The present Zambia analysis complements this body of work by applying a structured, country-level inventory and validation methodology tailored to the demand-signaling objectives of Scaling for Impact under HLO1-B.

While NPS-led analyses often focus on comparative or cross-country policy coherence diagnostics, this report adopts a deliberately country-embedded approach. Its primary contribution lies in generating a nationally validated evidence base that identifies policy density, institutional configurations, and implementation constraints specific to Zambia's

climate adaptation and mitigation agenda. In doing so, it provides granular inputs that can inform subsequent cross-country synthesis, semantic analysis, and comparative intelligence functions under HLO1-D, rather than duplicating those efforts.

### **Objectives of the Policy Review**

The objectives of this policy review reflect the need to strengthen national policy alignment, institutional coherence, and investment readiness within Zambia's climate and food system agenda. The first objective is to identify, categorize, and analyse all active national policies and institutional programs that influence Zambia's climate adaptation and mitigation efforts across the food system. This includes frameworks governing primary production as well as upstream and downstream value chain functions such as input supply, transport, storage, transformation, processing, marketing, retailing, and food safety. The scope further covers climate, agriculture, water, land, biodiversity, energy, gender, MSME development, finance, and social protection policies that collectively shape resilience, food system performance, and innovation scaling outcomes. The second objective is to examine the degree of coherence, complementarity, and synergy among these policies. For the purposes of this review, policies are defined as formally adopted national instruments, including acts, strategies, policies, plans, and official policy frameworks issued or endorsed by the Government of Zambia, together with their associated institutional programs and implementation arrangements, where applicable. Particular attention is directed toward the alignment between the National Adaptation Plan ((GRZ 2023), the Nationally Determined Contribution, the National Green Growth Strategy, the Comprehensive Agriculture Transformation Support Programme and other sectoral strategies. This analysis considers the extent to which these frameworks support or constrain integrated climate-resilient development.

The third objective is to analyse the institutional architecture governing the design, coordination, implementation, and assessment of these policies. This includes examining the mandates, capacities, and coordination mechanisms of ministries, agencies, subnational structures, research institutions, private-sector actors, and development partners. Identifying areas of duplication, fragmentation, or institutional weakness is essential for strengthening coordination and improving policy implementation effectiveness. The fourth objective is to examine political and financial commitments supporting climate action. This involves reviewing climate financing flows, budget allocations, donor support, private-sector participation and opportunities for leveraging climate finance instruments such as adaptation funds, green investment mechanisms and blended finance. Understanding financing gaps and opportunities is central to determining the feasibility of policy implementation.

The fifth objective is to generate actionable and forward-looking recommendations that can strengthen policy coherence, enhance institutional coordination, improve financing architectures and support the scaling of CGIAR-backed innovations. These recommendations aim to promote inclusive development, benefit smallholder farmers and ensure that climate-smart innovations reach the communities most affected by climate shocks.

A further objective is to analyse the political economy drivers that influence climate policy implementation. Sectoral silos, competition for donor resources, inconsistent mandates and incentive structures within ministries shape how policies are executed. Understanding

these factors is essential for designing coordination mechanisms that function effectively in practice rather than merely in formal policy documents.

## Methodology

The methodology applied in this report followed a structured and iterative approach designed to generate an accurate, comprehensive and nationally validated understanding of Zambia's policy and institutional landscape for climate adaptation and mitigation. The approach combined systematic evidence gathering with national consultation to ensure alignment with government priorities and practical realities on the ground.

For the purposes of this analysis, *policies* are defined as formally adopted national instruments issued or endorsed by the Government of Zambia. These include acts, policies, strategies, plans, frameworks and official policy documents that establish objectives, principles, mandates, or regulatory provisions relevant to climate adaptation, mitigation, and agrifood system transformation.

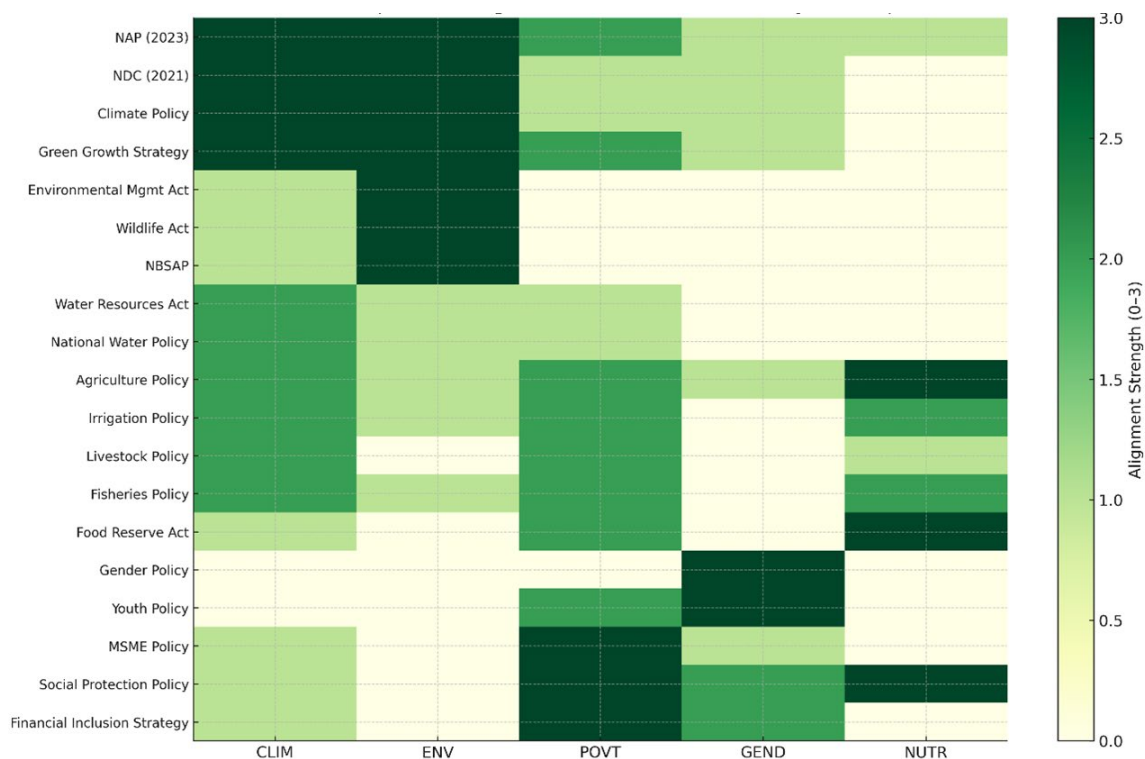
*Institutional programs* are defined as structured initiatives, projects or interventions implemented by government institutions, development partners, research organizations or coordinated platforms that operationalize policy objectives through financing, service delivery, capacity building, infrastructure development or innovation scaling. Programs may be time-bound or ongoing and may contribute to multiple CGIAR Impact Areas.

The first stage involved the development of a preliminary inventory of national policies relevant to climate resilience, mitigation, and agrifood system transformation. The inventory focuses on policies and institutional programs that were active or formally in force at the time of the review in 2025, including those under implementation or officially under revision, while excluding policies that had expired or been formally replaced. This initial phase employed a combination of document searches, ministerial repositories, legislative archives, national development plans and technical publications. Policies were screened to confirm that they were active, nationally endorsed and substantively relevant to climate, agriculture, water, biodiversity, energy, land management, gender or economic resilience. This process produced an initial list of climate-related and agrifood-system-related policy documents that provided the foundation for more detailed review.

The scope of this review deliberately prioritizes nationally endorsed policies and institutional programs that directly shape the agrifood system and climate response. While private-sector strategies, regional policy instruments, and informal governance arrangements play an important role in practice, they were included only where they were explicitly anchored in national policy frameworks or institutional programs. This boundary was adopted to maintain analytical consistency, transparency, and comparability across S4I country inventories, while recognizing that future analyses could extend this work by integrating private investment strategies and regional policy dynamics in greater depth.

The second stage focused on extracting structured information from each identified policy using a standardized template that captured policy objectives, implementation arrangements, institutional mandates, financing mechanisms, monitoring and evaluation provisions and cross-sectoral linkages. This step enabled a granular assessment of the extent to which each policy supported or constrained coherent climate action. Special attention was given to how policies aligned with CGIAR's Climate Adaptation and Mitigation impact area, as well as their treatment of cross-cutting themes such as gender,

youth, biodiversity, water security, natural resource management, private-sector participation and innovation.



**Figure 1.** Alignment of selected national policies with the five CGIAR Impact Areas in Zambia. (Source: Author’s compilation)

Figure 1 presents a cross-walk between Zambia’s principal national policies and the CGIAR Impact Areas.

The horizontal axis shows the CGIAR Impact Areas: Climate Adaptation and Mitigation (CLIM), Environmental Health and Biodiversity (ENV), Poverty Reduction, Livelihoods and Jobs (POVT), Gender Equality, Youth and Social Inclusion (GEND), and Nutrition, Health and Food Security (NUTR). The vertical axis lists key national policy instruments reviewed under the policy and institutional inventory. Shading intensity (0–3) reflects the relative strength of alignment between each policy and the corresponding impact area, based on qualitative content analysis of policy objectives and implementation provisions.

The matrix shows that most climate and agricultural policies strongly support climate adaptation, environmental sustainability and poverty reduction, but display varying levels of alignment with gender equality and nutrition objectives. These gaps indicate where targeted policy adjustments and investment strategies could enhance coherence and strengthen the enabling environment for climate-resilient agrifood system transformation.

The third stage involved compiling an inventory of institutional programs and initiatives associated with the policy framework. A systematic PRISMA-inspired screening method was applied to identify programs that were directly or indirectly linked to policy objectives. Government programs, development-partner initiatives and cross-sectoral interventions were examined to determine their scope, financial allocations, geographic reach,

implementing agencies, target groups and relevance to climate resilience and food systems transformation. Only programs that were active or recently implemented were retained to ensure contemporary relevance.

The fourth stage consisted of analysing Zambia's institutional architecture, including national, provincial and district-level structures. The review assessed mandates and coordination arrangements across ministries and agencies such as the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Green Economy and Environment, the Ministry of Finance and National Planning, the Ministry of Water Development and Sanitation, the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock, ZEMA, WARMA and the National Food and Nutrition Commission. The assessment also considered the roles of non-state actors including farmer organizations, private enterprises, civil society, research institutions and development partners. This stage sought to identify areas of duplication, fragmentation or institutional misalignment that affect policy implementation.

The fifth stage examined the political and financial commitments supporting climate adaptation and mitigation. Government budgets, climate finance reports, donor-funded programs and sectoral investment plans were analysed to understand the scale, distribution and predictability of climate-related financing. The review also assessed how financing constraints or bottlenecks influenced the execution of priority actions under the National Adaptation Plan, the Nationally Determined Contribution, the National Green Growth Strategy and the Comprehensive Agriculture Transformation Support Programme.

While budgetary allocations and public expenditure patterns are critical indicators of political commitment, the analysis was constrained by limited availability of systematically tagged climate expenditure data across sectors. Zambia does not yet apply comprehensive climate budget tagging within national or sectoral budgets, and expenditure reporting is fragmented across ministries and development partners. Where possible, budget statements, investment plans and donor financing frameworks were reviewed qualitatively to identify broad financing trends and constraints. However, the absence of consolidated and comparable budget data limited the use of quantitative expenditure analysis. As a result, policy and program density, combined with qualitative assessment of financing mechanisms and stakeholder insights, was used as a pragmatic proxy for identifying priority areas and demand signals.

The sixth and defining stage of the methodology was the national validation process conducted in Lusaka involving up to 20 stakeholders (40% women) drawn from the policy landscape in Zambia. The validation workshop confirmed the accuracy of the policy inventory, clarified institutional roles and identified omissions in the initial policy list. It also resolved inconsistencies in ministry nomenclature, particularly concerning the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock and its relevance to climate-sensitive sectors. This clarification is foundational for accurate institutional mapping, livestock emissions accounting and identification of climate vulnerabilities in the livestock subsector, which had previously been underrepresented in national reviews.

Participants additionally emphasised the need for deeper mapping of climate-relevant programs across social protection, irrigation, water security, energy transitions, research and market systems. As a result, the program inventory was expanded to include shock-responsive social protection schemes, nutrition governance mechanisms, smart subsidy reforms, irrigation rehabilitation projects and renewable energy initiatives, all of which significantly influence climate resilience trajectories.

The preliminary inventories, institutional mapping and analytical findings were presented and reviewed during the workshop by representatives of government ministries, statutory bodies, research institutions, farmer organizations, private-sector actors, youth groups, development partners and civil society. Stakeholders assessed the completeness of the policy list, verified institutional roles, identified additional policies and programs not captured in the initial review and highlighted practical implementation challenges. Their contributions provided nuanced insights on coordination bottlenecks, subnational implementation barriers, financing gaps, data limitations and opportunities for improving policy coherence.

The validation process ensured that the analysis reflects not only documentary evidence but also the perspectives of actors directly engaged in Zambia's climate and agrifood systems agenda. It strengthened the accuracy, contextual relevance and legitimacy of the findings and resulted in the inclusion of additional policies such as the National Green Growth Strategy, the Food and Nutrition Act, the National Lands Policy, the MSME Development Policy and multiple water, biodiversity and energy frameworks that had not been captured initially. It also confirmed the need to integrate youth engagement, gender-responsive implementation, private-sector participation and district-level capacity constraints more explicitly into the analysis.

Overall, this combined documentary and consultative methodology ensured that the report is grounded in evidence, aligned with national realities and responsive to stakeholder priorities. The approach provides a robust platform for guiding strategic decision-making and for aligning CGIAR's climate research, innovation pathways and investment priorities with Zambia's long-term development and resilience goals.

Within the Scaling for Impact (S4I) program, outputs generated under Area of Work 1 and specifically under High-Level Outcome 1-B are designed to inform and feed into High-Level Outcome 1-D. In practical terms, HLO1-B focuses on assembling and validating country-level evidence on policies, institutions, and programs, while HLO1-D builds on this evidence by synthesizing demand signals across countries and translating them into operational insights using comparative and semantic policy analysis tools. The structured inventory, thematic frequencies, and institutional mappings presented in this report therefore provide the empirical foundation required for that downstream work. This analysis does not duplicate the functions of HLO1-D, but instead supplies the foundational evidence base upon which demand signaling and innovation matching are subsequently built.

### **Assumptions and Limitations**

This assessment is subject to several assumptions and methodological limitations that should be acknowledged when interpreting the findings.

First, the analysis assumes that the existence, frequency, and thematic concentration of national policies and institutional programs provide meaningful signals of government priorities and institutional demand. Policies and programs are treated as primary indicators of formal intent, administrative focus, and enabling conditions for implementation. While this assumption is widely used in policy analysis, it does not imply that policy presence alone guarantees effective implementation, adequate resourcing, or political salience. Strong policy articulation may coexist with weak execution, fragmented financing, or limited institutional capacity, as observed in several areas of this review.

Second, the analysis assumes that active policies and programs offer the most relevant basis for understanding current demand and implementation dynamics. Accordingly, policies that had expired or been formally replaced at the time of the review were excluded. While this approach enhances contemporary relevance, it may understate the influence of legacy policies or informal practices that continue to shape institutional behavior beyond their formal lifespan.

Third, the review relies primarily on formal policy documents, institutional programs, and stakeholder consultations. Informal policy processes, political negotiations, private-sector strategies, and market-driven dynamics are not systematically captured, despite their importance in shaping climate action and agrifood system outcomes. As a result, some sources of demand, particularly those emerging from private investment or subnational innovation, may be underrepresented.

Fourth, although the analysis explicitly considers political and financial commitment, systematic and comparable budgetary data on climate-related expenditures were not consistently available across sectors. The absence of comprehensive climate budget tagging and consolidated expenditure reporting constrained the ability to quantitatively assess budget alignment with policy priorities. Consequently, policy and program density is used as a proxy for priority setting, complemented by qualitative insights on financing constraints and institutional bottlenecks.

Finally, stakeholder validation through the Lusaka workshop strengthened the accuracy and contextual relevance of the findings, but it reflects the perspectives of participants present at the time of consultation. While efforts were made to include a broad range of institutions and actors, no single consultation can fully capture all views, particularly at subnational levels.

These limitations do not invalidate the findings but underscore the need to interpret them as indicative rather than exhaustive. They also point to priority areas for future analytical work, including deeper integration of budget analysis, subnational expenditure tracking, and comparative policy coherence assessments across countries.

## **Key Findings**

From a demand-signaling perspective, the findings presented in this section indicate where Zambia's climate priorities are most strongly articulated through policy density, programmatic emphasis, and institutional commitment

The analysis reveals that Zambia's climate and agrifood system policy environment is robust in its conceptual foundations but constrained in its capacity to deliver coordinated, sustained and transformative action. The country has invested significantly in developing policies, strategies and programs that articulate its ambitions for climate resilience, sustainable agriculture, water security, green growth and inclusive development. However, the degree to which these ambitions translate into practical outcomes remains uneven and shaped by structural, institutional and financial realities. The findings emerging from the documentary review, the institutional assessment and the Lusaka validation workshop reflect several interlinked systemic challenges.

## Demand Signaling Insights from the Policy and Institutional Landscape

From a demand-signaling perspective, the findings presented in this section reveal where Zambia's climate priorities are most strongly articulated through policy and programmatic action. The density of instruments aligned with climate adaptation, water security, disaster risk management, ecosystem protection, and climate-smart agriculture indicates areas of sustained policy attention and implementation demand. Conversely, the relatively lower representation of climate finance mechanisms and mitigation-oriented instruments may point to emerging or latent demand areas where additional innovation, institutional strengthening, and investment alignment are required. At the same time, this pattern may also reflect the fact that climate finance is often operationalized through private-sector channels, financial institutions, and corporate mechanisms that are not fully captured within national policy instruments, rather than an absence of demand.


**Table 1.** Overview of national policies and institutional programs reviewed under the Climate Adaptation and Mitigation (CLIM) impact area in Zambia.

Item	Count
Total active national policies reviewed	94
Total institutional programs reviewed	112
CGIAR Impact Areas covered	5
Lead Impact Area for in-depth analysis	Climate Adaptation and Mitigation (CLIM)

Table 1 establishes the scope and composition of the policy and institutional landscape reviewed under the Climate Adaptation and Mitigation (CLIM) impact area. By delineating the number of active national policies and institutional programs included in the inventory, the table defines the evidence base upon which subsequent findings are drawn. This scoping is consistent with the HLO1-B inventory methodology applied across S4I countries and ensures transparency regarding the breadth of policy and programmatic instruments informing the analysis.

A dominant finding is the misalignment between the breadth of Zambia's policy landscape and the coherence of its implementation. Many policies, including the National Climate Change Policy (GRZ 2016), the National Adaptation Plan, the Nationally Determined Contribution (GRZ 2020), the National Green Growth Strategy and the Comprehensive Agriculture Transformation Support Programme, contain overlapping objectives related to climate resilience, sustainable production, green economy transition and improved livelihoods. However, these frameworks often evolve and operate in parallel rather than as components of a unified strategic architecture. The resulting fragmentation creates inefficiencies in planning, programming and resource allocation and contributes to a proliferation of coordination structures that lack the authority or resourcing to harmonize actions. Stakeholders repeatedly observed that this gap between policy ambition and operational coherence represents one of the most significant obstacles to effective climate action.

A second major finding relates to the political economy of institutional coordination. Zambia's ministries and agencies possess clearly defined mandates, yet practical interactions among them are shaped by historical sectoral silos, competition for donor resources, differences in technical capacity and varying institutional incentives. The Ministry of Green Economy and Environment provides statutory leadership for climate



governance but has limited leverage over sectoral ministries whose mandates, budgets and political visibility are often more substantial. Ministries responsible for agriculture, water, fisheries and livestock, energy and MSME development all pursue climate-related activities, yet their efforts are not consistently synchronized with national climate directives. In the absence of mechanisms that convene and guide alignment while also ensuring accountability, the system remains vulnerable to duplication, inconsistent messaging and missed opportunities for synergy.

A third finding concerns the underperformance of decentralization as a driver of climate resilience. Provincial and district structures are intended to translate national climate and food system priorities into local interventions that respond to the needs of farmers, communities and vulnerable groups. However, decentralization has not been matched with adequate resourcing, technical expertise, data systems or decision-making authority. District climate plans are often developed without sufficient technical support, and local development committees lack the tools required to interpret climate information, integrate it into planning or guide community-level adaptation. Participants in the Lusaka workshop emphasized that unless districts receive targeted investments in staffing, climate information, extension systems and financing autonomy, climate adaptation will remain uneven and inequitable.

Social protection systems remain an underutilized entry point for climate adaptation. Instruments such as the Food Security Pack, emergency cash transfers, nutrition programs and public works schemes have the potential to buffer climate shocks, support household recovery and catalyze community resilience. However, these programs are not systematically aligned with climate risk data or early warning systems, resulting in reactive rather than anticipatory support.

A fourth key finding centers on climate finance, which represents a binding constraint on Zambia's ability to scale resilience interventions. Although several policies articulate financial needs and outline mechanisms for mobilization, climate budgeting remains fragmented and inconsistent. Ministries do not systematically tag climate expenditures, and the country lacks a centralized and transparent mechanism for tracking climate-related investments. Without an integrated climate finance architecture, Zambia struggles to quantify adaptation expenditures, build a compelling case for international climate financing or align donor resources with national priorities. The workshop revealed that development partners manage numerous climate-related initiatives, yet many operate outside national budgeting systems, weakening national ownership and limiting the sustainability of outcomes. Strengthening the public finance architecture for climate action is essential.

A fifth major finding concerns weaknesses in monitoring, evaluation and learning systems. Despite references to monitoring in most policies, Zambia lacks a unified climate monitoring framework that integrates data from agriculture, water, forestry, meteorology, energy, land and social sectors. Information systems remain siloed, incompatible or incomplete, reducing the country's ability to track outcomes, detect risks, support early warning or fulfil reporting obligations under the Nationally Determined Contribution and National Adaptation Plan. District-level monitoring gaps further limit the feedback loops required for adaptive management. Without coherent MEL architecture, Zambia cannot fully leverage scientific insights, attract results-based climate finance or evaluate the cost-effectiveness of interventions.

A sixth finding highlights persistent inequities in gender, youth and social inclusion within climate and agricultural systems. Women and young people form a substantial share of

Zambia’s agricultural and natural resource workforce, yet they continue to face barriers to land ownership, financial services, climate information, productive technology and meaningful participation in decision-making. Although Zambia’s Gender Policy, Youth Policy and MSME frameworks acknowledge these inequalities, their application in climate programming is uneven. The workshop highlighted the absence of systematic mechanisms to ensure that women and youth participate in planning processes, benefit from climate financing instruments or access training in climate-smart entrepreneurship. These disparities limit adaptive capacity and risk deepening vulnerability among rural households.

Another important finding relates to the limited yet emerging participation of the private sector. The private sector has significant potential to drive climate-smart value chains, renewable energy solutions, digital advisory services, weather-indexed insurance, green jobs and technology dissemination. However, businesses face constraints including unclear regulatory frameworks, insufficient incentives for green investment, limited access to climate finance, weak market linkages and inadequate coordination with public institutions. These challenges suppress innovation, delay technology adoption and reduce Zambia’s capacity to build competitive and climate-resilient agrifood systems.

A final overarching finding is that Zambia’s institutional ecosystem possesses considerable untapped potential. The country benefits from a growing community of climate-focused public institutions, research actors, farmer organizations, universities and civil society networks. Development partners remain committed to supporting climate adaptation, and the private sector is expanding its engagement in renewable energy, irrigation, digital services and sustainable production. The fundamental challenge is not the absence of institutions or policies but the absence of integrated systems that bring these actors together around common goals, harmonized data, coordinated financing flows and mutually reinforcing strategies. With stronger coordination mechanisms, improved financing and MEL systems, targeted capacity strengthening and structured participation of women, youth and private actors, Zambia is well positioned to accelerate progress toward a climate-resilient and inclusive food system.

## Policy Landscape

Zambia’s policy landscape for climate adaptation and food system resilience is extensive and reflects a growing recognition of the interconnected nature of climate change, environmental management, agricultural productivity, biodiversity protection, energy transitions and socioeconomic inclusion. The country has developed numerous policies, strategies and legal frameworks that collectively articulate national priorities for resilience and inclusive green growth.

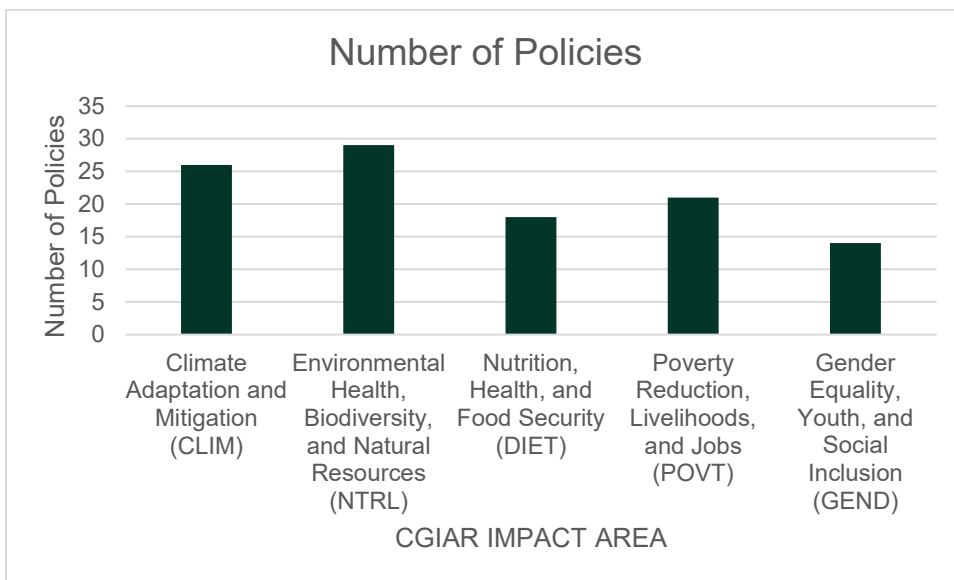
**Table 2.** Number of national policies and institutional programs mapped across CGIAR Impact Areas (multiple tagging allowed).

CGIAR Impact Area	Policies	Programs
Climate Adaptation and Mitigation (CLIM)	26	31
Environmental Health, Biodiversity, and Natural Resources (NTRL)	29	24

Nutrition, Health, and Food Security (DIET)	18	16
Poverty Reduction, Livelihoods, and Jobs (POVT)	21	19
Gender Equality, Youth, and Social Inclusion (GEND)	14	22
Total (non-additive)	94	112

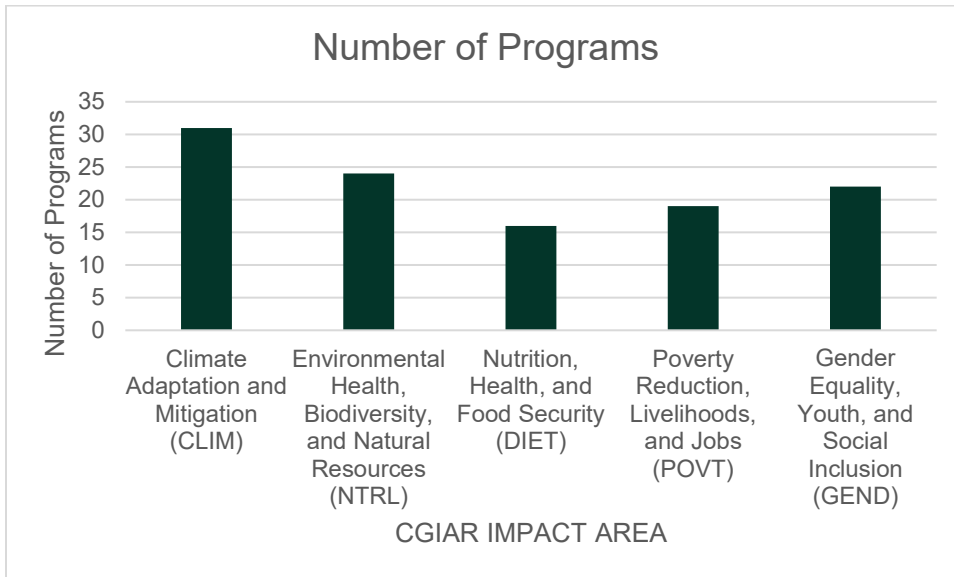
Note: Totals are non-additive as policies and programs may contribute to multiple CGIAR Impact Areas.

Table 2 presents the distribution of national policies and institutional programs across the five CGIAR Impact Areas, highlighting the multi-dimensional nature of Zambia’s policy framework. The distribution reflects the fact that many policies and programs contribute to multiple impact areas, underscoring the interconnectedness of climate adaptation and mitigation with poverty reduction, natural resource management, nutrition, and social inclusion. The concentration of instruments aligned with CLIM confirms the relevance of climate considerations within Zambia’s broader development policy landscape, while the spread across other impact areas points to potential complementarities in implementation.



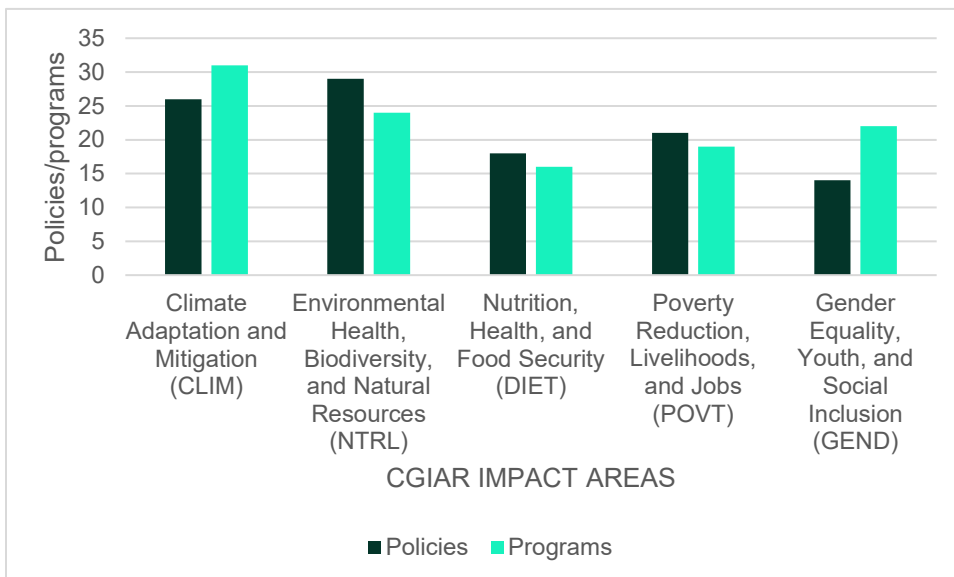
**Figure 2.** Distribution of reviewed national policies across CGIAR Impact Areas (policies may contribute to more than one impact area).

Figure 2 visualizes the distribution of national policies across CGIAR Impact Areas, reinforcing the cross-cutting character of Zambia’s policy framework. While a substantial share of policies aligns with Climate Adaptation and Mitigation, comparable policy attention is also directed toward natural resources, poverty reduction, and nutrition-related outcomes. This pattern mirrors observations from other S4I country inventories, where climate-related policies are embedded within broader development and environmental policy agendas rather than existing in isolation.



**Figure 3.** Distribution of reviewed institutional programs across CGIAR Impact Areas

Figure 3 illustrates the distribution of institutional programs across CGIAR Impact Areas, complementing the policy-level findings. Compared to policies, programs show a stronger concentration within CLIM and GEND, reflecting the translation of cross-sectoral policy commitments into targeted implementation initiatives. This divergence between policy and program distributions is consistent with patterns observed in the Nigeria and Bangladesh inventories, where institutional programs often serve as the primary vehicles for operationalising policy objectives.



**Figure 4.** Relative distribution of policies and institutional programs across CGIAR Impact Areas in Zambia.

Figure 4 juxtaposes the relative distribution of policies and programs across CGIAR Impact Areas, highlighting differences between policy formulation and programmatic implementation. In several areas, including CLIM and GEND, the number of programs exceeds the number of policies, suggesting an implementation-intensive landscape supported by a smaller set of overarching policy instruments. This pattern aligns with broader S4I findings that scaling opportunities are shaped not only by the existence of policies but also by the density and alignment of programs operating on the ground.

Despite the breadth of this architecture, stakeholders at the Lusaka validation workshop emphasized persistent fragmentation, limited alignment across sectors and recurring implementation challenges at both national and subnational levels. This section synthesizes the major climate-related and agrifood-system-related policies and situates them within Zambia’s broader development vision.

The foundation of Zambia’s climate policy framework is built on the National Policy on Climate Change of 2016, which provides overarching guidance for climate governance, mainstreaming and institutional coordination. Complementing this is the revised Nationally Determined Contribution of 2021, which outlines mitigation and adaptation targets and commits the country to integrating climate action across agriculture, energy, land use and biodiversity. The National Adaptation Plan, released in 2023, further advances this agenda by identifying priority adaptation actions for food systems, water resources, energy, ecosystems, infrastructure and social protection. Together, these three instruments form the core of Zambia’s strategic commitment to climate resilience and low-carbon development (see Figure 5).

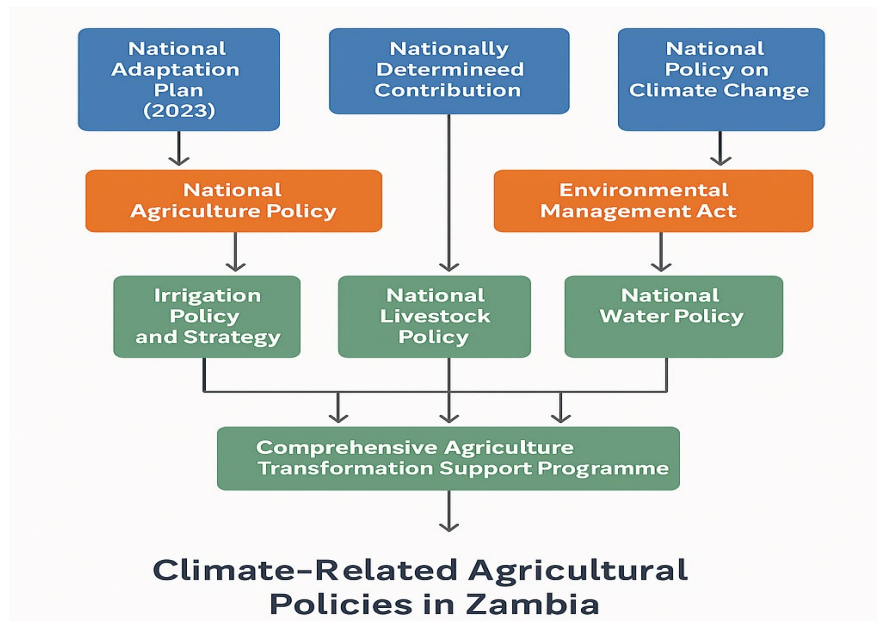
**Table 3.** Frequency of key climate-related thematic focus areas across CLIM-related policies and institutional programs in Zambia (multiple themes per item allowed).

CLIM thematic focus area	Policies (n = 26)	Programs (n = 31)
Climate adaptation	22	26
Climate mitigation	14	17
Water resources & irrigation	16	21
Disaster risk management	13	18
Climate finance	9	14
Ecosystem protection & restoration	15	19

Table 3 disaggregates CLIM-related policies and programs by key thematic focus areas, providing insight into the substantive orientation of Zambia’s climate policy and institutional landscape. In this table counts are non-additive, as individual policies and programs may address multiple thematic focus areas. Frequencies are based on qualitative review of policy and program objectives and implementation focus.

Climate adaptation features most prominently, reflecting Zambia’s exposure to climate variability and climate-induced risks. Water resources management, disaster risk management, and ecosystem protection also appear frequently, indicating recognition of climate impacts as system-wide challenges spanning water, land, and environmental governance. Mitigation and climate finance themes, while less prevalent, are nonetheless

present across both policies and programs, suggesting an emerging but still secondary emphasis within the CLIM portfolio. As these thematic frequencies are non-additive, they are intended to illustrate areas of concentration rather than relative priority or effectiveness.




**Figure 5.** Zambia’s Climate and Agrifood Policy Architecture

### Climate and Sectoral Policies Inform CATSP Implementation

Zambia’s climate governance framework, including the National Adaptation Plan, the Nationally Determined Contribution and the National Policy on Climate Change, sets the overarching national direction for adaptation and mitigation. These high-level strategies influence agricultural and natural resource management policies such as the National Agriculture Policy, the Irrigation Policy and the Livestock and Fisheries policies. CATSP sits beneath these frameworks as the sector’s principal implementation programme, absorbing their priorities and translating them into concrete investments and interventions within the agrifood system.

### Cross-sectoral Integration Shapes CATSP’s Design and Delivery

Agriculture-related policies operate alongside cross-cutting frameworks for water governance, biodiversity conservation, land management, gender equality, youth empowerment and MSME development. These policies jointly shape the enabling environment within which CATSP must function. Their integration ensures that CATSP incorporates climate-smart agriculture, sustainable resource management, inclusive participation and livelihood resilience, making policy alignment essential for effective implementation.



Environmental legislation further reinforces this climate agenda. The Environmental Management Act of 2011 establishes the regulatory foundation for pollution control, environmental planning, waste management and ecosystem protection. The Zambia Wildlife Act of 2015 governs wildlife conservation and provides the statutory basis for managing protected areas and biodiversity, which are increasingly threatened by climate-induced habitat loss. The National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, the National Lands Policy and the emerging Wetlands Policy strengthen commitments to protect ecosystems, restore degraded landscapes, safeguard land tenure and support sustainable agriculture. The National REDD+ Strategy positions Zambia within global efforts to reduce deforestation and forest degradation while promoting sustainable livelihoods.

Several additional policies critical for climate and agrifood resilience were identified during the validation process but remain insufficiently integrated into national climate planning. These include the National Water Policy, the National Land Policy, the National Sanitation Policy and the Wetlands Policy. These frameworks directly govern resource-use decisions that shape climate vulnerability, yet their omission from many climate analyses has contributed to fragmented approaches to water allocation, watershed protection, land-use planning and settlement expansion areas where climate impacts are already intensifying.

Zambia's emerging commitment to a greener and climate-smart economy is articulated most clearly in the National Green Growth Strategy for 2024 to 2030. This strategy seeks to reposition the economy toward resource efficiency, renewable energy, circular economy models, green jobs and low-carbon agricultural transformation. It provides one of the strongest policy anchors linking climate mitigation, climate adaptation and economic reform, and its alignment with the National Development Plan and sectoral policies holds significant potential for accelerating climate-resilient growth. Stakeholders at the validation workshop highlighted the importance of positioning the Green Growth Strategy as a unifying policy capable of bringing coherence across sectors that currently operate in isolation.

Agriculture remains the sector most vulnerable to climate impacts, and several policies shape its performance under increasing climatic variability. The National Agriculture Policy and the more recent Comprehensive Agriculture Transformation Support Programme set the direction for technology adoption, irrigation expansion, market development, seed system strengthening and sustainable land and water management. These policies acknowledge climate change as a major constraint to productivity and outline pathways for promoting climate-smart agriculture, although operationalization remains uneven. The Fisheries and Aquaculture Policy, the Livestock Development Policy, the Agricultural Marketing and Trade Policy, the Irrigation Policy and sectoral extension strategies all address specific components of the agrifood system and contribute to strengthening resilience to climate shocks. The Food Reserve Act of 2020 and the Food and Nutrition Act provide the regulatory basis for food security and nutrition governance during climatic and economic stresses.

Water-related policies also play a central role in shaping resilience. The Water Resources Management Act and its associated institutional arrangements under WARMA regulate water allocation, catchment management, groundwater protection and flood control. The Zambia Water Investment Programme outlines long-term investment needs for water security, irrigation development, hydropower and ecosystem protection. These policies are increasingly important as Zambia experiences rising variability in rainfall and greater

competition for water between agriculture, domestic use, ecosystems and the energy sector.

Energy policies intersect strongly with the climate agenda. The National Energy Policy of 2019, the Renewable Energy Strategy and the Energy Efficiency Action Plan support the diversification of the energy mix, expansion of renewable energy and reduction of emissions in the energy sector. These policies have direct implications for agrifood systems by promoting solar-powered irrigation, enabling low-carbon value addition and reducing post-harvest losses through improved access to sustainable energy.

Cross-cutting social and economic policies further influence resilience outcomes. The National Gender Policy, the National Youth Policy, the MSME Development Policy, the Social Protection Policy and financial inclusion strategies shape the distribution of climate risks and adaptation opportunities across different population groups. These policies are particularly important for safeguarding the livelihoods of women, youth and vulnerable households who face disproportionate exposure to climate shocks. However, workshop participants emphasized that although these policies exist, their integration into climate and agricultural programming remains limited.

Across all these policy instruments, a central finding from both the documentary review and the Lusaka validation workshop is the lack of a coherent and harmonized framework that brings together climate, agriculture, water, land, biodiversity, energy and economic transformation agendas. Many policies share common objectives but are implemented independently, supported by separate funding streams and overseen by institutions with overlapping mandates. This fragmentation limits Zambia's ability to scale climate-smart innovations, mobilize climate finance, strengthen monitoring systems and build resilience at community and district levels.

Despite these challenges, the policy landscape provides a strong foundation for transformation. The presence of progressive frameworks such as the Green Growth Strategy, the National Adaptation Plan, the Climate Change Policy and the Comprehensive Agriculture Transformation Support Programme presents opportunities for cross-sectoral alignment and integrated implementation. Strengthening coordination between these policies, harmonizing monitoring and evaluation systems, improving financing mechanisms and leveraging CGIAR research and innovations can significantly enhance Zambia's capacity to build a resilient and sustainable agrifood system.

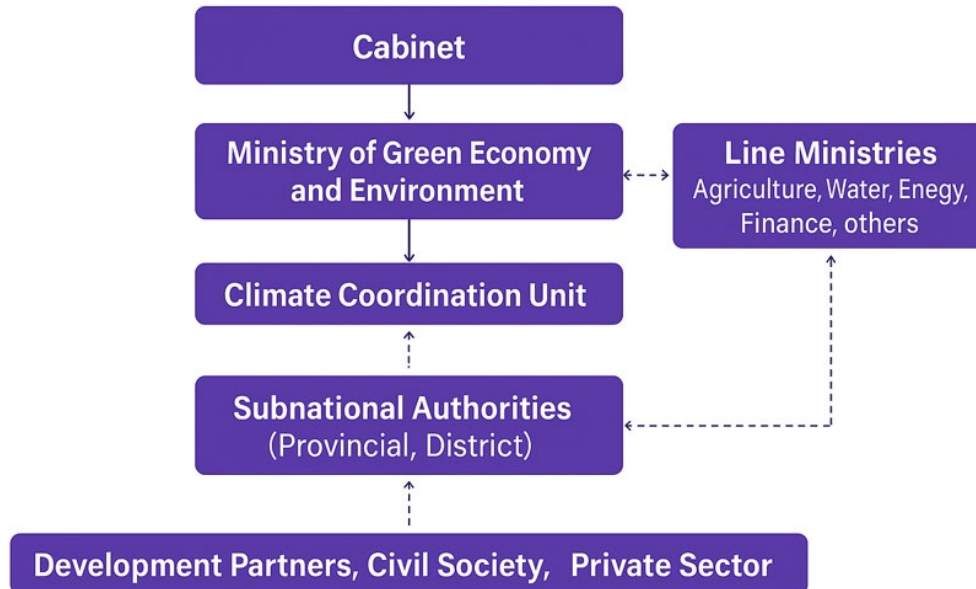
Market-oriented policies such as the Agricultural Marketing Bill, the Warehouse Receipt System Act, evolving seed legislation and contract farming regulations also have significant implications for climate resilience. These frameworks influence how farmers access markets, diversify production, manage post-harvest losses and respond to climate-induced shocks. Their limited alignment with climate objectives constrains the sector's ability to transition toward climate-smart and low-emission value chains.

Social protection and nutrition governance frameworks, including the Food and Nutrition Act, the Social Protection Policy, the Food Security Pack and shock-responsive safety nets, also play a central role in climate resilience by protecting vulnerable households from climate-induced income and food insecurity. Despite their relevance, these instruments are rarely integrated into climate planning cycles, resulting in missed opportunities to link social protection with anticipatory action and resilience programming.

## Institutional Landscape

Zambia's institutional landscape for climate adaptation and agrifood system resilience is shaped by a complex network of ministries, statutory agencies, subnational governance structures, research institutions, civil society organizations, private enterprises and development partners. Together, these actors form the foundation upon which national climate ambitions must be translated into practical, measurable and sustainable action. Although the institutional architecture is relatively mature and reflects deliberate government efforts to organize climate governance, the Lusaka validation workshop revealed persistent gaps that continue to constrain implementation. Understanding the interactions, strengths and limitations of this system is essential for aligning Zambia's policies and programs with the CGIAR Climate Adaptation and Mitigation agenda.

At the center of Zambia's climate governance system is the Ministry of Green Economy and Environment (see Figure 5). This ministry is the lead institution responsible for climate policy direction, international climate commitments, environmental regulation and coordination of adaptation and mitigation actions across sectors. Through the Climate Change Directorate, it oversees the implementation of the National Adaptation Plan and the Nationally Determined Contribution and guides the operationalization of the National Policy on Climate Change. The ministry has been instrumental in elevating climate change as a strategic development priority. However, as emphasized during the validation workshop, it faces challenges in exercising its coordination mandate due to limited resources, overlapping responsibilities with other ministries and inadequate mechanisms for cross-sectoral enforcement.



**Figure 6.** Institutional Architecture for Climate Governance in Zambia (Source: Author's compilation)

Figure 6 illustrates how climate governance in Zambia is organised through a vertically layered and horizontally connected institutional system. Cabinet provides the highest-level policy direction, while the Ministry of Green Economy and Environment serves as the

central coordinating authority for climate action. The Climate Coordination Unit links national leadership with provincial and district structures, ensuring that adaptation and mitigation priorities flow downward and that local information flows upward. Line ministries, such as Agriculture, Water, Energy and Finance, work laterally with MGEE to integrate climate objectives into their sector programmes. Development partners, civil society and the private sector provide technical support, finance, and implementation partnerships, engaging with both national and subnational actors. Collectively, the structure highlights a governance arrangement that requires strong coordination and information-sharing across institutions for effective climate response.


The Ministry of Agriculture plays a pivotal role in translating climate policy into measurable results, given that agriculture is both the most climate-sensitive sector and the primary source of livelihood for rural households. It oversees crop production, extension services, research linkages, land use planning, sustainable soil management, seed systems and the responsibilities associated with the Comprehensive Agriculture Transformation Support Programme. Its broad mandate positions it at the intersection of climate resilience, food security, nutrition, livelihoods and economic growth. Yet workshop discussions revealed that climate considerations are not consistently embedded in agricultural planning cycles. Collaboration with the Ministry of Green Economy and Environment, the Ministry of Water Development and Sanitation and the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock remains uneven. This results in fragmented programming, duplicated initiatives and inconsistent delivery of climate-smart agriculture at scale.

District officials highlighted additional constraints that limit the effectiveness of frontline service delivery. These include limited extension staffing, transport shortages, delays in accessing climate information, outdated animal health infrastructure and insufficient financing for community-level adaptation. Even well-formulated national strategies struggle to translate into localized responses under such conditions. Without addressing these district-level barriers, climate impacts will continue to disproportionately affect vulnerable households.

District structures are the primary interface between national policy and community-level action. However, validation discussions revealed systemic weaknesses. These include limited operational budgets, absence of district climate focal persons, inadequate staffing in extension and veterinary services, poor access to climate and hydrological information and limited digital infrastructure. As a result, districts struggle to integrate climate priorities into annual plans or coordinate responses during climate shocks. Strengthening district institutional capacity is therefore essential for achieving climate adaptation at scale.

The Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock contributes significantly to climate resilience through its oversight of livestock development, aquaculture production, animal health systems and rangeland management. These subsectors are highly vulnerable to climate-related shocks such as heat stress, pasture depletion, disease outbreaks and declining water bodies. Despite their importance, climate adaptation remains insufficiently integrated into livestock and aquaculture planning frameworks. The ministry's ability to respond to climate-induced emergencies is often constrained by resource limitations and limited coordination with veterinary research systems, water institutions and climate information providers.

Water governance plays an equally critical role in climate resilience. The Ministry of Water Development and Sanitation and the Water Resources Management Authority are responsible for water allocation, catchment protection, groundwater regulation, dam oversight and the management of both drought and flood risks. As climate variability



increases, pressure on water systems has intensified, raising the urgency of integrated approaches to water storage, irrigation expansion, flood control and watershed restoration. Stakeholders at the validation workshop repeatedly stressed that climate adaptation efforts in agriculture, energy and urban systems cannot progress without more coordinated water governance. However, siloed institutional arrangements continue to impede integrated planning.

Environmental protection and natural resource management institutions add further layers of responsibility. The Zambia Environmental Management Agency, the Forestry Department and the Department of National Parks and Wildlife regulate environmental compliance, oversee forest conservation, manage protected areas and support biodiversity protection. These responsibilities directly influence Zambia's capacity to implement climate mitigation, pursue ecosystem restoration and achieve land degradation neutrality. Persistent challenges remain, including insufficient enforcement of environmental regulations, weak coordination across land governance agencies and fragmented biodiversity programs.

Economic and financial institutions shape the enabling environment for climate action. The Ministry of Finance and National Planning plays a central role in planning, budgeting, climate finance coordination and national development monitoring. Its decisions determine whether climate priorities embedded in the National Adaptation Plan, the Nationally Determined Contribution and the National Green Growth Strategy receive adequate funding. The Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprise Development supports entrepreneurship, value-chain development and financial inclusion, all of which are essential for fostering climate-resilient MSMEs, promoting green enterprise development and enabling livelihood diversification. The Ministry of Energy directs the transition toward renewable energy and energy efficiency, which supports key interventions such as solar irrigation, rural electrification, cold chains and climate-resilient agro-processing.

The decentralized governance system, comprising Provincial Development Coordinating Committees, District Development Coordinating Committees and Ward Development Committees, serves as the link between national policy and local action. These structures are intended to integrate climate priorities into district planning, mobilize community participation and support community-based adaptation. The validation workshop identified systemic weaknesses, including inadequate financial autonomy, limited technical staffing, insufficient climate information services and unclear mandates relative to national-level institutions. These gaps reduce the effectiveness of climate action at the levels where impacts are most acutely felt.

Non-state actors are integral to Zambia's climate institutional landscape. Research institutions such as the Zambia Agricultural Research Institute, public universities and CGIAR centers generate innovations that support climate adaptation and mitigation. Civil society organizations contribute through community mobilization, awareness campaigns, capacity development and environmental advocacy. Farmer organizations strengthen producer capacity, disseminate climate-smart practices and support participation in input and output markets. The private sector plays an increasingly important role in delivering climate-smart technologies, renewable energy systems, digital services and financial products. However, workshop participants noted that incentives for private-sector engagement remain limited and that regulatory frameworks do not always support innovation scaling.

Development partners provide financial and technical support for climate resilience programs, infrastructure development, early warning systems and institutional

strengthening. Their contributions remain significant but are often fragmented, resulting in parallel systems, duplication and inconsistent alignment with national priorities. The validation workshop underscored the need for a more coordinated development partner engagement framework linked to the implementation pathways of the National Adaptation Plan, the National Green Growth Strategy and the Comprehensive Agriculture Transformation Support Programme.

Across these institutions, a common theme emerging from the validation exercise is the need for a stronger and more integrated coordination mechanism to bridge sectoral divides, harmonize data systems and align investments. The absence of a unified climate governance platform contributes to a proliferation of strategies, programs and reporting systems that do not connect effectively. Climate finance mobilization remains fragmented, monitoring and evaluation systems are inconsistent and institutional mandates overlap in ways that slow decision-making and weaken accountability.


Despite these challenges, Zambia's institutional ecosystem holds substantial potential. The presence of specialized climate governance structures, committed sectoral ministries, an active research community, an increasingly engaged private sector and development partners willing to support coordinated action creates a strong foundation for transformative climate resilience. Unlocking this potential will require clearer coordination mandates, stronger financing mechanisms, improved data architecture, enhanced subnational capacity and deeper integration of climate priorities into economic and social policy domains.

Participants also highlighted practical coordination conflicts that impede effective implementation. These include overlapping responsibilities between the Zambia Environmental Management Agency and the Water Resources Management Authority in water resource regulation, between the Ministry of Agriculture and local government authorities in land-use planning and between the Ministry of Green Economy and Environment and the Ministry of Finance and National Planning in climate finance leadership. Although these conflicts are seldom addressed explicitly in policy documents, they significantly influence the day-to-day functioning of climate governance and the effectiveness of climate-responsive actions.

## **Gaps and Opportunities**

The assessment of Zambia's policy architecture, institutional dynamics and program landscape reveals a climate and agrifood system that is conceptually well framed but practically constrained by structural, institutional, financial and governance gaps. These limitations weaken the country's ability to deliver climate-resilient development at scale. Yet within these challenges lie significant opportunities for Zambia to reposition itself as a regional leader in climate adaptation, green growth and agrifood transformation.

A fundamental gap concerns the disjunction between policy ambition and policy execution. Zambia has made remarkable progress in articulating its national climate and development aspirations through instruments such as the National Adaptation Plan, the Nationally Determined Contribution, the National Climate Change Policy, the National Green Growth Strategy, the National Agriculture Policy and the Comprehensive Agriculture Transformation Support Programme. Collectively, these documents set out a sophisticated agenda for resilience, productivity, green industrialization and sustainable resource management. However, the mechanisms needed to translate these visions into coordinated action are insufficiently developed. Policies often operate in isolation, guided



by separate planning cycles, implementation structures and financing channels. This has created a landscape where policies coexist rather than reinforce one another, resulting in diluted impact, uneven progress and missed opportunities for synergy.

A second major gap arises from the institutional incentives that shape climate governance. The Ministry of Green Economy and Environment is formally mandated to lead climate coordination, yet it operates in an environment where sectoral ministries retain larger budgets, broader mandates and greater political visibility. Ministries responsible for agriculture, water, fisheries and livestock, finance, energy and local government respond primarily to sector-specific priorities, donor interests or internal planning requirements rather than to cross-sectoral climate directives. This dynamic weakens the authority of climate coordination frameworks and perpetuates the fragmentation observed in program implementation. Effective climate governance requires incentives that encourage collaboration and discourage unilateral action, yet such incentives remain limited.

A third gap relates to the limited operational capacity of provincial and district structures that are expected to form the backbone of climate adaptation. Zambia's decentralization framework aims to bring decision-making closer to communities, yet subnational institutions lack adequate financing, staffing, climate information, digital infrastructure and technical tools. District development plans are frequently prepared without sufficient reference to climate data, and local development committees struggle to integrate national climate priorities in a manner that reflects local vulnerabilities and livelihood realities. The validation workshop underscored that without targeted investments in district capacity, Zambia's climate policies will remain aspirational rather than transformative.

A fourth gap concerns the country's constrained climate finance ecosystem. Although the National Adaptation Plan and Nationally Determined Contribution outline substantial investment requirements, Zambia does not yet possess a climate finance architecture capable of mobilizing, coordinating and tracking climate-related investments across sectors. Ministries lack systematic tools to tag climate expenditures, quantify adaptation benefits or satisfy the requirements of major climate funds. Development partners often introduce parallel financing channels that bypass national systems, reducing coherence and limiting institutional strengthening. The absence of a unified national framework for climate finance mobilization and tracking prevents Zambia from presenting the long-term investment profile required to access climate funds at scale. A further critical gap relates to the lack of quantification of Zambia's climate financing needs and expenditures. Without a consolidated estimate of adaptation costs by sector, the country struggles to articulate financing gaps or build coordinated investment pipelines.

A fifth systemic gap concerns fragmentation within monitoring, evaluation and learning systems. Climate resilience requires integrated data on rainfall patterns, hydrological flows, land conditions, agricultural productivity, biodiversity health, community vulnerability and social inclusion. Yet these datasets remain diffuse, inconsistently collected and rarely synthesized across sectors. Ministries maintain independent reporting systems, and district-level data are intermittent or incomplete. Without an integrated national climate information system, Zambia cannot undertake evidence-based planning, guide adaptive management, monitor progress against the National Adaptation Plan and Nationally Determined Contribution or attract results-based financing. This gap limits Zambia's capacity to respond to climate risks with precision, timeliness, and confidence, and constrains its ability to assess the effectiveness of policies and actions, learn from experience, and adapt over time.

Practical implementation failures illustrate these systemic weaknesses. Ministries shared examples that included delays in subsidy distribution, inadequate supply and certification of quality seed, recurrent livestock disease outbreaks exacerbated by climatic stress, fisheries losses caused by rising temperatures and fluctuating water levels and persistent inconsistencies in extension delivery. These challenges demonstrate the gap between policy ambition and operational capability and highlight the urgent need for stronger institutional systems.

A sixth gap relates to shortcomings in social inclusion. Although Zambia has enacted progressive gender, youth and social protection policies, their operational integration into climate and agrifood programming remains limited. Women and youth continue to face barriers to land, finance, technology, markets and representation in governance structures. Their participation in climate-related decision-making is often symbolic rather than substantive. Workshop discussions emphasized that climate interventions insufficiently account for differentiated vulnerabilities, thereby reducing the overall adaptive capacity of rural households.

A final structural gap concerns the limited engagement of the private sector in climate and agrifood system transformation. While Zambia's policy architecture recognizes the importance of green enterprises, renewable energy, climate-smart technologies and market development, the enabling environment for private-sector participation is underdeveloped. Investors face regulatory uncertainty, limited access to blended finance instruments, high capital costs and weak incentives for climate-smart innovation. These constraints hinder the development of irrigation technologies, climate insurance products, drought-tolerant inputs, digital advisory tools and low-carbon processing systems.

Despite these systemic challenges, Zambia possesses considerable opportunities. One of the most significant is the emergence of the National Green Growth Strategy as a potential anchor for unifying climate, agriculture, energy, water and industrial development under a coherent resilience and transformation agenda. The Strategy provides a structured pathway for aligning sectoral plans, mobilizing green investment, incentivizing private innovation and linking national development priorities to global climate finance architecture.

The National Adaptation Plan presents another major opportunity. It offers a clearly prioritized, costed and nationally owned framework that can be used to mobilize climate finance, guide cross-sectoral implementation and coordinate development partner support. Integrated effectively with the National Development Plan and the Comprehensive Agriculture Transformation Support Programme, the National Adaptation Plan could become the operational backbone of Zambia's climate resilience agenda.

The Comprehensive Agriculture Transformation Support Programme provides an additional opportunity to embed climate resilience into Zambia's economic transition. Its focus on productivity, irrigation, digitalization, seed systems, market development and value addition offers a practical platform for scaling climate-smart agriculture and promoting inclusive growth.

Further opportunities arise from the expanding renewable energy sector, the growth of digital technologies, increasing availability of blended finance instruments, heightened global attention to adaptation finance and the expanding role of CGIAR in generating climate-resilient innovations. Zambia's institutional landscape includes motivated research institutions, farmer organizations, civil society networks and private-sector actors who are increasingly engaged in climate innovation and green enterprise development. If these

opportunities are harnessed through stronger governance structures, clearer coordination mechanisms, targeted investments in decentralization, integrated monitoring systems and enhanced climate finance mobilisation, Zambia can convert its strong policy foundations into measurable, scalable and equitable progress toward climate-resilient food systems.

The validation workshop also identified significant potential to develop climate-resilient livelihoods and green jobs, particularly for women and youth. Expanded climate-smart MSMEs, circular economy models, agro-processing, renewable energy services, digital agriculture and training in climate finance and green entrepreneurship offer major pathways for building a climate-resilient and inclusive economy. The annexes A and B further show some of the institutions and policies that characterize the Zambian climate change and agriculture ecosystems.

## **Conclusion and Way Forward**

Zambia has established a comprehensive policy framework for climate resilient and sustainable development, anchored in the National Adaptation Plan, the Nationally Determined Contribution, the National Green Growth Strategy and sectoral transformation programs. These instruments reflect clear national commitment to climate adaptation, ecosystem protection and resilient agrifood systems. However, this assessment and the Lusaka validation workshop confirm that implementation remains uneven. Fragmented coordination, overlapping mandates, limited financing alignment and weak monitoring systems constrain effective delivery.

The analysis indicates that Zambia's primary challenge is not policy intent but institutional coherence. Stronger alignment among major climate and agrifood strategies is required to embed climate priorities consistently within planning, budgeting and implementation processes. Clearer institutional roles, improved accountability mechanisms and more effective inter-ministerial coordination are necessary to translate policy ambition into integrated action.

Decentralized implementation remains a critical gap. Districts and communities face direct climate impacts yet often lack sufficient technical capacity, information systems and predictable financing. Strengthening subnational institutions and integrating local perspectives into national planning frameworks will be central to durable adaptation outcomes.

Financing will significantly shape Zambia's climate pathway. Achieving resilience in agriculture, water systems, ecosystem restoration and infrastructure requires coordinated mobilization of public, private and international resources. A coherent national climate finance framework aligned with priority strategies would strengthen resource mobilization, expenditure tracking and investment targeting.

Monitoring, evaluation and learning systems must also improve to support adaptive and evidence based climate responses. Harmonized indicators, integrated reporting platforms and stronger district level data systems will enhance transparency, planning and access to performance based finance.

Women and youth remain central to Zambia's resilience trajectory. Expanding their access to climate information, finance, land and technology will strengthen adaptation while advancing inclusive growth.

Zambia's policy foundation is strong. Converting that foundation into coordinated, well financed and accountable implementation systems will determine the country's success in advancing a climate resilient and food secure future.

## **Recommendations**

Zambia's progress toward a climate resilient and inclusive agrifood system depends on strengthening institutional coherence, financing alignment and decentralized implementation. The following recommendations build on the policy and institutional analysis and stakeholder validation.

### **1. Strengthen national climate coordination.**

The Ministry of Green Economy and Environment should be empowered to coordinate climate action across sectors, with clearer mandates and stronger integration into national planning and budgeting systems. Climate objectives should be embedded within development planning to reduce fragmentation and align implementation of the National Adaptation Plan, the Nationally Determined Contribution and the National Green Growth Strategy.

### **2. Establish a coherent national climate finance framework.**

Zambia should formalize a climate finance coordination mechanism responsible for resource mobilization, expenditure tracking, proposal development and reporting. Climate budget tagging, improved access to multilateral funds and strengthened public-private partnerships would enhance financing predictability and alignment with national priorities.

### **3. Operationalize the National Adaptation Plan as the central implementation framework.**

The National Adaptation Plan should guide sector planning, budget allocations and development partner programming. Integration with the National Development Plan and the Comprehensive Agriculture Transformation Support Programme will improve sequencing and accountability.

### **4. Strengthen decentralized climate implementation.**

District institutions require improved technical capacity, climate information access and predictable financing. Clear guidance for integrating climate priorities into district planning, alongside investments in extension services and early warning systems, will enable more effective local adaptation.

### **5. Build an integrated climate monitoring and reporting system.**

A unified monitoring, evaluation and learning architecture should consolidate data across agriculture, water, land and energy sectors. Harmonized indicators and stronger district-level reporting will improve adaptive management and access to performance-based climate finance.

### **6. Embed gender and youth inclusion in climate programming.**

Operational mechanisms should ensure equitable access to land, finance, technology and decision-making processes. Inclusion indicators should be integrated into monitoring systems to track progress and strengthen accountability.

## **7. Catalyze private sector and innovation partnerships.**

Regulatory clarity, blended finance instruments and risk-sharing mechanisms can stimulate investment in irrigation, renewable energy, digital advisory services and climate-smart value chains. Partnerships with research institutions, including CGIAR platforms, can accelerate the scaling of climate-resilient technologies.

Together, these actions would strengthen institutional coherence, improve financing alignment and enhance implementation capacity, enabling Zambia to translate its strong policy foundation into measurable resilience outcomes.

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## Annexes

### Annex A. Inventory of National Policies Relevant to Climate Resilience and Agrifood Systems Transformation

**Table A1.** National policies and their climate relevance

Policy Title	Year	Lead Institution	Climate / CGIAR Impact Areas
Second National Agricultural Policy	2016	Ministry of Agriculture	Climate Adaptation and Mitigation; Nutrition, Health and Food Security; Poverty Reduction, Livelihoods and Jobs
Eighth National Development Plan (8NDP)	2022	Ministry of Finance and National Planning	All Five
The Plant Variety and Seeds Act (Amendment)	2021	Ministry of Agriculture	Climate Adaptation and Mitigation; Poverty Reduction, Livelihoods and Jobs
National Policy on Climate Change	2016	Ministry of Lands, Natural Resources and Environmental Protection	Climate Adaptation and Mitigation; Environmental Health and Biodiversity; Gender Equality, Youth and Social Inclusion
Environmental Management Act, 2011	2011	Ministry of Lands, Natural Resources and Environmental Protection	Environmental Health and Biodiversity; Climate Adaptation and Mitigation
NAP Zambia 2023	2023	Ministry of Green Economy and Environment	Climate Adaptation and Mitigation; Environmental Health and Biodiversity; Poverty Reduction, Livelihoods and Jobs
GFSS Country Plan – USAID Zambia	2022	USAID Zambia (in collaboration with GRZ)	All Five
Provisional NDC Submission (2021)	2021	Ministry of Green Economy and Environment	Climate Adaptation and Mitigation; Gender Equality, Youth and Social Inclusion
Zambia Vision 2030	2006	Ministry of Finance and National Planning	All Five
Comprehensive Agricultural Transformation Support Programme (CATSP)	2023	Ministry of Agriculture (Zambia)	Climate Adaptation, Nutrition & Food Security, Gender Equality, Poverty Reduction, Environmental Health

**Table A2.** Inventory of Institutional Programs Supporting Climate Resilience

Program Title	Implementing Agency	CGIAR Impact Areas	Status
National Crop Diversification Programme	Ministry of Agriculture	Climate adaptation and GHG reduction	Active
Irrigation-Supported Crop Intensification Program	Ministry of Agriculture	Climate adaptation and GHG reduction	Active
CGIAR Innovation Scaling Pilots (e.g., AICCRA, TAMASA, SIMLESA)	ZARI; CGIAR Centers	Climate adaptation and GHG reduction	Active
Irrigation Development and Support Project (IDSP)	Ministry of Agriculture	Climate adaptation and GHG reduction	Completed (main phase); Follow-on activities ongoing
Water Resources Development Project (WRDP)	Ministry of Water Development and Sanitation	Climate adaptation and GHG reduction	Completed (core phase); ongoing follow-ups
Smallholder Irrigation Promotion Program (SIPP)	Ministry of Agriculture	Climate adaptation and GHG reduction	Active
Water Productivity through Open-access of Remotely sensed derived data (WaPOR) Zambia Pilot	IWMI; Ministry of Agriculture	Climate adaptation and GHG reduction	Pilot
Accelerating Impacts of CGIAR Climate Research for Africa (AICCRA) Zambia Water-Smart Pilots	IWMI Zambia	Climate adaptation and GHG reduction	Active (Pilot Phase)
Water User Associations (WUAs) Empowerment Initiative	Ministry of Agriculture	Climate adaptation and GHG reduction	Active
Zambezi Watercourse Commission (ZAMCOM) Strategic Plan and Basin-wide Planning	ZAMCOM Secretariat	Climate adaptation and GHG reduction	Active
SADC Water-Energy-Food (WEF) Nexus Regional Dialogues and Investments	SADC Water Division; Ministry of Water Development and Sanitation	Climate adaptation and GHG reduction	Active
Green Infrastructure for Resilience (GIR) Programme	Ministry of Green Economy and Environment	Climate adaptation and GHG reduction	Active (early scale-up phase)

Climate-Resilient Infrastructure Development Fund (CRIDF) – Zambia Activities	CRIDF with local authorities	Climate adaptation and GHG reduction	Active
National Hydrological Monitoring and Early Warning System	Ministry of Water; WARMA	Climate adaptation and GHG reduction	Active
Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP)	Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development	Climate adaptation and GHG reduction	Planned/Initial implementation
Zambia National Adaptation Plan (NAP)	Ministry of Green Economy and Environment	Climate adaptation and greenhouse gas reduction	Active
Zambia Integrated Forest Landscape Project (ZIFLP)	Ministry of Green Economy and Environment	Climate adaptation and greenhouse gas reduction	Active
Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA) Mainstreaming Programme	Ministry of Agriculture	Climate adaptation and greenhouse gas reduction	Active
Zambia Voluntary Carbon Market Pilot	Ministry of Green Economy and Environment	Climate adaptation and greenhouse gas reduction	Pilot
Green Economy Financing Facility (GEFF)	Development Bank of Zambia	Climate adaptation and greenhouse gas reduction	Active
Country Agrifood Transformation Strategy Program (CATSP)	Ministry of Agriculture (MoA)	CLIM, POVT, DIET, GEND, NTRL	Planned/Active
Comprehensive Agriculture Transformation Support Program (CATSP)	Ministry of Agriculture; Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock	CLIM, NTRL, POVT, DIET, GEND	Active

## **Annex B. National Validation Workshop**

A national validation workshop was held in Lusaka on 3 November 2025 to review, verify and strengthen the policy and institutional inventory and preliminary analytical findings. The workshop brought together up to 20 representatives (40% women) from key government ministries and agencies, including the Ministry of Green Economy and Environment, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Water Development and Sanitation, Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock, Ministry of Finance and National Planning, Zambia Environmental Management Agency and Water Resources Management Authority. Participants also included representatives from research institutions, civil society organizations, farmer associations, youth groups, private-sector actors and development partners.

The workshop served three primary functions. First, participants validated the completeness and accuracy of the policy and program inventory, identifying omissions, clarifying institutional mandates and resolving inconsistencies in ministry nomenclature. Second, stakeholders provided qualitative insights into implementation challenges, coordination bottlenecks, financing gaps and subnational constraints that are not fully visible in policy documents. Third, the workshop tested the demand-signaling interpretation of the findings, assessing whether identified priority areas and gaps resonated with implementation realities.

Feedback from the workshop directly informed revisions to the policy inventory, expansion of the institutional program list and refinement of the analysis of coordination, financing and inclusion gaps presented in this report.

## **Annex C. Analytical Framework and Mapping Methodology**

The policy and institutional analysis applied a structured content analysis framework aligned with the CGIAR Impact Areas and the objectives of HLO1-B under Scaling for Impact. Each policy and institutional program was reviewed using a standardized extraction template capturing objectives, thematic focus, institutional responsibility, implementation mechanisms, financing references, monitoring provisions and cross-sectoral linkages.

Mapping to CGIAR Impact Areas was conducted using thematic coding based on explicit references within policy objectives, strategic priorities and implementation components. Policies and programs could be tagged to multiple Impact Areas where substantive contributions were evident. Mapping decisions were guided by predefined criteria to ensure consistency, including relevance to climate adaptation or mitigation, contribution to food system outcomes, and alignment with cross-cutting priorities such as gender inclusion, biodiversity protection and poverty reduction.

Institutional coherence was assessed qualitatively by examining overlaps, complementarities and gaps across policies and programs, informed by stakeholder validation. This framework is consistent with approaches applied in comparable CGIAR policy coherence analyses and provides a transparent basis for interpreting policy density and demand signals.



#### Disclaimer

This work was carried out under the CGIAR Scaling for Impact Program and has not been independently peer reviewed. Responsibility for editing, proofreading, and layout, opinions expressed, and any possible errors lie with the authors and not the institutions involved.

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