Investing in Rural Agriculture

TIDI/UCD/Self Help Africa
Day Conference
25 May 2011
Dublin
Background

• Agriculture main source of livelihood for 80% of rural Zambians
• Rural small-scale farmers (SSF) critical contributors to national food security
• Declining government investment into the sector
• Heavy dependence on single crop (maize)
Background

• Lack of markets and weak market linkages
• Erratic weather patterns, degrading soils, lack of access to finance, inputs etc
• Government funded input support programme reaches only 10% of SSFs
Self Help Africa Approach

• Recognise role of agriculture in development and poverty reduction
• 25 years experience and in-depth understanding of heterogeneity of rural SSF
• Crafting strategies and implementing actions to address differences and potential
Grass root actions
Farming as business model

• Developing skills and local capacities
• Developing entrepreneurial skills
• Facilitating access to finance, agro inputs and services
• Promoting value addition and facilitating market linkages
Market Oriented Rural Enterprise project

- Supported 2,500 farmers
- Organised into producer groups
- Trained in crop production technologies and entrepreneurship
- Commodity value chains developed
- Linked to markets
What changed?

• Improved production
• Surplus crops taken to markets
• Market demands improved packaging and quality
• Market availability promoted crop diversification and larger yields
• More income, better access to services
Seed Entrepreneurship for Economic Development and Food security

• Supporting 1,000 seed growers
• Training to grow certifiable seed
• Supporting 10 seed growers association to become viable commercial enterprises
• Facilitating market linkages
• Building capacity for better policy advocacy
What is changing

• Farmers growing seed for markets
• Developing local skills and competencies for growing certifiable seed
• Improving access to quality seed
• Creating community based seed value chain
• Improving incomes
Conclusion

• Investing in agriculture means more than improving food security
• Catalyst for developing other sub-sectors
• Enables rural communities to form enterprises based on traditional activity
• Developing local skills
• Rural small scale farmers have opportunity to be change agents