



Tropentag, September 15-17, 2021, hybrid conference

“Towards shifting paradigms in agriculture  
for a healthy and sustainable future”

## Passivity and Activeness of Cooperative Members: A Case of Rice Farmers in Western Zambia

SAMUEL MWANZA<sup>1</sup>, JIŘÍ HEJKRLÍK<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Czech University of Life Sciences Prague, Fac. of Tropical AgriSciences, Czech Republic*

<sup>2</sup>*Czech University of Life Sciences Prague, Department of Economics and Development,*

### Abstract

Measures to achieve agricultural development among smallholders elevates cooperatives as an important channel to improving their incomes and market access due to the postulated inherent advantages expressed theoretically in the form of reduced transaction cost, raised social capital and economies of scale. However, the advantages of cooperative membership in Zambia still remains a theory with number of members having only formal membership and passive role in the group. Using a theoretically grounded framework on benefits and challenges of cooperatives, this study assesses and links key theoretical aspects that determine active and passive involvement of farmers in rice producer groups. Simple descriptive statistics and the framework deductive content analysis were employed to analyse the quantitative and qualitative data respectively, from a total of 215 passive and active respondents of rice cooperatives in Limulunga and Mongu districts of western Zambia. Results on quantitative analysis reveals longer formal education for active members and a greater number of males being active. In addition, assets and total land holdings are found to be more among the active members. Active members have also higher share capital value investments, higher selling price, less sales through middlemen, better access to agricultural extension services, and share higher perceived cooperative benefits. Qualitative results from content analysis reveals links to the theories of reduced transaction costs, build-up of social capital and better economies of scale as theories explaining the benefits of cooperative membership, hence, influencing member activeness. However, theories related to governance and decision-making problems, investment related problems, and cooperative asset related problems were found to be critical in explaining passivity of members in Zambian cooperatives. In addition, general dormancy of cooperatives, low production quantities of rice, different levels of commitment and failure to benefit from subsidised inputs contributes all to passivity of members. Capitalising on trainings and awareness creation targeting change of members' approach towards their cooperatives can positively contribute to cooperative development in western province of Zambia.

**Keywords:** Commitment, Content Analysis, Farmer Groups, smallholder Farmers