

Social resilience and sustainable development

Lessons from small farmers in Southern Africa



Kleinbauern im südlichen Afrika haben mehrere Krisen erlebt. Fallstudien in Simbabwe haben gezeigt, dass in der Vergangenheit oft eine Kombination verschiedener Strategien den Kleinbauern geholfen hat sich zu behaupten: Konzentration auf die produktivsten Teile ihres Bodens, Marktorientierung und Diversifizierung, unterstützt durch vier Faktoren, nämlich die Verfügbarkeit von Betriebsmitteln, finanzielle Unterstützung, der Grad der sozialen Organisation und formale Besitzverhältnisse. Auf der Grundlage dieser Erkenntnisse bietet der Artikel NGOs, Regierungen, Landwirten und internationalen Organisationen Ratschläge, um eine „nachhaltige Intensivierung“ der Landwirtschaft zu unterstützen, die die bereits vorhandenen Bewältigungsmechanismen der lokalen Landwirte einbezieht.



Locardia
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Introduction: Global crises and the local situation in Zimbabwe

Crises have become a way of life in many parts of the world, just to mention the Global Food Crisis of 2003–2008, the Global Economic Crisis of 2007–2009, the Covid Pandemic of 2020/2021 as well as the ongoing wars in Eastern Europe and in several African and Asian countries, contributing to a seemingly never-ending refugee crisis. The reasons for these disasters are manifold, but they can be grouped into two main categories, namely human-induced and natural disasters (IPCC 2019, Gähler 2016), which are of course often closely interconnected (figure 1). There is a common sense un-

derstanding that the frequency of such crises may even accelerate in the future, with serious global consequences (Ollivaud and Turner 2014). Generally, it is the ordinary poor people, many of them living in vulnerable circumstances in the rural tropics, who bear the brunt of such events (Philip and Rayan, 2004). This is particularly true for many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa: There, more than two thirds of the population still depend on agriculture (Sisay et al. 2019). A large proportion of rural households suffer from poverty, food insecurity and social unrest, and the state has limited capacity and/

or willingness to respond to and mitigate the threats to the local population or to provide adequate levels of protection.

In such contexts, national governments and numerous NGOs, often supported by international donors, have become active in supporting small farmers with training programs, the diffusion of technology, credits, social payments, subsidies, and infrastructural investments. These efforts have had remarkable success but have not been too successful in stopping a general process of local marginalization and environmental degradation (Jensen and Loneragan 2012). More effective measures are therefore urgently

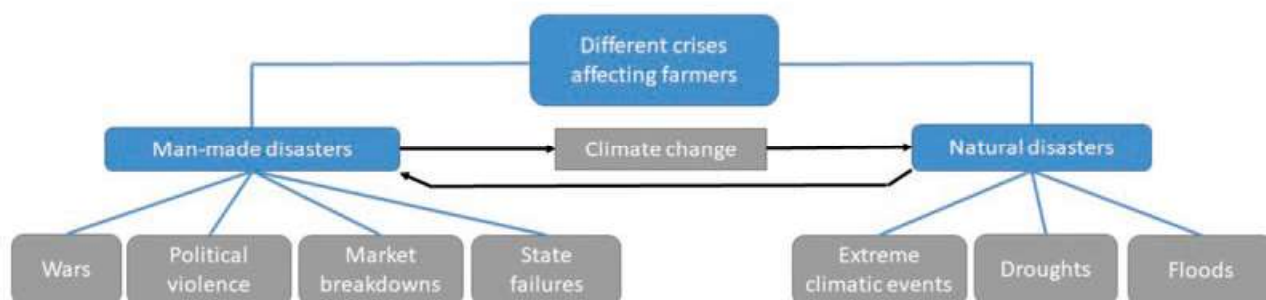


Figure 1: Different categories of crises affecting African farmers