Improving Food System Resilience through Better Governance
Lessons from Multistakeholder Partnerships in Zimbabwe

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INTERNATIONAL FOOD POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE

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ABSTRACT

Food system resilience has become a key objective of the food and nutrition security agenda. Within the three-pronged framework consisting of policy systems, institutional systems, and human capacity, it is important to study the impact of good governance on food system resilience as an institutional resilience-building strategy. Improving food system governance remains a major component of any national strategy for achieving food and nutrition security in developing countries. Yet the relationship between good governance and resilience building remains unexplored. In addition, conventional governance arrangements do not seem to yield the much-anticipated results of achieving food and nutrition security. Therefore, in addition to exploring how governance may aid in building resilience, there is a need to investigate new ways of taking resolute actions that enhance growth and structural transformation in food systems. The multistakeholder partnerships (MSPs) strategy is often proffered as a better governance approach. MSPs aim to enhance shared understanding of food systems and strive to build consensus through dialogue, consultation, and joint analysis. Consequently, the multisectoral nature of MSPs enables them to incorporate extremely important components of food system resilience. MSPs’ inherent decentralized design encourages decentralization of mobilization for community efforts. In this way, the effectiveness and efficiency of such MSP structures may have long-lasting impacts on improving food system resilience within institutional systems, especially at the local level. Therefore, in short, this paper analyzes how to improve food system resilience through better governance using MSPs for food and nutrition security outcomes. Specifically, we draw lessons from the response of MSPs to the food crisis in Zimbabwe that emerged from the El Niño of 2015–2016.

Keywords: Food system, governance, agribusiness competitiveness, resilience, multistakeholder partnerships, decentralization, food and nutrition security, El Niño, Zimbabwe, Africa
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FAO</td>
<td>Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD</td>
<td>focus group discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FNC</td>
<td>Food and Nutrition Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>FNS</td>
<td>food and nutrition security</td>
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<tr>
<td>FNSC</td>
<td>food and nutrition security committee</td>
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<td>FNSP</td>
<td>National Food and Nutrition Security Policy</td>
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<tr>
<td>IFPRI</td>
<td>International Food Policy Research Institute</td>
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<tr>
<td>KII</td>
<td>key informant interview</td>
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<tr>
<td>MSP</td>
<td>multistakeholder partnership</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>nongovernmental organization</td>
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<td>NNS</td>
<td>National Nutrition Strategy</td>
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<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
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<td>PAC</td>
<td>Productive Asset Creation</td>
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<td>RIASCO</td>
<td>Regional Inter-Agency Standing Committee</td>
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<td>SDG</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Goal</td>
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<td>USAID</td>
<td>United States Agency for International Development</td>
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<td>WFP</td>
<td>World Food Programme</td>
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<td>Zim-ACP</td>
<td>Zimbabwe Agricultural Competitiveness Program</td>
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<td>ZimAsset</td>
<td>Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-economic Transformation</td>
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<td>ZimVAC</td>
<td>Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee</td>
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<td>ZRBF</td>
<td>Zimbabwe Resilience Building Fund</td>
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors would like to thank the key informants who participated in the case study reported in this paper. The idea presented in this paper, of understanding the role of governance in building the resilience of the food system, benefited from various capacity-strengthening workshops in the last few years on the food systems approach to nutrition and related discussions in India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Malawi, and Nigeria. The authors take full responsibility for the contents of the paper.

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Improving Food System Resilience through Better Governance: Lessons from Multistakeholder Partnerships in Zimbabwe

1. Introduction

Recently there is a renewed effort globally to end hunger, achieve food security, improve nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture by 2030 through the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In the context of food and nutrition security (FNS), the first three SDGs developed and agreed upon in 2014 (UN 2015) are expected to resonate well with continental, regional, and national commitments in Africa. Food and nutrition insecurity is a key obstacle to the realization of the SDGs in Zimbabwe (FAO et al. 2015). Contemporary research efforts in FNS suggest the imperative need for thoughtful and multipronged strategies to sustainably attack this chronic issue (HLPE 2017). In effect, there is a growing global realization of the importance of FNS in ensuring sustainable development, as reflected by its hegemony in the current international development discourses. For example, Pritchard, Ortiz, and Shekar (2016) argue that although FNS has evolved significantly over the past decade in both theory and practice, it remains complex and multifaceted in nature, thus requiring a multidisciplinary approach to address it. To date, statistical evidence points to an estimated 815 million people food insecure around the globe, of whom 98 percent are believed to be living in developing countries (FAO et al. 2017). This also points to the importance of approaching FNS issues in a sustainable, resilient manner. Many international organizations, such as the World Food Programme (WFP), have initiated a shift in direction that favors empowering communities to build resilient food systems over only providing food assistance (WFP 2018).

Governance issues have become a major impediment to the design and implementation of food security and nutrition programs in developing countries (FAO et al. 2015). This is partly due to the political economy issues that shroud the provision of food security to the population, such as achieving food security for all as a human right (Pinstrup-Andersen, Nygaard, and Ratta 1995). The political economy issues affect the policy and programmatic process at the country level, particularly in the policy design stage. The governance of the policy process determines its final outcomes, particularly at the implementation level (Resnick 2017).

Consequently, after the food and financial crises of 2007–2008 and 2011, building resilient food systems became a prioritized focus for many players in the development field (Pinstrup-Andersen 2014). A resilient food system is one in which “people, communities, countries, and global institutions prevent, anticipate, prepare for, cope with, and recover from shocks and not only bounce back to where they were before the shocks occurred, but become even better off” (IFPRI 2014, 5). In the wake of such shocks’ stimulating a majority of the food crises in Africa (Miguel, Satyanath, and Sergenti 2004; Martin 2005; Mulligan 2009), it is important to shift from providing support for specific relief efforts to building comprehensive food systems that possess the resilience to combat these shocks (Longley, Christoplos, and Slaymaker 2003). This strategy involves capacity strengthening in the various processes of a food system.
This paper uses the case study of the Zimbabwean food system to understand the role of governance and to identify opportunities for improving governance through various processes that enhance the inclusivity and participation of various stakeholders through approaches such as multistakeholder partnerships (MSPs). We build off this argument and strive to understand the importance of MSPs, particularly at the provincial and district levels, in improving and promoting resilience within the Zimbabwean food system. Our goal is to delineate, through a case study of Zimbabwe, that good governance may contribute to a strengthened capacity for building resilient food systems. We hypothesize that, over time, better governance of food systems eventually leads to more resilient food systems.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows: The next section develops two conceptual frameworks to identify and study the governance mechanisms for achieving food system resilience and the governance mechanisms for achieving FNS-related SDGs. Section 3 offers a literature review and develops one of the approaches to improved food system governance at the country level—the MSP and its role in improved governance. This section also offers explanations of the connections between food system governance, MSPs, and food system resilience. Section 4 presents a case study of Zimbabwe during the food crisis of 2015–2016, when a major El Niño reduced FNS in the southern Africa region. Section 5 documents lessons from the case study and derives policy implications for future prevention of food crises from a food system perspective. Concluding remarks make up the final section of the paper.

2. Conceptual Framework and Methodological Approach

Conceptual Framework
This section presents a conceptual framework explaining the transformation of food system governance to achieve FNS through food system resilience. Figure 1 shows the steps required for a food system to move from being exposed to being resilient, in order to achieve the SDGs of zero hunger (SDG 2), good health and well-being (SDG 3), and no poverty (SDG 1). Figure 2 elaborates on the requirement of good governance to achieve food system resilience and illustrates the steps needed to move the food system from low FNS to high FNS.

Strong food system resilience is imperative in achieving the SDGs. This is illustrated by the conceptual framework, Figure 1. This framework depicts the reasons why resilient food systems are important for improved FNS and how the former may be achieved, as discussed in this paper. The pathway to achieving a resilient food system is dependent on its characteristics. In the context of increasing the capacity of resilient food systems, Babu and Blom (2014a) divide a food system into three subsystems—policy, institutional, and production. Within the policy subsystem, resilience may be enhanced by policies that build capacity through community empowerment, social safety nets, and the effectiveness of analytical warning tools (Babu and Blom 2014a). The success of the markets, trade, and institutional subsystem relies on the relationship among government agencies, data collection systems, and market regulatory policies, to name a few (Babu and Blom 2014a). Such initiatives within the institution subsystem are vital in determining the allocation and production of food within food systems during shocks. Last, the production subsystem consists of the research and innovation mechanisms, such as tools, technology, and practices, that promote resilience (Babu and Blom 2014a).
Figure 1: Transformation of food system resilience for achieving food and nutrition security

Sustainable Development Goals

Food and nutrition security–related Sustainable Development Goals
1. No poverty
2. Zero hunger
3. Good health and well-being

Improved food and nutrition security: Food and nutrition for all

Local-level food and nutrition security

Exposed food system

Good governance of food system

Multistakeholder partnerships: A mechanism of good governance

Resolved food system

Agribusiness competitiveness: An indicator of governance

Capacities of a resilient food system:
1. Monitoring food security indicators
2. Recognizing food emergencies and food security risks
3. Evidence-based policy making and investment planning
4. Decentralized mobilization of communities for food security action
5. Policy analysis and program evaluation
6. Creating, maintaining, and utilizing each of these capacities

Source: Based on Babu and Blom (2014b)
Together, these subsystems could enact initiatives delineated by the capacities of resilient food system as proposed by Babu and Blom (2014a). These capacities, such as monitoring food security indicators, recognizing food emergencies and food security risks, and adopting evidence-based policy making and investment planning, represent a broader cycle composed of steps proposed by Timmer (1988) that results in an agricultural transformation. Each step may be interpreted as an area for capacity building, and each requires action from all three subsystems of the food system. These capacities illustrate a structural transformation that ensures a food system’s ability to endure shock and promote food security, as part of building its resilience.

This leads us into the linkages and processes illustrated in Figure 2. We propose that the effectiveness of the subsystems described above in promoting resilience is largely dependent on their governance. In other words, the role of better food system resilience in achieving the SDGs may be seen in the context of how improved governance mechanisms that help in achieving the goals will also help in the process of improving FNS. In this framework, as illustrated by Figure 2, good governance, through the effective implementation of MSPs (as one of several aspects of good governance), will lead an exposed food system to become a resilient one over time. It can also be seen in the context of improving other various elements of the food system governance. Figure 2 shows the pathways for achieving the FNS-related SDGs at the country level by improving possible governance mechanisms. For example, depending on the country context, governance mechanisms can benefit the way in which the policy process operates, can help improve the institutional and human capacity for better coordination of policy and program implementation, and can improve human capacity to deal with the issues and challenges in a more participatory and transparent manner. Within the context of this paper, we focus on MSPs and the role they play in improving governance.
Figure 2: Transformation of food system governance for achieving food and nutrition security

Source: Based on Babu and Blom (2014b); Babu (2015).
To move from low food system governance to high food system governance, we identify improvements needed in factors associated with current policy processes and in institutional and human capacity. For improving policy processes and developing clear, evidence-based policies, we must understand how various entities in a policy system operate toward better food system governance (Babu and Blom 2014a). The process of policy design, adoption, implementation, and refinement not only contributes to good governance but requires effective governance as well. It also requires a well-capacitated institutional structure. Some characteristics of good governance include transparency, equality, accountability, strategic vision, and responsiveness. Improving these characteristics requires selected changes in governance mechanisms. Capacity strengthening at both institutional and individual levels to transform food systems should go hand in hand with improving these mechanisms. Babu and Shishodia (2017) discusses components of the capacities needed to implement programs and agriculture transformation.

Though Figures 1 and 2 appear to be similar, it is important to understand that the bases on which these figures are created greatly differ. To be more specific, Figure 1 presents the overall framework illustrating the pathway analyzed to achieve food system resilience through a particular mechanism: food system governance using MSPs. In contrast, Figure 2 delves deeper into this mechanism of food system governance and maps out the various goals and processes needed to achieve high food system governance. Therefore, Figure 2 represents a subset of Figure 1.

Methodological Approach

The methodology adopted in this research paper fundamentally follows a qualitative approach in order to understand the contributions of MSPs to FNS governance for growth and structural transformation. The article attempts to trace FNS as a global challenge as well as its governance, which is critical for sustainable development. It is well known that the subject of FNS governance through MSPs has entered the policy domain of many institutions. It is also globally accepted to the extent that the methodological study of this body of knowledge is possible through systematic analysis and critique (Candel 2014). This systematic analysis and critique principally take the form of a document and literature review. Key informant interviews (KIIs) were also conducted with policy makers and those involved in food security task forces to identify the role of MSPs in improving the food system during the 2016 food crisis.

In addition to qualitative interviews that assess the effectiveness of MSP governance in Zimbabwe, we also use quantitative indicators to enhance our investigation into food system governance and how it may be achieved through proper implementation of MSPs. More specifically, we have selected the agribusiness competitiveness index developed by Babu and Shishodia (2017) to evaluate food system governance in Zimbabwe.

3. Literature Review

Designing Effective MSPs for Growth and Structural Transformation

In establishing effective MSPs, it is important to set a multistakeholder governance structure that is fit for purpose with respect to the MSP’s mission and its governance and operational needs, including addressing up front (as much as possible) issues involving potential asymmetries of power and conflicts of interest (Hazlewood 2015, 5). The Organisation for Economic Co-operation
and Development (OECD) supports this approach, indicating that it is critical to align MSPs with country priorities and work through national and local planning, budgeting, and fund allocation systems in order to build genuine ownership and strengthen capacity, and to enhance the efficient and effective delivery of finance and other means of support. In order to ensure growth and structural transformation, there is need to support locally controlled finance mechanisms where appropriate and feasible (OECD 2015). While local funding mechanisms may not be suitable in all cases, global goals and targets that require local action need locally accessible finance provided to locally accountable organizations in order to succeed (Hazlewood 2015, 6). Last, it is imperative to ensure robust monitoring and evaluation to support learning and knowledge sharing, evidence-based decision making, and accountability for results among all partners.

It is useful to look at the institutional architecture of countries that have helped address food insecurity and malnutrition problems through MSPs. The government of South Africa places a high priority on FNS, as evidenced by the country’s National Food and Nutrition Security Advisory Council, comprising experts from agriculture bodies, the environment, and climate change, and is chaired by the deputy president. There is at the central level a National Food and Nutrition Coordinating Committee, which is decentralized up to the lower tiers of government and supported by technical working groups. The South African constitution (Sections 27, 28, and 35) recognizes the right to food, and this recognition forms the basis for the National Policy on Food and Nutrition Security of 2013, which resonates with both the global and regional commitments. To further buttress effective implementation of the food and nutrition policy, an Inter-Governmental Technical Working Group on Food and Nutrition Security was established in 2014. This group—together with a concoction of strategies including the Integrated Food Security Strategy of 2000, the National Development Plan, the Food Security Production Intervention Programme of 2012, and Fetsa Tlala (“Defeat Hunger”), the country’s Zero Hunger Programme of 2013, among others—strives to provide the basis of FNS in South Africa (FAO 2015).

Pereira and Drimie (2016, 8) argue that one of the key characteristics underscoring the complexity of South African food systems is that different stakeholders contest the causes and effects of food systems at many levels. Government departments are poorly equipped to deal with the interlinked priorities of FNS and poverty alone. In South Africa, dealing with the power dynamics between different actors remains one of the biggest challenges that food policy has so far failed to handle and thus has failed to achieve the intended food security outcomes. There is a need for renewed engagement and commitment between the private sector, organized labor, civil society, and the state in establishing mechanisms to address food insecurity through social dialogue. MSPs in food security systems in South Africa demand a flexible learning approach that provides the process as much as the outcomes, rather than a “go-it-alone” approach by government departments. This requires institutions that can convene and facilitate multisectoral action.

The government of Ethiopia exhibits its commitment toward FNS by tasking the Office of the Prime Minister with presiding over the sector in close collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, other ministries, and, among other stakeholders, the National Food Security Council. This design was further buttressed by a set of FNS policies and strategies to achieve the desired national goals, for example, the Food Security Strategy (2002), the National Nutrition Strategy, the National Nutrition Program (2008), the Agriculture Sector Policy and Investment Framework 2010–2020, and the National School Health and Nutrition Strategy (2012). The intersectoral coordination of different stakeholders by government through the legal and institutional frameworks in Ethiopia respects the regional and global commitments to FNS.
In Ethiopia, there is a considerable level of enthusiasm for multisectoral approaches to improving FNS at both the national and subnational levels (Kennedy et al. 2015). There is also an almost universal agreement that good governance is essential for effective design and implementation of MSPs. Indeed, there is a clarion call for research that examines MSPs at the country and subnational levels to ascertain what can be done to improve FNS system governance.

In Mali, the creation of the National Food Commissariat 2004 attached to the President’s Office was a clear sign of political support for FNS in this agriculture-based country. It is also supported by other strategies including the National Food and Nutrition Strategy (2002) and the National Food and Nutrition Programme (2005). In 2013, the government of Mali crafted the National Nutrition Policy, which took a multisectoral approach in its implementation, involving different government ministries, civil society, and development partners. In March 2015, the Nutrition Coordinating Unit was created by a decree from the prime minister to coordinate and scale up nutrition interventions. Notwithstanding the high pathway Mali has taken toward improving FNS, the existing frameworks have been instrumental in many successful interventions, including the Homegrown School Feeding Programme, a government-led school feeding program using food produced by local smallholder farmers (WFP n.d.).

In essence, the country examples show that in general, coordinating mechanisms for FNS are essential to avoid duplication of effort, address different stakeholder interests, and enhance efficiency and effectiveness. Despite ongoing arguments about institutional and policy reforms to match the changing nature of FNS, in general they proved to be fundamental in ensuring successful FNS interventions. Because of the complexity and multisectoral nature of FNS, both the policy and institutional frameworks need to be strong, flexible, and sensitive to the different stakeholders’ interests.

**Meaning and Typologies of MSPs**

MSPs are based on principles drawn up at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa, which marked a departure from the traditional partnerships that are more binding (OECD 2015). MSPs are defined as voluntary, self-organizing arrangements among any combination of partners, including central government agencies, regional groups, local authorities, nongovernmental actors, international institutions, and private-sector partners, to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development (OECD 2015). According to Hazlewood (2015, 2), an MSP arrangement is an ongoing working relationship between organizations from different sectors, combining their resources and competencies, and sharing risks toward achieving agreed-upon shared objectives, while also achieving their own individual objectives. These observations regarding the categorization of various MSPs are illustrated in Figure 3, which delineates the typology of MSPs within the context of food system governance.

**Figure 3: Multistakeholder typology in food system governance**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal / Model</th>
<th>Joint Project</th>
<th>Joint Program</th>
<th>Strategic Alliance</th>
<th>Collective Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Definition</strong></td>
<td>Short-term, one-time</td>
<td>Collaboration among</td>
<td>Platform for ongoing</td>
<td>Initiative based on long-term</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Food System Governance Multistakeholder Typology
collaborative effort among small set of partners, often to develop or pilot an innovative product or approach

a small set of partners to implement a program or address a specific aspect of a social problem

collaboration around one or more related social issues, aligning partners (typically > 5) in support of a common agenda and joint investments

commitments to a common agenda by a group of cross-sector actors, needed to realize systemwide change around a social problem

Partners Involved

Selected set of partners, often a mix of local and international nongovernmental organizations, corporations, and research organizations, identified at the outset

Inclusive participation of a larger set of cross-sector stakeholders, including government actors; additional partners can join

Time Frame

Short-term (< 9 years), oriented to specific grants

Medium- to long-term (10 + years); not defined by specific grants

Partner Expectations

Requires contributions from individual organizations to a joint effort

May require changes to organizations’ core activities to align with common agenda

Source: Based on Peterson et al. (2014).

Some Potential Benefits of MSPs

Biermann and others (2007) argue that although MSPs are lauded as a solution to the perceived regulation, implementation, and participation deficits in the governance of sustainable development, little is known concerning the practical realities, especially in ensuring FNS, thus warranting systematic research in order to improve their efficiency and effectiveness. Again, though MSPs are perceived as instrumental in realizing development efforts, especially when partners pool resources, skills, and assets, in reality they have not gone without critics and have proved in many instances to be complicated. Bezanson and Isenman (2012), Buse and Tanaka (2011), and Sachs and Schmidt-Traub (2014) submit that reviews of global MSP experience and lessons, most notably in the health sector, suggest that well-designed and adequately resourced MSPs can have a number of potential benefits.

MSPs advance more integrated, comprehensive, and scalable approaches to poverty eradication and sustainable development challenges by facilitating cross-sector dialogue toward co-creating and aligning around a common agenda for action and advocacy (Dodds 2015). In fact, MSPs combine and leverage the complementary roles and diverse capabilities of a larger set of cross-sector (public and private) stakeholders, promoting their inclusive participation in solving sustainable development challenges while facilitating a shift to more programmatic approaches to planning, investment, and implementation. Empirical research points out that MSPs provide multilevel platforms or networks for achieving sustainable impact at scale by opening up new opportunities for collaboration; by linking action across multiple scales, from global to local and local to global; and by facilitating rapid learning and efficient knowledge transfer, both horizontally and vertically (Hazlewood 2015).

Biermann and others (2007) submit that successful MSPs will result in more integrated, efficient, and effective approaches to financing by using pooled financing mechanisms for mobilizing, combining, and allocating diverse sources of international and domestic public and private finance. Fundamentally, pooled funding arrangements have played a central role in global MSPs and have demonstrated their potential for engaging private business and leveraging private
finance for development purposes, although to date, activities of this type on a significant scale have been largely limited to the health sector. In most developed countries, MSPs have employed blended finance approaches and instruments for the strategic use of public funds to mobilize private finance and catalyze public and private investments for development purposes in partner countries (OECD 2015). This has resulted in an increase in the effectiveness and impact of grant money and can maximize the development impact of private investments, resulting in more private capital flow into sectors such as agriculture and energy that are crucial for sustainable development. Moreover, MSPs provide platforms for global advocacy and mobilization of civil society around priority poverty eradication and sustainable development challenges (Peterson et al. 2014).

Some Potential Side Effects of MSPs
MSPs are sometimes regarded as a menace to the existing institutional arrangements and architecture because they transfer responsibility and financial resources from one stakeholder to another. The OECD (2015) argues that MSPs impose rigid and top-down “blueprint” approaches and “conditionalities” with respect to strategies and priority setting, funding requirements and procedures, and implementation modalities—thereby undermining country ownership and potentially distorting national and local development funding and investment priorities. MSPs are also criticized for reinforcing a siloed (sectoral) and “projectized” approach to development problems and solutions, thereby undermining the potential to address the drivers of systemic change and to scale up impact through a more programmatic approach.

Moreover, MSPs are likewise criticized for investing insufficiently in building the structures needed to manage the complexity and challenges of working effectively across global, regional, and national/local levels. Hazlewood (2015) contends that MSPs result in power imbalances in their governance and operation, leading to exclusion or lack of meaningful participation of stakeholders, in particular local actors. Profoundly, MSPs seek to expand the development role of the private sector in their operation without putting into place agreed-upon rules and other measures to ensure private-sector transparency and accountability. The OECD (2015) points out MSPs’ lack of shared measurement systems, weak monitoring and impact evaluation, and insufficient focus on learning and knowledge sharing, especially when implemented without proper research.

Legal and Institutional Frameworks Guiding FNS
Successful FNS efforts hinge on strong legal and institutional frameworks, including clear policies coupled with robust coordinating mechanisms. The interest in the governance of FNS by many stakeholders, including the United Nations, has been identified as critical in realizing food and nutrition outcomes. Garcia (2011, 1) defines institutional frameworks for food and nutrition as the group of organizations, norms, public policies, and programs with defined functions, the final objective of turning FNS into a national strategy, and the means and resources to implement such a strategy. Maluf and Leão (2013) provide a more refined definition of FNS frameworks in the Brazilian context, integrating the promotion of intergovernmental coordination both horizontally (at the national level) and vertically (linking the national and local levels). Intrinsically, FNS frameworks entail the provision of public spaces for social participation and also the recovery or requalification of the roles of state institutions. It thus follows that FNS frameworks rise above the segmentation and fragmentation of public policies while promoting decentralization as well as territorial approaches. Implied in the above definitions is the inherent struggle in the
implementation of FNS strategies and also the complexity of understanding the governance issues of this important component of sustainable development.

**Toward MSPs in Food System Governance**
Following the conceptual framework presented above, we study the role of MSPs in improving food system governance and resilience for achieving FNS. Contemporary efforts to address global food and nutrition insecurity unanimously agree that MSPs can play an important role in eradicating poverty and can enhance structural transformation (Dodds 2015, 11). The proliferation of multiple actors in the provision of FNS to complement government efforts has been on the rise in the world recently (FAO n.d.). Inherently, the complexity of development needs, declining resources, declining aid, several structural adjustment policies, and global political changes in general have also contributed to declining service provision by the state in developing countries such as Zimbabwe. This gap has been increasingly filled by other actors, including nonstate actors and the private sector, adding to their importance as development agents within most developing countries. The wide acknowledgment of MSPs under the current development discourse is envisaged under Goal 17 of the Sustainable Development Goals, which advocates for strengthening the means of implementation and realizing global partnerships for the achievement of these ambitious targets by 2030.

**Food System Governance and Agribusiness Competitiveness**
At the microeconomic level, *agribusiness competitiveness* refers to the ability of a firm to meet the agricultural needs of a market. At the macroeconomic level, it highlights the various policies, institutions, and infrastructure that a nation promotes to create an environment of competition for agribusiness (Babu and Shishodia 2017). Research shows that although agricultural productivity in several African countries is improving, agricultural imports are on the rise, implying that food systems are lacking (AGRA 2016; WEF 2015). Babu and Shishodia (2017) indicate that agribusiness and value chain development may aid in altering Africa’s current trade potential.

In order to achieve a high level of competitiveness, the functioning of food systems through various underlying, intermediate, and immediate factors must be improved (Babu and Shishodia 2017). Babu and Shishodia (2017) take a supply chain focus on the development of their agribusiness competitiveness index. This allows for the analysis of competitiveness at each stage of the supply chain that adds value to the agribusiness product (Esterhuizen and van Rooyen 2006). The functioning of these stages is largely dependent on how these food systems are governed. There are many ways to achieve high food system governance, as illustrated in Figure 2. We propose that agribusiness competitiveness is one way that largely contributes to improving the processes of a food system, which consequently aids in creating robust governance mechanisms. In other words, food system governance is a fundamental component in ensuring the proper functioning of food systems across all these factors, and therefore has the capacity to aid in enhancing African trade potential (Babu and Shishodia 2017).

Table 1 illustrates the various characteristics of good governance, derived from Figure 2, and how agribusiness competitiveness contributes to each characteristic. In this way, we portray the importance of using this indicator as a factor of essential consideration when analyzing good governance in Zimbabwe. In other words, we prove that agribusiness competitiveness is a useful way of measuring food system governance in a given country.
Table 1: Good governance characteristics and agribusiness competitiveness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good governance characteristic</th>
<th>Some implications for high agribusiness competitiveness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transparency</td>
<td>Improved information flow through actors of the open market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Easily accessible extension systems that greatly enhance agribusiness competitiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equality</td>
<td>Strong protection of property rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Extension systems that support development, education, and gender equality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>Successful public-private partnerships that ensure communication among smallholder farmers, private firms, and public officials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness and efficiency</td>
<td>Efficient land markets, institutions, management of agricultural risks, and management of natural resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic vision</td>
<td>Trust in the political system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Extensive knowledge of the social, cultural, political, and economic factors contributing to agribusiness competitiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsiveness</td>
<td>Creation of strong linkages between public and private sectors to enhance communication</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors’ compilation based on Babu and Shishodia (2017) and UNDP (1997).

Implications of Agricultural Competitiveness for MSPs

Agricultural competitiveness in Zimbabwe is highly dependent on the construction of comprehensive and inclusive MSPs (President’s Congress Report 2016). The integration of various stakeholders from nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), research organizations, the public sector, and the private sector is required to facilitate and ensure agricultural growth, and to tackle issues regarding competitiveness. Such issues include funding challenges, high production costs, low productivity, and the depreciation of the South African rand against the US dollar (President’s Congress Report 2016). These issues may be solved through the multisectoral nature of well-functioning MSPs that are governed properly. Therefore, the use of the agribusiness competitiveness index to evaluate the governance of food systems in Zimbabwe is a useful indicator for assessing the need for MSPs that target the issue in order to achieve FNS.

Good Governance and Food System Resilience

When studying good governance, it is important also to investigate its implications for building resilience (Tendall et al. 2015). Food systems are exposed to internal and external shocks. Their ability to resist the current shock, recover from this disruption, and reorient themselves to accept an alternative outcome is referred to as enhanced food system resilience (Ingram 2018). Ingram (2018) states that all three of these resilience notions require reorganization efforts that create changes in the food system.

Therefore, in the long run, resilience requires good governance of food systems. Table 2 illustrates the key capacity components of a resilient national food system, developed by Babu and
Blom (2014b), and analyzes them in the context of good governance. This table illustrates the ingrained necessity of good governance that is required to create resilient food systems. Each good governance characteristic may be observed in the resilience capacity characteristics across all the three food subsystems: policy; markets, trade, and institutional; and production. In other words, such a framework signifies that good governance of food systems is an important contribution to building the capacity for resilience.

Therefore, food systems with strong resilience also have deep-seated, built-in aspects of good governance. We will explore this relationship further in the context of MSPs.

Table 2: Good governance and components of resilience capacity for food security

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good governance characteristic</th>
<th>Components of resilience capacity for food security among the three subsystems (policy; markets, trade, and institutional; and production)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transparency</td>
<td>Policy system: Democracy, transparency, and participation Markets, trade, and institutional system: Trade openness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equality</td>
<td>Policy system: Economic diversification, decentralized decision making, social safety nets Markets, trade, and institutional system: Market access for inputs and for food, domestic market integration, land and natural resource rights, labor availability Production system: Input supply, storage and distribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>Policy system: Policy environment and processes, democracy, transparency, and participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness and efficiency</td>
<td>Policy system: Monitoring and evaluation Markets, trade, and institutional systems: Early warning systems, market/data/information system Production system: Research and innovation system, research-extension-farmer linkages, marketing, wholesale, and retail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic vision</td>
<td>Policy system: Decentralized decision making Markets, trade, and institutional systems: Land and natural resource rights, food safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsiveness</td>
<td>Policy system: Democracy, transparency, and participation Markets, trade, and institutional system: Market/data information system, early warning systems Production system: Research-extension-farmer linkages</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors’ compilation based on Babu and Blom (2014b).

How Do MSPs Contribute to Food System Resilience?

One of the many capacities of a resilient food system delineated in Figure 1 is the decentralized mobilization of communities for food security action (Babu and Blom 2014b). Figure 4 illustrates the innate structure of MSPs that allows them to foster decentralized governance. It shows the extent to which MSPs have the ability to decentralize community mobilization efforts. Such a structure must be enhanced and preserved.
Figure 4: Decentralization capability of multistakeholder partnerships

Good governance of multistakeholder partnerships

- Strategy
- Funding
- Tracking

National level

Provincial level

District level

Village level

Ward level

Source: Authors’ compilation
Creating more representation of local institutions and stakeholders within multisectoral platforms introduces a variety of unique strengths that such stakeholders bring to enhance emergency preparedness (Battista and Baas 2004). In other words, MSPs have the ability to decentralize their institutions, involve local actors, and increase the effectiveness of resilience initiatives. In this way, good governance, through the implementation of well-established MSPs, may contribute to strong food system resilience. In other words, the robust integration of local stakeholders into MSPs enhances the implementation of decentralized mobilization efforts, thereby greatly contributing to resilience.

This strong representation of district-level multistakeholder platforms puts these players in a situation of responsibility. They enact various resilience-building initiatives within their communities and are very involved in disaster preparedness and relief. In this process, linkages between horizontal and vertical communication channels are strengthened.

4. Case Study of FNS, Governance, and Resilience in Zimbabwe

This section presents a case study of Zimbabwe, using MSP as the process for improving resilience through enhanced governance, presented in five subsections covering, respectively, the context of the 2015–2016 El Niño in Zimbabwe, a brief history of the food policy system in Zimbabwe, the country’s governance in terms of agribusiness competitiveness, the results of KII and focus group discussions (FGDs) undertaken for the case study, and the implications of all of these findings on food system resilience in Zimbabwe.

El Niño 2015–2016 in Zimbabwe

El Niño is a phenomenon during which the ocean temperatures of the equatorial Pacific become remarkably warm (PMEL n.d.). This is primarily due to the relaxation of trade winds in the central and western Pacific, thereby flattening the thermocline in the east and elevating it in the west. This results in reduced efficiency of the upwelling that generally cools the ocean’s surface (PMEL n.d.). Without this vital occurrence, the temperatures of the sea surface rise and regions such as southern Africa generally experience drought (PMEL n.d.).

In 2015, much of southern Africa was devastated by the worst drought in 35 years, which was brought about by the very strong 2015–2016 El Niño cycle (UNICEF 2017). This cycle of El Niño largely resulted in southern African countries’ receiving below-average rainfall and abnormally high temperatures. El Niño years in Zimbabwe over time have seen a distinct relationship between high sea surface temperature and negative standardized precipitation index (ZRBF 2016b, 10). These data show that the high temperatures and low average rainfall that came with the 2015–2016 El Niño drastically reduced maize yield, increased the prevalence of drought-related cattle deaths, and decreased reservoir levels (ZRBF 2016b, 10). Over half a million children suffered from severe acute malnutrition and about 3.2 million children had reduced access to clean drinking water (ZRBF 2016a). The reporting organizations strongly emphasize the need for programs and policies that use early
warning tools in the form of research, information, and technology that aids in planning (ZRBF 2016b, 22).

A shock such as El Niño is a clear test to the strength of governance and resilience within a country’s food system. The governance of MSPs in Zimbabwe has major impacts on the implementation of programs and policies supported by the various stakeholders involved. Consequently, this system of operation within MSPs impacts the resilience of the respective food systems to withstand similar shocks in the future. MSPs that successfully incorporate resilience into their frameworks may be built on a strong, multisectoral foundation of research and innovation coupled with a system that connects such innovations to all divisions of the country’s government (Babu and Blom 2014).

The Food Policy System in Zimbabwe
The FAO (2015) notes that the majority of the world’s hungry people live in developing countries, with Africa south of the Sahara recording the highest prevalence. Empirical data point to the sustained existence of chronic food and nutrition insecurity in this region, manifested by a high degree of vulnerability, especially among children and women, with one in every four being undernourished (FAO 2017). Zimbabwe is one of the countries south of the Sahara severely affected by food and nutrition insecurity, with the FNS situation in the country remaining fragile and even deteriorating over the past two decades. According to the Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Survey of 2016 (ZimVAC 2016), 2.8 million people in rural Zimbabwe required food assistance, of whom 1.4 million were children 18 and younger, a situation that denotes a sharp increase in food and nutrition insecurity as compared with the previous season. The United Nations Development Programme concurs (UNDP 2014), highlighting that Zimbabwe is regarded as a low-income, food-deficit country, ranked 156 out of 187 developing countries on the Global Hunger Index, which makes it a struggling country in addressing the global fight against hunger.

Since its independence in 1980, Zimbabwe has regarded food and nutrition as a top priority in its national agenda, as evidenced by the establishment of food and nutrition management committees at the national, provincial, and district levels (FNC n.d.. At the apex level, the Food and Nutrition Steering Committee was made up of key ministries and government departments and chaired by the Ministry of Agriculture, with the Nutrition Unit in the Ministry of Health providing the secretariat. This committee worked closely with food and nutrition management teams in all the provinces and districts throughout the country. When the government came to power in 1980 and set up these structures, it prioritized spending in social sectors, including agriculture, with the desire to redress the socioeconomic inequalities that existed before independence. Notwithstanding the importance of these welfarist policies, sustaining them proved to be a major challenge considering the economic stagnation that began during the first decade of independence (Zhou and Zvoushe 2012).

The food and nutrition governance structures established soon after independence in a bid to deal with hunger and malnutrition issues became critical in the 1990s in order to understand and address vulnerabilities that emerged due to the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme and the recurrent droughts that the country was facing, especially the severe 1992 drought (Zhou and Zvoushe 2012). In response to the deteriorating food and nutrition situation in the country, the government established a Task Force for Food and Nutrition in 1995. In 1998, the first Food and Nutrition Policy Framework was approved by the cabinet, empowering the task force to craft the
country’s Food and Nutrition Policy in order to address the food and nutrition challenges the country was facing. The year 1998 witnessed the birth of the Food and Nutrition Council (FNC) in Zimbabwe, which is the secretariat to the National Task Force for Food and Nutrition Security, with the mandate of promoting a multisectorial response to the country’s continued household food insecurity and malnutrition. The structure of the FNC’s coordination platforms is illustrated in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Coordination platforms of the Food and Nutrition Council

Source: FNC (n.d.).

In the year 2000, initiatives were undertaken to establish the Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee (ZimVAC), with support from the Southern African Development Community’s Regional Vulnerability Assessment Committee, in order to assess the FNS situation to inform programming. In an effort to address FNS issues, one of the four thematic areas in the current blueprint guiding the country (the Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-economic
Transformation, or ZimAsset) is the food and nutrition cluster. However, despite all these efforts, FNS in Zimbabwe remains a mammoth task, evidenced, among other things, by the president’s declaration of a state of disaster early in 2016, calling for a collaborative way to address it.

Because FNS is recognized as a global and complex phenomenon, a systematic approach is also highly appropriate to address the issues that are related to it. An underpinning maxim is that food and nutrition insecurity have, vigorously, proved to be a global evil, and this calls for systematic research to proffer lasting solutions in order to realize sustainable development and enhance resilience in food systems (Babu and Blom 2014b). In this context, this case study seeks to understand the role of MSPs in ensuring FNS governance for growth and structural transformation in Zimbabwe.

In Zimbabwe, FNS is addressed through a cocktail of both institutional and legal frameworks. At the apex level of government, the National Task Force for Food and Nutrition Security is chaired by the vice president and enjoys technical support from the National Steering Committee on Food and Nutrition Security, whose membership comprises the permanent secretaries of 17 ministries and the FNC. The steering committee is chaired by the deputy chief secretary in the Office of the President and Cabinet. These institutional frameworks preside over the National Food and Nutrition Security Policy (FNSP), which seeks to promote and ensure adequate FNS at all times in Zimbabwe, particularly among the most vulnerable. The policy also seeks to provide practical ways of fulfilling both global and regional commitments, such as Article 25 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the SDGs, the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme, and Scale Up Nutrition, among other commitments made by the country. The current blueprint guiding the country’s development agenda, ZimAsset, has identified FNS as one of its four clusters, demonstrating the country’s commitment to addressing food and nutrition insecurity.

To further harness these efforts, the National Nutrition Strategy 2014–2018 (NNS) strives to ensure nutrition security through evidence-based nutrition interventions that are integrated within the broad public health framework that includes health services, water, and sanitation, in order to implement commitment V(5) of the FNSP in Zimbabwe (FNC 2014). Aligned to this is the Zimbabwe National Food Fortification Strategy (2014–2018), which aims to address the burden of malnutrition (dietary deficiency) in the country.

In response to the El Niño–induced food crisis in 2015 and 2016, one initiative undertaken by the MSPs in Zimbabwe took place through government departments, UN agencies, and NGO partners under the leadership of the FNC (UNICEF 2016). Together, they worked toward responding to the deterioration of FNS due to the El Niño food crisis and treated the program as an emergency initiative. This response was a multisectoral rapid assessment conducted in all 60 districts of Zimbabwe (UNICEF 2016). Each sectoral intervention involved various local and national stakeholders in different districts. This particular initiative involved training for health workers, hygiene promotion and capacity building, and distribution of nonfood items (UNICEF 2016). In addition, this multisectoral response strove to strengthen multisectoral coordination by organizing meetings with district-level food and nutrition security committees and actively involving provincial and district water and sanitation committees (UNICEF 2016). A primary concern with this initiative was the lack of proper funding for multisectoral programs; there was a 96 percent funding gap across the water and sanitation, education, and health and nutrition projects (UNICEF 2016).

Members of the Regional Inter-agency Standing Committee (RIASCO) for southern Africa worked with national and international NGOs, international donors, and various sectoral players
in 13 countries to respond to the El Niño food crisis as well, following an action plan based on three pillars: humanitarian, resilience, and macroeconomic (RIASCO 2017). In addition to other sectoral programs, RIASCO’s action plan enacted food assistance, agricultural recovery programs, food security and market assessments, and monitoring of emerging threats to agriculture (RIASCO 2017). A primary lesson learned from this program was the importance of government leadership and community-level engagement. RIASCO proposed that systems must be put in place that enhance multisectoral communication within each country observed (2017). In addition, there is a need for structures that involve community stakeholders in decision making (RIASCO 2017).

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) implemented an El Niño response plan in southern African countries as well. Coordination was overseen by the FAO Southern Africa Resilience Hub, and FAO representatives consulted with governments (FAO 2016) to perform national-level planning and monitoring. However, implementation of these initiatives assumed that country offices had the ability to perform duties such as managing multisectoral coordination and arranging logistics for projects (FAO 2016).

**Agribusiness Competitiveness and MSPs in Zimbabwe**

Although several indicators could be used to identify the state of food system governance, one indicator that has been researched in the African context is the competitiveness of the agribusiness sector. According to the agribusiness competitiveness index developed by Babu and Shishodia (2017), Zimbabwe’s index number is 0.73, placing the country at number 35 out of the 42 countries for which an index was calculated (Babu and Shishodia 2017), as illustrated in Table 3. This ranking reveals the country’s low degrees of both agricultural productivity and agribusiness competitiveness, on a scale of low, medium, and high for both categories (Babu and Shishodia 2017).

Given the information illustrated in Table 1 that connects the characteristics of good governance to various aspects of agribusiness competitiveness, we can conclude that this low level of agribusiness competitiveness in Zimbabwe implies that the governance of food systems in the country is very weak.

**Table 3: Agribusiness competitiveness index of selected African countries**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Agribusiness competitiveness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>2.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>2.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mauritius</td>
<td>2.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>2.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>2.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>2.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Namibia</td>
<td>1.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>1.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Botswana</td>
<td>1.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>1.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Republic of Tanzania</td>
<td>1.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesotho</td>
<td>1.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senegal</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zambia</td>
<td>1.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Côte d’Ivoire</td>
<td>1.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>1.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>1.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seychelles</td>
<td>1.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madagascar</td>
<td>1.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cameroon</td>
<td>1.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malawi</td>
<td>1.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gambia</td>
<td>1.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mali</td>
<td>1.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mozambique</td>
<td>1.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benin</td>
<td>1.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gabon</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Togo</td>
<td>0.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guinea</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comoros</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burundi</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burkina Faso</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabo Verde</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Zimbabwe</strong></td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niger</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mauritania</td>
<td>0.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sao Tome and Principe</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chad</td>
<td>0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Djibouti</td>
<td>0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central African Republic</td>
<td>0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Republic of the Congo</td>
<td>0.30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors’ compilation based on Babu and Shishodia (2017).

Agricultural competitiveness has implications not only on the governance of its food system but also on the effectiveness of MSPs. Well-governed MSPs are a vital component of high agribusiness competitiveness. The existence of a multisectoral platform that integrates a variety of stakeholders allows for improved public-private linkages, increased flow of information, successful extension systems, better currency management, and more investment (Babu and Shishodia 2017; President’s Congress Report 2016). In 2016, the president of the Commercial Farmers Union of Zimbabwe addressed the organization’s congress (President’s Congress Report 2016), briefly assessing the condition of agricultural competitiveness in the country and proposing some measures to improve it. These measures include managing currency, promoting value addition, positioning products and value chains for greater competitiveness in markets, improving the government bureaucracy to boost the enabling environment, reducing output losses, looking into the effects of high utility charges and taxation on competitiveness, improving economies of scale and business linkages for small-scale farmers, and reducing investment risks. We observe that the key underlying mechanism of all of these solutions is the establishment of a multisectoral platform.
that brings together a wide range of stakeholders involved in the food system. For example, the proposal that products and value chains should be positioned for greater competitiveness in markets calls for a comprehensive understanding of market entry requirements, market trends, and market channels by local stakeholders in agriculture (President’s Congress Report 2016).

The report also highlights the need for the national government to aid regulatory institutions in participating in internationally accepted quality standards. In addition, the union president’s report emphasizes the creation of a fostering policy environment that encourages businesses (President’s Congress Report 2016). Such measures may be facilitated through public-private partnerships and the convenient flow of information that is brought about by well-governed MSPs. To create business linkages for small-scale farmers, the report calls for associations and organizations that allow smallholder farmers to receive inputs and services collectively.

Such a solution may be approached holistically through MSPs that are focused on the district level. These MSPs will integrate nonprofit organizations, local policy makers, private firms, and smallholder farmers to aid in improving economies of scale. Therefore, it can be concluded that MSPs have the ability to play a very strong role in increasing agricultural competitiveness, which will consequently improve food system governance. Given Zimbabwe’s low agricultural competitiveness index, there is a need for more integrated, holistic MSPs that address concerns such as the ones raised at the farmers’ union congress (President’s Congress Report 2016).

The Zimbabwe Agriculture Competitiveness Program (Zim-ACP), led by the US Agency for International Development (USAID), is an example of an initiative that strove to improve agricultural competitiveness in the country. Other stakeholders included Development Alternatives Inc., Imani Development, smallholder farmers, and farmer unions (Imani Development n.d.). This program, implemented from October 2010 to 2015, attempted to strengthen representative institutions in the partnership, improve market infrastructure, and improve agribusiness skills (DAI n.d.). In the process, the program reports that it supported evidence-based advocacy, helped create the GlobalGAP Farm Assurers training guide, revamped information systems on the horticulture and livestock market, hosted public-private dialogue forums, trained both male and female leaders of farmer organizations in how to improve governance and service, and increased the profitability of 511 private firms (DAI 2015).

This initiative is lauded for its outcomes and success. According to Melissa Williams, the USAID mission director, the program facilitated a healthy conversation between local stakeholders and the Zimbabwean government (DAI 2015; Samukange 2015). Additionally, the private sector’s investments into Zim-ACP’s initiatives allowed for improved access to finance and markets, growth, and sustainable productivity (DAI 2015).

This particular initiative, in the context of agricultural competitiveness, was successful during the five years that it was implemented. If this program were sustained and expanded for longer than five years, it is possible that its outcomes could contribute to a higher agribusiness competitiveness index, indicating higher food system governance. In addition, its continuation and expansion within the Zimbabwean MSP system could be implemented through existing MSP platforms such as the FNC. The program may have had direct impacts in improving governance during the country’s food crisis in 2015 and 2016.
Results of the KII and FGD on the Role of MSP in Food System Governance
Sixteen KIIIs were conducted with purposively and carefully sampled managers, specialists, or officers in charge of FNS from the government, donor agencies, civil society organizations, and research organizations. These activities were supported by three FGDs: one with government officials, a second with civil society, and a third with research organizations. Responses from both the KIIIs (98 percent) and the FGDs (90 percent) reveal that MSPs in Zimbabwe are critical cogs in combining the resources and expertise of different actors, and this has made them attractive to address complex issues that cannot be solved by a single partner. ZimVAC was cited as a good example. This is a platform made up of government, donor agencies, civil society, and research organizations working together to address food and nutrition issues in the country. In fact, ZimVAC is an instrumental platform where partners share experiences, technologies, and knowledge, and it is also critical in mobilizing financial resources. Interviews conducted with donor agencies (92 percent) revealed that joint working groups in the partnership process seem to help in narrowing the divergent views in terms of policies, strategies, and priorities among different partners.

Although MSPs are lauded for the above reasons, there is a need for concerted effort on the part of government to organize and support the resources provided by the various stakeholders in the partnership process. In fact, while these platforms exist for implementing FNS in Zimbabwe, findings from the KIIIs (80 percent) revealed a challenge of poor coordination. FNS issues are often addressed by different government departments numbering up to 17 ministries; hence weak intersectoral mechanisms tend to result in fragmentation of FNS interventions, especially at the national policy level. The FNC, which is a technical arm in the President’s Office and is responsible for the coordination of the different stakeholders in policy implementation, is often incapacitated in terms of both financial and human resources. A key interview with a program coordinator from a civil society organization revealed that because most of the activities done by FNC are funded by the donors with limited and sometimes no funding from government, the food and nutrition interventions are often ineffective and coordination is poor. An FGD with government workers established that the inherent weakness of the FNC in playing the multisectoral coordination role has resulted in a duplication of roles in the implementation of FNS policy in Zimbabwe. Different partners carry out their activities directly, resulting in poor monitoring and evaluation of FNS interventions.

KIIIs with the research organizations unanimously agreed that coordination between policy makers and various stakeholders continues to be fragile due to the polarized political environment. This is partly due to mistrust between policy makers and the donor countries. Interviewees disclosed that policy makers often think some of the donations made by donors may be motivated by special interests or instigated by opposition parties. Thus, trust between donors, NGOs, and policy makers needs to be strengthened through mutual trust in order for MSPs to be fruitful. These findings from KIIIs concur with statements by the country’s former first lady, who recently castigated NGOs for using food handouts to pursue hidden political agendas aimed at creating confusion among communities: “NGOs come here giving people food handouts year-in, year-out. This shows that they don’t have people at heart. They want us to be beggars for the rest of our lives. We know that they are pursuing their political agendas and trying to turn the people of Zimbabwe against their government” (The Herald 2015). Thus, MSPs in FNS are not always smooth but, rather, are often complex; hence the need to find a lasting solution in order to make them work. The fundamental challenge of MSPs revolves around cultivating a working
relationship based on mutual trust, mutual respect, open communication, and understanding among the different stakeholders (ODI and FDC 2003).

**Table 4: Findings from key informant interviews and focus group discussions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Finding</th>
<th>Discussion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Multistakeholder partnerships are critical cogs in combining the resources and expertise of different actors, and this has made them attractive to address complex issues that cannot be solved by a single partner.</td>
<td>The Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee (ZimVAC) was cited as a good example. This is a platform made up of government, donor agencies, civil society, and research organizations working together to address food and nutrition issues in the country. In fact, ZimVAC is an instrumental platform where partners share experiences, technologies, and knowledge, and it is also critical in mobilizing financial resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Joint working groups in the partnership process seem to help in narrowing the divergent views in terms of policies, strategies, and priorities among different partners.</td>
<td>Multistakeholder partnerships and coordinating platforms are helpful in creating strategic policies and priorities because they are shown to be able to narrow divergent views of various solutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Poor coordination is a challenge.</td>
<td>Food and nutrition security issues are often addressed by different government departments numbering up to 17 ministries. Weak intersectoral mechanisms tend to result in fragmentation of food and nutrition security interventions, especially at the national policy level. The Food and Nutrition Council, a technical arm in the President’s Office responsible for coordination of the different stakeholders for policy implementation, is often incapacitated in terms of both financial and human resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The polarized political environment leads to mistrust.</td>
<td>Coordination between policy makers and various stakeholders continues to be fragile due to the polarized political environment. This is partly due to mistrust between policy makers and the donor countries. Interviews disclosed that policy makers often think some of the donations made by donors could be motivated by special interests or instigated by opposition parties. Thus, trust between the donors, nongovernmental organizations, and policy makers needs to be strengthened by mutual trust in order for multistakeholder partnerships to be fruitful.</td>
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*Source: Authors’ compilation*
Resilience Building among Local Players in Zimbabwe

Using agricultural competitiveness as the indicator for food system governance, it can be concluded that Zimbabwe’s low agricultural competitiveness index denotes its relatively weak governance of food systems. This situation implies that Zimbabwe lacks well-established MSPs, because MSPs are an important structural component for enhancing agricultural competitiveness. In addition, through the qualitative analysis of MSP governance in Zimbabwe using KII and FGDs, one may observe that there exists a well-established design for MSPs at the national level. However, there is a need for more structural and coordinative support for these MSPs.

We use this evidence collected on Zimbabwe’s MSPs and the governance of its food system to evaluate the country’s food system resilience in responding to the El Niño food crisis in 2015 and 2016.

One may observe that multisectoral initiatives were undertaken in response to the El Niño food crisis in Zimbabwe, such as UNICEF’s humanitarian response, discussed earlier in this paper. However, these initiatives require more integration with existing Zimbabwean MSPs at the district level in order to truly build resilience within the food system. The very institutional structure of MSPs calls for decentralization of multisectoral programs from the national to the provincial, district, and village levels. The effective implementation of such a well-governed and decentralized structure has the ability to build resilient food systems. This section will enhance this understanding within the context of Zimbabwe and strive to emphasize the importance of MSPs in playing this decentralization role.

One way to evaluate the level of decentralization within MSPs in Zimbabwe is through the country’s NNS, which contains a list of 19 goals that aim to ensure nutrition security in the country. These goals are grouped into six key result areas, the fifth of which encompasses goals that target strengthening multisectoral coordination for an integrated nutrition response (FNC 2014). Specifically, goal 13 states, “All provinces and districts [will] have food and nutrition security committees that are fully discharging their terms of reference by 2014, [with] 50 percent of ward-level committees functioning by 2018” (FNC 2014.94).

This goal has the ability to achieve one of the capacities for food system resilience, a highly decentralized mobilization of community efforts for food security action. The successful implementation of province- and district-level food and nutrition security committees (FNSCs) overseen by the FNC may have greatly improved Zimbabwe’s resilience in response to the food crisis of 2015–2016.

Five strategic activities are delineated to achieve goal 13: train the national FNSC in 2014, train and resuscitate 36 remaining district FNSCs and 8 provincial FNSCs in 2014, finalize the monitoring and evaluation training package for FNSCs, roll out monitoring and evaluation training to all provincial and district FNSCs in 2014 and 2015, provide an annual constraint-removal budget for day-to-day running of FNSCs at all levels, and train 50 percent of ward FNSCs by 2018 (FNC 2014).

A majority of these activities, including the training and resuscitation of 36 district FNSCs and 8 provincial FNSCs, were achieved (FNC 2014). However, we propose that these activities for the
capacity development of FNSCs need to be strengthened, broadened, and made more multisectoral. District-level FNSCs require more structure and collaboration with other sectors that enhance strategy development, investment opportunities, and monitoring and evaluation.

The Productive Asset Creation (PAC) program, an initiative led by the WFP, sets an ambitious model for the structure of district-level MSPs. The stakeholders and actors of the PAC initiative are the national government of Zimbabwe, WFP, World Vision Zimbabwe, community members, smallholder farmers, and USAID (Macheka 2016). This program, primarily conducted in the southern district of Hwange, provided participants with emergency food assistance while also assisting them in working on rehabilitation projects with the entire community (UN Zimbabwe 2016). Some of these projects include rehabilitating and reconstructing dip tanks and drinking troughs for livestock, and managing community gardens. Additionally, the water supplied comes from pumps powered by solar technology (WFP 2012).

The three main categories of productive assets within this program are community-managed assets, household-managed assets, and co-managed assets. Such a robust system of asset management integrates multiple levels of the local community, including individual, community, and governmental (WFP 2012).

The goals of the PAC program were to “improve availability [of] and access to food during the peak hunger period, improve conditions of natural resources, improve dietary diversification, create opportunities for smallholder farmers to increase crop/livestock productivity, improve market integration and trade, and strengthen the capacity and role of the private sector to be responsive to the demand for cereals in deficit wards” (WFP 2012, 1).

Communities struck by the El Niño–induced drought in 2015 and 2016 were left devastated. However, villages in Hwange that had previously benefited from the PAC program had strong, resilient local systems that allowed them to stay afloat (UN Zimbabwe 2016). This program continued and expanded during the 2015–2016 food crisis. Solar-powered water pumps, which used the same sun that “scorched other people’s fields” during the El Niño food crisis, empowered smallholder farmers to tend to their crops and livestock (Macheka 2016). In addition to expanding the community projects to include building small gardens, the PAC program also provided food assistance for six months in response to the El Niño food crisis (UN Zimbabwe 2016).

The PAC program built resilience in response to the El Niño food crisis in certain villages of the Hwange district. However, it was limited in its scope. It was implemented only in selected villages (DePauw 2017) and it did not holistically integrate the three food subsystems. As a result, it has a lot of potential to increase its capacity and bring together more stakeholders.

Overall, the PAC program was very successful in responding to the El Niño food crisis. Community members involved in the program were empowered by its ability to leave behind manageable assets that play a major role in contributing to long-term, lasting community resilience.

This initiative took place at the district and village levels (DePauw 2017). However, we propose that a decentralized, district-oriented initiative like the PAC program should be integrated into the
national MSP system, which would greatly improve resilience in Zimbabwe. In other words, such an action would incorporate projects of the PAC program into the district-level FNSCs of the FNC, which would greatly enlarge its scope to include the various sectors that the PAC program worked with. The next section explores how initiatives like the PAC program can offer lessons for building stronger resilience in Zimbabwe through MSPs.

5. Lessons from MSPs during the Food Crisis of 2016

The Zimbabwean case study provides several lessons for improving food system governance through MSPs. Responses from the KIIIs and FGDs note that ZimVAC is considered a particularly good example of a well-governed MSP in Zimbabwe. This platform provides stakeholders with the opportunity to bring together their technology, experiences, and knowledge in order to address complex issues regarding FNS. Such a platform has successfully brought together national evidence and data to assess nutrition, socioeconomic profiles, and impacts of response interventions (WFP 2017). From our findings and qualitative research done on MSPs in Zimbabwe, it can be seen that Zimbabwean MSPs, such as ZimVAC, are well established and present at the national level.

However, the primary concern with MSPs in Zimbabwe is that they lack efficient multisectoral coordination that properly integrates the various players in the platform. Though the FNC is credited with the formal multisectoral coordination role, our KIIIs and FGDs reveal that the FNC is largely unable to properly address intersectoral communication. Therefore, there is a need for a coordinated and collective effort (from stakeholder mapping to diagnostic analysis) across the country to identify the critical partners in the MSP process across the country. The mapping exercise should be supported by an audit of the capacity-related gaps in order to realize the benefit that comes with MSPs. Essentially, there is need to involve the government, the private sector, civil society, and research organizations.

Notwithstanding the various committees and task forces established in food system governance, these mechanisms are rarely reviewed, thus denying the full benefits that come with MSPs. Thus concerted efforts are called for on the part of the government and development partners to organize the resources that are essential for the successful implementation of MSPs to ensure FNS.

A strengthened food system requires all stakeholders to invest in setting up a sustainable financing mechanism not limited to projects or to research and development. Such a funding mechanism must be designed and owned by all the partners. In fact, the government should strive to rely on domestically mobilized resources, for they are sustainable and come with fewer conditions. The private sector and development partners should support and complement government efforts by providing the funding and critical skills needed for the successful implementation of MSPs for improved food system governance.

It is imperative to expand the food policy system to include more organizations representing a wide range of stakeholders. This will increase the vitality of the MSP process and make it more transparent and inclusive. This is necessitated by the notion that the MSP process is ad hoc, with minimal participation of other groups, such as the private sector, civil society, and farmer-based groups. The participation of these groups in a systematic way will entail giving them more responsibilities and will thus improve the transparency and accountability of the food system.

In pursuing enhanced and strengthened food system governance, stakeholders in the MSP process should invest heavily in both human and institutional capacity building. Fundamentally, this should go beyond training programs to include support strategies for accountable leadership,
investment in long-term education and learning, strengthened public systems, voice mechanisms between all the stakeholders in the MSP process, and institutional reform.

The successful implementation of MSPs hinges on strengthened capacity to use research evidence in the food policy system. Often, unfortunately, research evidence generated by universities and think tanks is motivated mainly by tenure and publication concerns, without attention to the policy issues at hand. Dissemination of research evidence among the stakeholders in the MSP process is essential for the effective functioning of food system governance. Ideally, information asymmetry among the stakeholders in the food system frequently creates debates that are critical in increasing the transparency and accountability of the MSP process.

Our key investigation strives to determine how good governance, through MSPs, contributes to building resilience in the context of Zimbabwe. Through our literature review and qualitative research, it may be observed that the decentralized mobilization of the community is a key resilience capacity that may be achieved through good governance of MSPs. In other words, the importance of the integration of local stakeholders in multisectoral platforms is that it may greatly enhance resilience.

MSPs in Zimbabwe at the national level are prevalent. However, in order to achieve holistic food system resilience, it is important for MSPs to enhance their governance by improving communication and linkages at the district level. MSPs have the ability to greatly impact resilience. Their natural institutional structure as a platform that integrates local stakeholders in addition to the national government, NGOs, and private firms emphasizes the need to create channels that empower communities to adopt responsibility and work alongside other stakeholders in implementing programs and projects that strive to achieve FNS. Such a structure naturally allows for decentralization of community mobilization, which consequently contributes to gaining food system resilience. For this reason, we study the strengths and weaknesses of the governance and implementation of food system MSPs in Zimbabwe and strive to propose solutions that fill in the gaps of this structure. These gaps are primarily in multisectoral coordination and the involvement of local players at the district level. A solution that fills in these gaps may greatly enhance food system resilience.

Therefore, we propose a district-level layered approach to improving the governance of MSPs, which will result in improved resilience within food systems. From analyzing lessons gained from national MSPs in Zimbabwe, we observe that strategy formulation, tracking through monitoring and evaluation, and effective investment structures are the key components of efficient governance of MSPs. Figure 6 illustrates this solution.
These three layers must be present, evident, and clear throughout all sectors involved in an MSP. Strategy formulation is the ability to build and create a strategic solution that is context specific and evidence based. Tracking through monitoring and evaluation requires the formation of a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework for a program. An effective investment structure calls for the establishment of a constant source of funding for the specific program. Each layer reinforces the others and creates robust, well-functioning district-level committees within MSPs that integrate various sectors as well as community members. In addition, this structure will
greatly enhance the sustainability of community-based programs and projects, and seek to create a strong and rigid foundation for resilience building.

For example, the PAC program’s implementation of solar-powered water pumps is a strategic and influential way of achieving FNS while also building resilience within a food system during a food crisis like the El Niño of 2015–2016. If this initiative were implemented through district-level FNSCs across all of Zimbabwe, overseen by the FNC, all three layers would be present. In the context of the agricultural sector, the solution has been formulated and tested. Its evidence and context are provided through its implementation in the Hwange district, proving that it may be implemented in other districts as well. The tracking may be done through a variety of means. For example, extension workers provided by the private firms that designed the water pump may perform the tasks required by this layer. Last, funding from USAID, the largest donor for the PAC program, could be expanded, allowing for the implementation and maintenance of these water pumps for irrigation and cattle watering across all districts of Zimbabwe. In this way, we propose that such mechanisms and frameworks be implemented through all of the public and private sectors involved in this initiative, such as the water sector, the health sector, and the technology sector.

MSPs have tremendous potential to build resilience within food systems. Their innate structure that calls for the incorporation of diverse players at all levels demands decentralization and capacity enhancement at these various levels. Our policy solution is one that requires improved linkage and capacity at the district level. Such an initiative creates robust community-led projects that bring together various sectors that are already present at the local level. This sort of initiative was carried out by the PAC program in the Hwange district of Zimbabwe. However, this type of program is not enough to create sustainable and resilient national food systems. The structure of national MSPs must also be implemented at the district level. This structure is embodied in the three key components of efficient governance of MSPs: strategy formulation, tracking, and proper funding structures. The presence of these components in the form of local ministries or even committees in all districts will greatly enhance the governance and communication of MSPs at the district level, which will, in turn, contribute to resilient food systems.

6. Concluding Remarks
This paper uses Zimbabwe as a case study to understand the role of MSPs in improving food system governance in developing countries in Africa. Using findings from this case study, we strive to understand the role of good governance through MSPs in achieving food system resilience. With the food crisis of 2015–2016 as the context, we conduct KIIIs to identify opportunities for a well-organized policy process that involves multiple stakeholders to contribute to better governance of the food system. Results indicate that investing in opening the food policy debate to diverse groups of actors and players could help to increase the transparency and accountability of policy and program interventions. Consequently, our findings illustrate the need for enhanced governance of MSPs through better coordination and communication.

We propose that this enhanced governance will allow for the proliferation of well-structured MSPs, particularly and most importantly at the district level. Such an initiative will more aptly decentralize responsibility and mobilization across all levels, and ensure that food systems build resilience from the ground up. We propose the district-level layered approach as a programmatic solution to building food system resilience through good governance of MSPs. This involves the
integration of strategy, tracking, and funding within the MSP structure at the district level across all sectors.

Using Zimbabwe as a case study, we draw specific lessons for other developing countries in Africa for strengthening resilience through better governance facilitated by MSPs. Additional research is needed to compare the composition of the MSPs and to study the quality of the debate on food system governance mechanisms and their effect on improving resilience over time.
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