

CHINA AND BRAZIL IN AFRICAN AGRICULTURE: THE CASE OF ZIMBABWE

- The case for agricultural cooperation
 - Background
 - Shared policy positions
- Areas of agricultural cooperation
- Findings
- Research Gaps/ Fears

1. The case for agricultural cooperation

1.1 Background

- Country isolated economically and diplomatically with the 1999/2000 land reform programme
- Aid and investment flows shrank dramatically
- All agric. land in state hands; land ceased to be a form of collateral
- Declining agric production; economy went into tailspin
 - Country engaged China and Brazil among other countries to explore opportunities for agric cooperation

1.2 Converging policy positions

- Zimbabwe-China political alliance established during time of Zimbabwe's liberation struggle
- At independence in 1980, political ties with China strengthened; economic ties with West continued; country a key member of the Non-Aligned Movement.
- General perception that Chinese technology was inferior: misinformation; China has come a long way since.
- 2003: Zimbabwe proclaimed the **“Look East Policy”** at the height of sanctions
- 1999: China's **“Going Out”** or **“Going Global Policy”** as stimulus to Chinese private investments in Africa: done to promote Chinese investments abroad in the context of wider geopolitical ambitions
- Chinese Wealth Fund established by Chinese Investment Cooperation: for cheap funds

1.2 Converging policy positions

- China's espoused policy of non-interference in internal affairs of other countries: insistence on Stability/Predictability
- Brazil: No historical ties; relationship established as Brazil is asserting itself as a global power keen on having successes with South-South cooperation; non-interference policy

2. Areas of agricultural cooperation

China: Agricultural Technology Demonstration Centre; Inputs and Equipment for tobacco and cotton contract farming arrangements; Agricultural machinery, Staff Development

Brazil: More Food for Africa; Staff Development; Ethanol Plant

- More Food for Africa programme: focus on food sovereignty; a convenient entry point for a country keen to regain status as regional food basket.
- Ethanol project: export of technology; possibility of world bio-fuel alliance with Brazil as axis?

3. Findings

- Investments “safe”: protected by govt to govt protocols; exempted from complying with some regulations
- Aid and investment delivered through partnerships between Chinese govt and private companies: making profit in the process
- Smart business decisions: provision of needed resources; a competitive market for produce
- Win-Win commercial business position as a basis for perpetuating relationship; Western donors: beneficiaries may never be able to stand on their own; dependency syndrome?

3. Findings contd.

- Changed perceptions towards China: country now more widely considered as a sincere development partner by all parties in govt and the population at large; deepening scope for South-South cooperation
- Cooperation programmes could worsen country's indebtedness if repayment arrangements are not tightened
- Non-transparency: agreements with both China and Brazil conducted in secrecy and not subject to public scrutiny
 - Chinese investment particularly welcome in short term: tobacco output had declined to 50 million kg from a high of 236 million kg; now at 150 million kg
 - Country given some breathing space and its *bargaining* position strengthened

4. Research Gaps/ Fears

- **Appropriate interventions for low potential areas?**
 - 75% of smallholder farmers in low potential areas; food shortages endemic; areas could be even more vulnerable with climate change
 - Increasing disparities among farmers in low and high potential areas
- **Unbalanced power relationships**
 - Need to interrogate the extent to which “national interest” is being prejudiced: terms of loans to Zimbabwe compared to other countries
 - Intricate nature of agreements with some guarantees reportedly provided through mining concessions
- **Environmental Impact**
 - Contract farming schemes promoting tobacco and cotton: impact on biodiversity; threat of deforestation; heavy pesticide use
 - Ethanol plant: displacement of farmers; impacts on livelihoods of people sharing river system