

MOZAMBIQUE News reports & clippings

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J Hanlon's new book "Moçambique recolonizado através da corrupção"

free on <https://bit.ly/MozRecol> (Portuguese only)

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Farmers have been abandoned, new government survey shows

The main income for 75% of Mozambicans families comes from farming but two thirds of them (3 million families) farm less than 1 hectare and most do not grow enough to feed their families, the Agricultural Census (CAP) published Wednesday (20 May) shows.

Mozambique has a cultivated area of 6.5 mn hectares, 18% of the 36 million hectares of arable land available, Minister of Planning and Development Salim Valá said at the report launch. "This means that the future of national economic transformation will continue to be deeply linked to our ability to transform subsistence agriculture into commercial, integrated, resilient and agro-industrialised farming."

But the CAP shows clearly that transformation clearly is not happening. About 1.2 million families (26% of farming families) have between 1 and 2 hectares (ha) of cultivated area, which means they can feed their families with some additional for the market - but they are not yet "family commercial farmers". Only 10% of farmers, about 470,00, can be considered as family commercial farmers, with 2-5 ha. Only 1% of farmers, 58,000, farm over 5 ha.

The survey shows the stark contrast between farmer support in Mozambique and its neighbours. CAP reports that only 9% of small and medium farmers use fertilizer and only 7% have access to extension services.

In Zimbabwe, 75% of small scale commercial and A1 (resettlement) farmers use inorganic (chemical) fertiliser, and many also use organic fertiliser such as manure. Also 75% receive government agricultural extension services and plant certified seeds. (Zimstat 2019) Malawi has similar percentages with 79% of farmers using inorganic fertilizer and of 77% using extension services. (IFPRI 2019)

In Zimbabwe and Malawi these are seen as vital state services. As part of the imposition of neoliberalism on Mozambique two decades ago, the government was forced by the World Bank to abolish its marketing board and reduce the number of agricultural extension agents. In a speech in Ribáue, Nampula on 15 May, President Daniel Chapo suggested these imposed policies might be reversed. But at present, as the CAP makes clear, Mozambican farmers are abandoned by the state.

The new and always excellent CAP is available on

Report: https://www.ine.gov.mz/web/guest/d/relatorio-cap-2023_2024

Excel tables: <https://www.ine.gov.mz/web/guest/d/quadros-finais-cap-2023>

The survey is dated 2023-2024 but was actually carried out between December 2024 and May 2025. The previous survey was in 2009/10.

Please Minister Valá, not Pro-Savana again

Salim Valá said that only 6.5 mn hectares of land are cultivated out of Mozambique's 36 mn ha of arable land. The headline is that 82% of Mozambique's farmland is "available". But that wrong interpretation caused two of Mozambique's biggest development disasters, ProSavana in the Nacala corridor and the Global Solidarity Forest Fund.

Much of that 82% of land has occupants and owners in local communities. Most peasant farmers only use a hoe and no fertiliser which means a family can only farm 1 ha, but they usually have two other plots (included in the "unused" land Vala refers to) left fallow to regain fertility, and in a rotating system farmers move from one plot to the next. Other land is held for children to take over when they grow to adults. And community forests are the sources of a wide range of food, herbs, timber, thatch, etc. Comparing the present CAP to CAP 2009/10 shows how quickly this land is being taken up by Mozambique's rapidly growing population. Fifteen years ago only 3.2 mn ha were cultivated, but the new CAP shows that in 15 years, land use actually doubled. Local people are putting this "available" land to use, each year farming 650,000 ha more land.

Technical support including fertilizer and extension services would allow farmers to use more of the land for longer periods. New systems of sustainable agriculture are now available, but they require three years to establish and the farmers need support to feed their families during that transition.

Mozambique has offered all the so-called "vacant" land to investors for decades. But they want large blocks of good land, so they try to capture all of the land peasant farmers have already identified as best. The ProSavana deal with was signed by Mozambican agriculture ministers in 2009 and 2013 offering Brazilian and Japanese companies 700,000 ha of "vacant land". Those companies wanted to create huge plantations, but the occupants of that land, with the support of national civil society and international NGOs, fought fiercely, and the project had to be abandoned in 2020.

In 2006 Norwegian and Swedish Lutheran churches and the Dutch Civil Servants and Education pension fund created the "ethical" Global Solidarity Forest Fund (GSFF) to plant 360,000 ha of trees on "vacant" land. Local people fought back burning and destroying thousands of hectares of newly planted trees. By 2020 more than 300,000 ha had been abandoned, with investors simply walking away from land they had grabbed from poor peasants and pillaged - and the peasants were given no compensation.. There is a final irony. Both the Nordic countries and Portugal do large forestry projects on an outcropping basis - where local farmers are paid to care for the trees and the companies promise to buy when they are ready for harvesting. That would have been ideal from rural Mozambique were local farmers could have small blocks of trees. But like all neo-colonial farm companies, GSFF and Portugal's Portucel refused listen to local people and apply their successful outgrower programme, and instead demanded plantations.

The answer has been clear for two decades - invest in intensifying cultivation by the current land occupants and turn them into family commercial farmers. In both the US and Europe most farms are family commercial farms and there are huge government programmes to support them. But

donors and the World Bank say only rich countries can do that; Mozambique must have foreign-owned plantations.

This argument is not new and we detailed it 12 years ago in *Chickens and beer: A recipe for agricultural growth in Mozambique* (2014) which is free on <https://bit.ly/Chickens-Beer>

Please please Planning and Development Minister Salim Valá, don't listen to people who tell you 82% of Mozambican farmland is vacant. Don't repeat ProSavana and the Global Solidarity Forest Fund. Instead, help the land's occupants to grow into family commercial farmers as in Mozambique's neighbours Malawi and Zimbabwe.

Chapo announces major changes to bring the state back in - Just nice words or a real challenge?

Speaking in Ribáue, Nampula on 16 May at the launch of the agricultural campaign, President Daniel Chapo announced state intervention that will go against decades of World Bank and IMF demands.

"We want to open a new chapter in the agricultural marketing landscape in Mozambique - a chapter where the producer is no longer the weakest link in the chain but is recognised as the true engine of the national economy," the President said. Until now the World Bank and IMF have insisted that marketing and farm support must be left to the free market, which left peasant farmers with all the risk leaving them the weakest part of the marketing system and in poverty. Are these just words that sounded good to the President in a speech, or is Chapo really prepared to challenge the World Bank and ingrained power in both the Ministry of Agriculture and Frelimo?

Chapo stressed that the state must "ensure that produce reaches the market in good time, in good condition, at fair prices, and with a real impact on household incomes." He also instructed the Mozambique Cereals Institute to guarantee to buy - to be the buyer of last resort - to ensure that no producer is left with unsold output due to lack of buyers, while also safeguarding food reserves and fair pricing for farmers." He also said that the Mozambique Commodities Exchange should "set reference prices and enforce fair market rules, with the goal of protecting the producer."

This is the policy in Zimbabwe which has ensured grain surpluses and rising small farmer income, but the World Bank has always vociferously opposed this and more than a decade ago forced the Mozambique Cereals Institute to stop setting minimum prices and being buyer of last resort.

Bank policy was also that processing was to be left to the private sector, and cashew nuts and other crops should be exported for processing. The President also said the government aims to invest in agro-processing so that agricultural surplus is no longer exported as raw material but instead transformed locally into value-added products. "We want to see maize produced by our people turned into flour produced in Mozambique. We want to see cashew nuts, sesame, peanuts and other crops driving the creation of new factories, generating jobs for families, women and young people, and bringing prosperity to the country."

Is Chapo brave and powerful enough to push this through?

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Two Anamola leaders gunned down and another attacked in three weeks

Attacks of members of Venancio Mondlane's party Anamola (National Alliance for a Free and Autonomous Mozambique) continue:

+ On 16 May in Mucambene, Massagena, Gaza, gunmen stormed into the house of activist Pedro Chauke and shot him dead, and fled in his car.

+ On 9 May Manica provincial coordinator Mouzinho Manasse was leaving a party meeting on the main street of Chimoio, Manica, and was killed in a drive-by shooting. He had only been named to his post a month earlier.

+ On 29 April the treasurer of the local branch in Zimpeto, Maputo city, known as Capitão, was kidnapped in broad daylight, badly beaten, including with two broken legs, and then dumped in Boquisso, Matola, 15 km away.

The Mozambican NGO Decide has become the most respected scorekeeper of attacks and killings. It reports that since July last year there have been more the 23 attacks on opposition party members, most on Anamola but some on the other opposition party Podemos. There have been no arrests. (MZ News, AIM, DW Africa)

Amnesty International (19 May) labelled this a "disturbing pattern of killings or enforced disappearances of opposition party members in the recent past". Amnesty said "Mozambican authorities must ensure prompt, thorough, independent, impartial, transparent and effective investigations into the killings of Pedro João Chauque and other opposition figures."

Venancio Mondlane's lawyer Elvino Dias and agent Paulo Guambe were gunned down by what looked like a police hit squad on 19 October 2024, just 10 days after the fraudulent presidential election. Mondlane was called to give evidence to the Public Prosecutor's office on 14 May this year. Afterward he gave a press conference in which he said they appeared to be just starting their investigation. "A year and eight months on, the Public Prosecutor's Office has no evidence, no leads – absolutely nothing regarding the deaths." He noted that there were two banks with surveillance cameras near the scene of the killings and other cameras on the getaway route, but no attempt was made to look at the videos.

It is not just opposition activists. On 17 April lawyer Amisse Abel Nota Passe went to Police Station 5 in Matola to assist someone who had been arrested. Instead he was thrown into a jail cell and badly beaten by 7 police officers. The Bar Association (Ordem dos Advogados de Moçambique - OAM) on 13 May formally submitted a complaint demanding criminal charges against those involved. (OAM, CDD)

IMF to visit Mozambique in June, in rapid policy change

An IMF team will visit Mozambique in June to discuss a new loan, in a sudden reversal of its position announced on 23 April. A year ago in April 2025 Mozambique and the IMF suspended (but did not cancel) the programme, because Mozambique could not or would not meet IMF demands, particularly devaluation and cuts to the wages of higher paid officials and civil servants. Going into this year's IMF Spring meetings in Washington, 13-18 April, the hard line remained. IMF officials said no further meetings until the demands were met.

But there were three changes:

+ In March the Mozambican government unexpectedly fully paid its \$630mn debt to the IMF, which also meant it no longer had any arrears.

+ Then on 2 April Mozambique hired international debt consultant Alvarez & Mashal. Reza Baqir is A&M Managing Director and Global Head of Sovereign [debt] Advisory Service. He worked at the IMF for 20 years and for four years headed the IMF's Debt Policy Division.

+ Third Mozambique made clear to the IMF that it would accept devaluation.

That was enough for the Mozambican delegation to convince the IMF to meet with them in Washington during the spring meetings. That meeting was successful and an IMF team will arrive in June to begin very difficult discussions on a new loan.

Devaluation is highly controversial at the top of Frelimo. The exchange rate has been set at \$1 = 63.9MT for five years. Most economists argue that the correct value of the Metical is \$1 = 90MT or even 100MT. This large a devaluation would mean imports cost much more and exports are more profitable. The problem is political, because senior Frelimo people control some of the import trade. At present the overvalued Metical makes it cheaper to buy imported rice rather than grow it in Gaza or Zambezia. Devaluation would make domestic rice competitive and create thousands of Mozambican jobs. But Frelimo bigwigs will complain. The debate will be over how long it takes to devalue - in a single big bang, or over several years.

Paying off the loan was unnecessary - the IMF did not demand it. The money came from \$ reserves held by the central bank (which opposed repayment). Local bankers argue it would have been better to repay the \$800 mn foreign payment backlog at the end of 2025, to ease the local economy. But the opposite position is taken by those who say it is better to talk to the IMF with clean hands. Another argument is that the IMF loan must be repaid in hard currency - \$ - and devaluation would substantially increase the debt (in local currency, MT).

Aid is falling and Mozambique's debt is so unsustainable it can no longer obtain foreign hard currency credit. Many other poor countries have the same problem and there is a move for a partial global debt cancellation similar to HIPC in 2000. That would take at least a couple of years to negotiate and debt cancellation beneficiaries would have to be in good standing with the IMF - thus paying off the IMF loan. (Reuters, Fitch, O Pais, AIM, Evidencias, Zitamar)

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Elections

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<https://www.cipmoz.org>; <https://cipeleicoes.org/eng/cip@cipmoz.org>).

To subscribe or unsubscribe: <https://bit.ly/MozBul-sub> Past election newsletters are on <https://bit.ly/CIP-EI>

Election study collaboration: We have detailed election data from 1999 through 2014 and are inviting scholars to use this data collaboratively. <http://bit.ly/MozEIData>

Important external links

Books by Joseph Hanlon can be downloaded, free: <https://bit.ly/HanlonBooks>

Flood, cyclone and weather: weather <https://www.inam.gov.mz/>

rainfall https://www.inam.gov.mz/images/DAPT_Previsoes/Manha/Previsao_Manha.pdf

Cyclone trackers, <https://bit.ly/Reunion-cyclone>, <https://www.metoc.navy.mil/jtwc/jtwc.html>

(which uses z time which is UCT - Coordinated Universal Time) and <https://www.cyclocane.com/>

Two LSE working papers - World Bank questions its Mozambique 'success' where oligarchs brought high inequality, poverty and corruption - <https://bit.ly/Moz-LSE-208c> and **How the IMF and World Bank caused a resource curse and civil war in Mozambique** - <https://bit.ly/Moz-LSE-209>

Minimum wage & exchange rate charts, tables 1996-2022 <https://bit.ly/MozMinWage2022>

Previous editions of this newsletter: <https://bit.ly/MozNews2023> and <https://bit.ly/MozNews2022>

My Mozambique archive: <http://bit.ly/Mozamb>

Cabo Delgado

Cabo Ligado weekly report on civil war <https://www.caboligado.com/>

Archive with reports, detailed maps, and census data <https://bit.ly/Moz-CDg>

Special reports on the war

Evolution of the war: global vs local. 27 Feb 2020 <http://bit.ly/CDelgadoOrigins>

Religion is shaping Cabo Delgado civil war. 30 April 2020 <https://bit.ly/CDelgadoReligion>

Intensifying argument over roots of war. 28 June 2020 <https://bit.ly/Moz-492>

Are the drums of war silencing any hope of peace? 26 July 2020 <http://bit.ly/Moz-496>

A history of violence presages the insurgency. 13 August 2020 <http://bit.ly/Moz-498>

Military & economic intervention. 3 Sept 2020 <https://bit.ly/CDelgadoIntervene>
Cabo-Delgado-Free-for-all. 20 Apr 2022. <http://bit.ly/Moz-593>

Mozambique heroin transit trade

English - LSE - 2018 - <http://bit.ly/Moz-heroin>

Portuguese - CIP- 2018 - <http://bit.ly/HeroinaPT>

2001 first article- *Metical* - English and Portuguese <https://bit.ly/MozHeroin2001>

Gas for development?

Gas_for_development_or_just_for_money?_2015 bit.ly/MozGasEng

Gás_para_desenvolvimento_ou_apenas_dinheiro?_2015 bit.ly/MozGasPt

Background reading

Special reports

Social protection report - 2017 Mozambique - <http://bit.ly/MozSocPro>

Special report on four poverty surveys: bit.ly/MozPoverty

\$2bn secret debt - in English

Secret debt trial (Aug-Oct 2021) press reports <https://bit.ly/Moz-secret-debt>

Kroll - Full report on \$2bn debt - <http://bit.ly/Kroll-Moz>

Kroll report summary - <http://bit.ly/Kroll-sum>

Key points of Mozambique parliament report - Nov 2016 - <http://bit.ly/MozAR-debt-En>

Following the donor-designed path to Mozambique's \$2.2 bn debt - <http://bit.ly/3WQ-hanlon>

In Portuguese:

Parliamentary Report on the Secret Debt (complete) bit.ly/MozAR-debt

2018 Constitution - <http://bit.ly/2KF588T>

Twelve books by Joseph Hanlon can be downloaded, free: <https://bit.ly/HanlonBooks>

"Moçambique recolonizado através da corrupção" (2025) <https://bit.ly/MozRecol> (Portuguese only)

Zimbabwe takes back its land (2013) <https://bit.ly/Zim-takes-land>

Bangladesh confronts climate change (2016)

Chickens and beer: A recipe for agricultural growth in Mozambique (2014) is on <https://bit.ly/Chickens-Beer>

Há Mais Bicicletas – mas há desenvolvimento? (2008)

Civil War Civil Peace (2006): <https://bit.ly/Civil-War-Civil-Peace>

Moçambique e as grandes cheias de 2000 (2001)

Mozambique and the Great Flood of 2000 (2001)

Paz Sem Benefício: Como o FMI Bloqueia a Reconstrução (1997)

Peace Without Profit: How the IMF Blocks Rebuilding (1996) <https://bit.ly/Peace-wo-Profit>

Mozambique: Who Calls the Shots (1991) <https://bit.ly/Shots-Moz>

Mozambique: The Revolution Under Fire (1984)

These are still available for sale:

Galinhas e cerveja: uma receita para o crescimento (2014) (free in English)

Just Give Money to the Poor: The Development Revolution from the Global South (2010)

Do bicycles equal development in Mozambique? (2008) (free in Portuguese)

Beggar Your Neighbours: Apartheid Power in Southern Africa (1986)

Mozambique media websites, English:

Club of Mozambique (free): <http://clubofmozambique.com/>

Zitamar (paywall): <http://zitamar.com/>

Mozambique media websites, Portuguese (all with partial paywall):

Notícias: www.jornalnoticias.co.mz

O País: www.opais.co.mz

@Verdade: <http://www.verdade.co.mz>

Carta de Moçambique <https://cartamz.com>

Mozambique think tanks and pressure groups, Portuguese:

Centro de Integridade Pública: CIP <https://cipmoz.org/>

Observatório do Meio Rural: OMR <https://omrmz.org/>

Instituto de Estudos Sociais e Económicos: IESE <https://www.iese.ac.mz/>

Centro Para Democracia e Desenvolvimento CDD <https://cddmoz.org/> (some CDD in English)

Also CDD now controls Fórum de Monitoria do Orçamento - FMO (main debt group) <http://www.fmo.org.mz>
and RMDDH - Rede Moçambicana dos Defensores dos Direitos Humanos (a human rights group).

To subscribe to all CDD publications: <http://eepurl.com/qO9l6v> (English or Portuguese).

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