

SURVEY BRIEF

**Agricultural season
2023/24**

ZAMBIA



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**Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations**



THE WORLD BANK

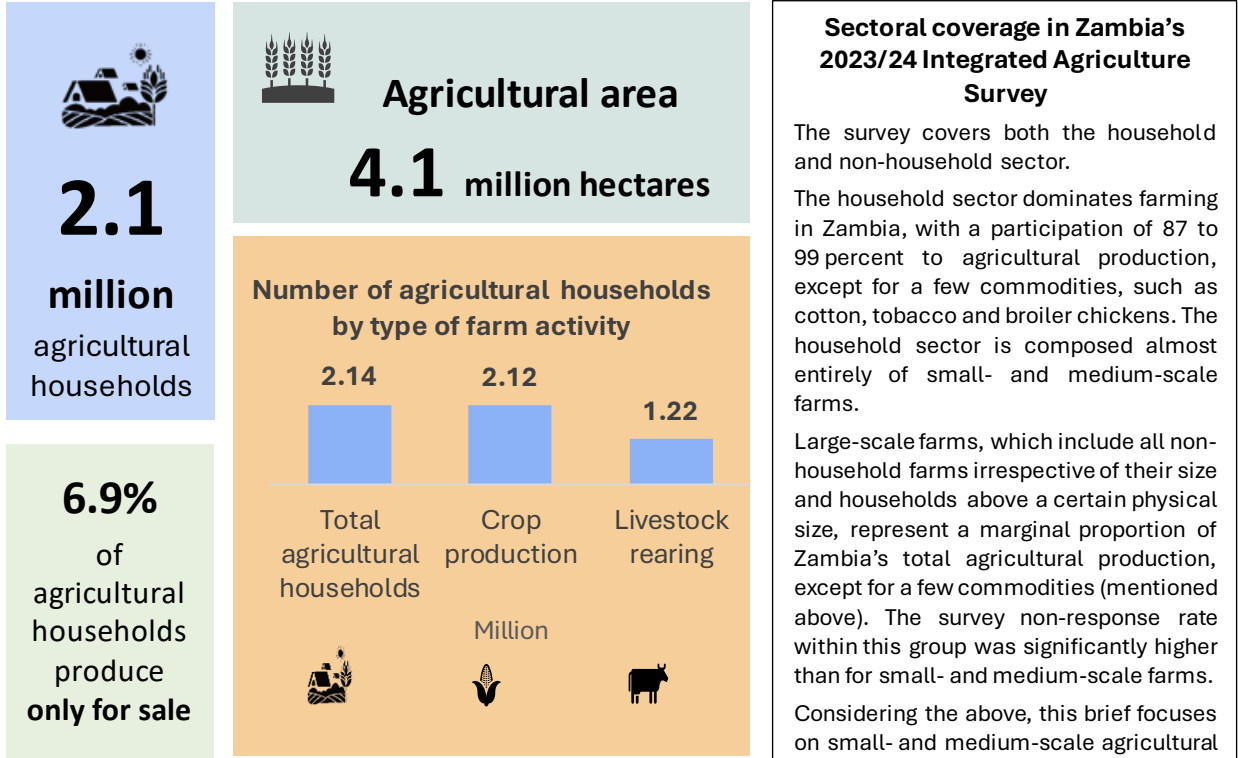
Under the umbrella of the 50x2030 Initiative to Close the Agricultural Data Gap, the Zambia Statistics Agency (ZamStats) in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock (MFL) and the Ministry of Green Economy and Environment (MoGEE) conducted its first Integrated Agriculture Survey (IAS) for the 2023/24 agricultural season. Through the 50x2030 Initiative, the country aims to strengthen its national statistics system and improve the quality and use of survey data in policymaking.

Key features

This note provides key insights on agricultural holdings in Zambia during the agricultural season 2023/24. It presents key indicators on agricultural land and holding size, crop output and yields, livestock rearing, input, gender and labour use. Further details are available in the [Integrated Agriculture Survey report](#) covering the agricultural season 2023/24 (IAS 2024). A technical annex at the end of this document provides further details on the indicators presented, definitions, sources and assumptions used.

Key characteristics of agricultural households

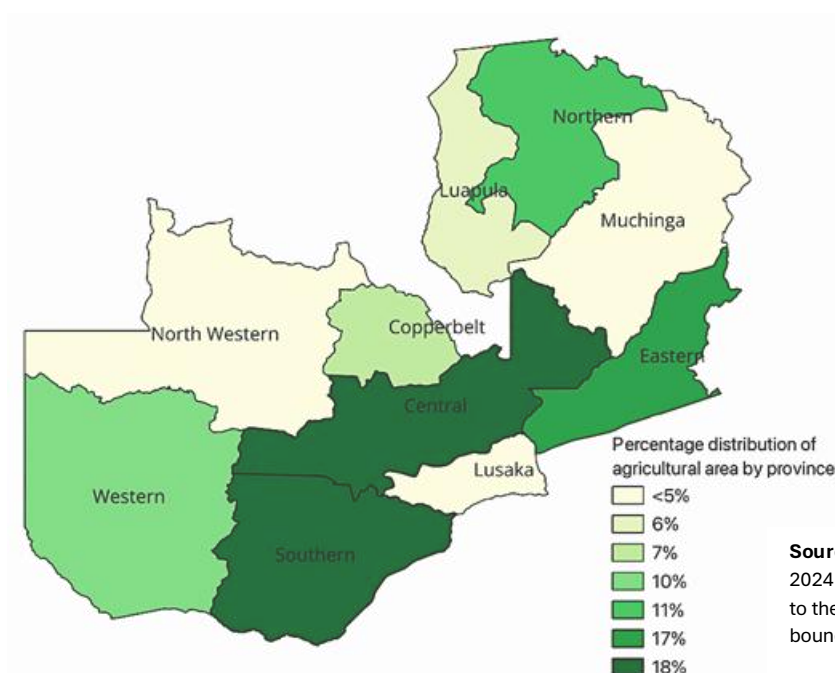
During the 2023/24 agricultural season, 2.1 million agricultural households operated in Zambia. These households managed 4.1 million hectares of agricultural land, including cropland, pastures and fallow land. Almost all agricultural households – 99 percent – reported engaging in crop production. Livestock rearing is also widespread, practiced by 1.2 million households – or 57 percent. Only 6.9 percent of agricultural households produce exclusively for sale, 51.2 percent produce primarily for self-consumption but sell part of their harvest, and the remaining 42.0 percent produce entirely for self-consumption.



Note 1: Figures in the infographic refer to agricultural households only. See the technical annex for the definition. **Note 2:** Among other types of farm activities, honey production was reported by 60 000 households. **Note 3:** Figures are rounded to the nearest thousand.

Agricultural area and average holding size

Total agricultural area by province



The 4.1 million hectares of agricultural land (crops, pastures and fallow) are unevenly distributed, with the Southern, Central and Eastern provinces together accounting for more than 50 percent of the national agricultural land.

Source: Author's own elaboration, based on IAS 2024 report (ZamStats *et al.*, 2024). **Note:** Refer to the disclaimer on page 10 for the names and boundaries used in this map.

Average agricultural area per household

1.9 ha

Average agricultural
area per household

On average, agricultural households farm 1.9 hectares of agricultural land. The average farm size ranges from 1.3 hectares in Luapula and Copperbelt to 2.8 hectares in the Central province. Almost all this land is used for crop cultivation or left fallow – together accounting for 97 to 99 percent of agricultural land across provinces – with only a small share allocated to pasture.

Crop output, harvested area and yields

In the agricultural season 2023/24, Zambia's main crops by harvested area were maize, soybeans, groundnuts and sunflower seeds. Maize is the country's main staple crop in terms of harvested area and production, and it is grown by approximately 1 871 000 farms (2 000 of which are large-scale farms). A total of 2 233 000 hectares were planted with maize, of which only 44 percent was harvested (981 000 ha). This reflects the particularly unfavourable conditions experienced during the season, with droughts and dry spells resulting in high pre-harvest losses for most major crops. Yields for the main cereal, leguminous and oil crops ranged from 0.3 tonne per hectare (sunflower seeds) to 1.5 tonnes per hectare for maize. The yield for tobacco, one of the country's major cash crops, was reported at 1 tonne per hectare.

Small- and medium-scale agricultural households account for the vast majority of the output for the eight major crops reported in the table below, with the notable exception of cash crops such as soybeans and tobacco, with a contribution dropping to 41 percent and 60 percent, respectively.

Harvested and planted area, production and yield of main crops

Crops	Harvested area 1 000 hectares	Planted area 1 000 hectares	Output 1 000 tonnes	Distribution of output by farm size	Yield Tonnes per hectare
Maize	981	2 233	1 460	87%	1.5
Soybeans	161	311	131	41%	0.8
Groundnuts	85	165	49	98%	0.6
Sunflower seeds	74	205	20	96%	0.3
Mixed beans	49	62	19	96%	0.4
Rice	30	63	25	97%	0.8
Sweet potatoes	18	29	43	99%	2.4
Tobacco (Virginia)	17	22	16	60%	1.0

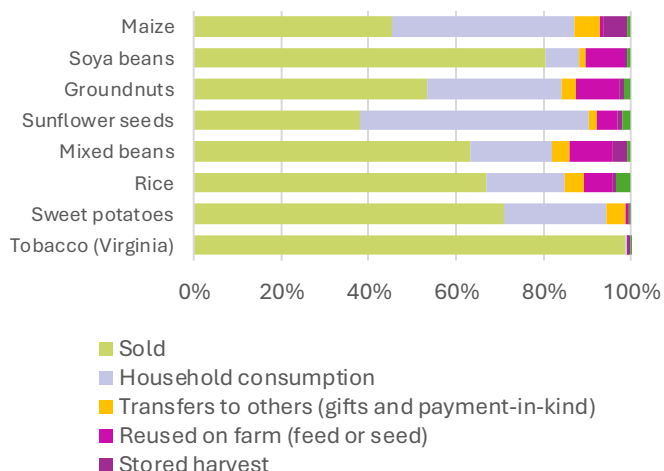
Note: Values are rounded to the nearest thousand.

■ Small- and medium-scale households
■ Large-scale farms

Main uses of crop production

Crops such as tobacco, soyabeans, sweet potatoes, rice, mixed beans and groundnuts are mostly produced for selling. In contrast, staple food crops like maize and sunflower seeds were largely retained for household consumption, with 41.9 percent and 52.4 percent of output consumed by households during the 2023/24 agricultural season, respectively.

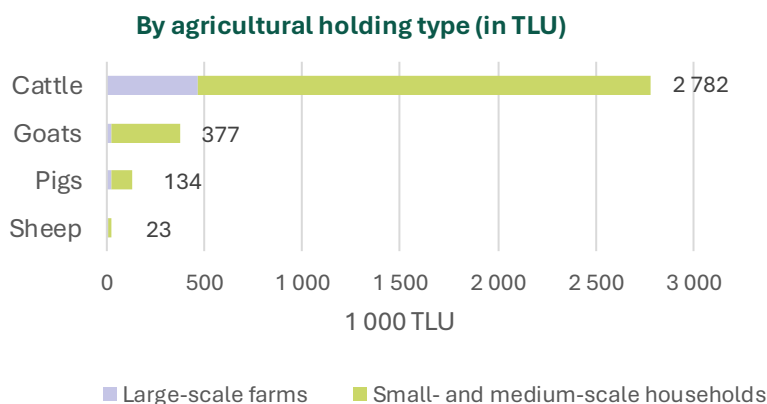
Uses of agricultural households' crop production



Livestock and poultry rearing

Livestock and poultry rearing is practiced by 57 percent of agricultural households in Zambia. Cattle account for 2.8 million tropical livestock units (TLU – see the technical annex for a definition of this concept) across all agricultural holdings, with over 80 percent held by small- and medium-scale agricultural households. Goats and pigs total 377 000 and 134 000 TLU, respectively, while sheep account for 23 000 TLU, with the majority of all three species reared by small- and medium-scale agricultural households. As for poultry, broiler and layer chickens. they are predominantly raised by large-scale farms, while village chickens, accounting for 97 000 TLU, are the most widespread poultry species and are mainly reared by small- and medium-scale agricultural households.

Population of livestock species

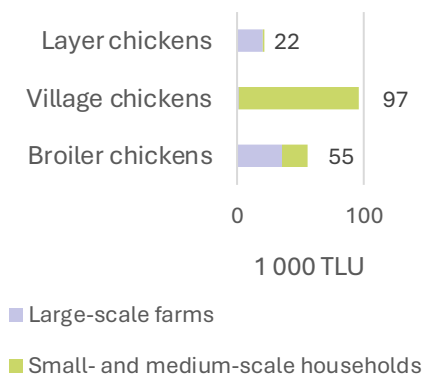


Total (in heads)

Species	Heads (1 000)
Cattle	3 974
Goats	3 767
Pigs	669
Sheep	234

Population of poultry species

By agricultural holding type (in TLU)



Total (in heads)

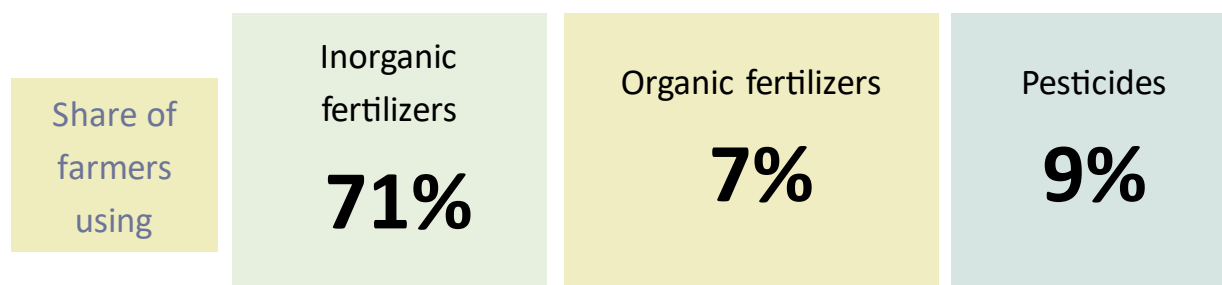
Species	Heads (1 000)
Layer chickens	2 210
Village chickens	9 659
Broiler chickens	5 518

Note 1: Population of livestock and poultry species in heads refers to the total number of animals raised by all agricultural holdings. **Note 2:** TLU conversion factors are based on FAO (2019).

Crop inputs

During the agricultural season 2023/24, most agricultural households reported using inorganic fertilizers (71 percent), while only a small portion (7 percent) declared applying organic fertilizers. Pesticides were only applied by 9 percent of households engaged in crop production.

Share of agricultural households using different inputs



Note: Percentages exclude agricultural households engaged only in crop production in backyards and gardens.

Labour input

Most agricultural households rely on the labour of household members (93.5 percent). The hiring of daily workers and other temporary workers remains much less common, with only 15.0 percent and 9.8 percent of agricultural households declaring using this type of workers, respectively. The employment of permanent workers (workers engaged for more than one season) is almost non-existent, with only 1.7 percent of households reported using this type of labour. Free or exchange labour is also practiced, although by a small share of households – 5.9 percent.

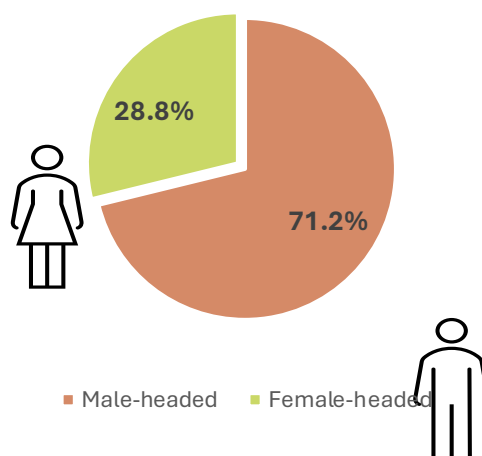
Only
1.7%
of households hired
permanent workers

Participation of women in farming

Among the household members aged 12 years or older engaged in crop or livestock activities, women are represented in nearly equal numbers to men (50.5 percent of workers). In contrast, women are underrepresented among hired workers. They make up only 29.8 percent of the total permanent workers employed for more than one season, 37.6 percent of the temporary hired workers (workers hired for a season or less) and 39.9 percent of the casual hired workers (workers hired on daily basis).

Women are underrepresented also in decision-level roles in the agricultural sector, with only 28.8 percent of agricultural households headed by women. The share of female-headed households is fairly homogeneous across provinces, ranging from 23.1 percent in Lusaka to 29.0 percent in the Eastern province. The only exception is the Western province, which reported a notably higher share of female-headed households at 45.4 percent.

Percentage of female-headed and male-headed agricultural households



Technical Annex

Sources

- Zambia Statistics Agency (ZamStats), Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock and the Ministry of Green Economy and Environment (MoGEE). 2024. *Integrated Agriculture Survey 2023/2024 Agricultural Season*. Lusaka. <https://www.zamstats.gov.zm/wp-content/uploads/2026/08/2024-Integrated-Agriculture-Survey-IAS.pdf>
- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). 2019. *Data for monitoring SDG indicators 2.3.1 and 2.3.2*. Rome. <https://openknowledge.fao.org/handle/20.500.14283/ca6950en>

Indicators

Definitions below are taken from Zambia's Integrated Agriculture Survey Report covering the agricultural season 2023/24 (IAS 2024).

- Agricultural area includes cultivated field (temporary and permanent crops), cultivated backyards or gardens, fallow land and pastures (temporary or permanent).
- Cropland refers to land used for cultivation of crops.
- Agricultural holding: economic unit of agricultural production under single management comprising all livestock kept, and all land used wholly or partly for agricultural production purposes, without regard to title, legal form or size.
- Agricultural household: population unit referring to a household with members practicing own account agricultural activities.
- Small- and medium-scale agricultural households: agricultural households that are growing or raising less than: 20 (0 to 19.99) hectares of area under crops; 100 cattle; 20 dairy cows; 150 goats; 150 sheep; 100 pigs; 1 000 village chickens; 6 000 broilers per annum; 1 000 layers per annum.
- Large-scale farms include agricultural households above the physical threshold specified for small- and medium-scale agricultural households and non-household farms, irrespective of their size.
- Organic fertilizers include solid manure; liquid manure / slurry; vegetable material and compost; stabilised sewage sludge; biostimulant and other organic fertilizers.
- Inorganic fertilizers include urea; ammonium nitrate; CAN (calcium ammon. nitr); ammonium sulphate; compound B; compound D; compound S; compound X, and other inorganic fertilizers.
- Pesticides include liquid or solid insecticides, herbicides, fungicides, rodenticides, bactericides (liquid or solid) and other pesticides.

- Tropical Livestock Unit (TLU) is commonly defined as a mature animal weighing 250 kg (Houerou and Hoste, 1977; Stotz, 1983). Conversion to TLUs allows comparison of the size of animal herd across species and countries. Standard country specific conversion factors may be obtained from [FAO](#) or directly from country sources.

The data presented in this brief are sourced from countries' surveys and may differ from data published on other FAO platforms.

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