

Kristen Baier
Adel DeSoto Minburn High School
Adel, Iowa
Angola Factor 6: Sustainable Agriculture

The Benefits of Stimulating Small Scale Agriculture In Angola

Angola is a country of southern Africa with a coastline along the south Atlantic Ocean between the countries of Democratic Republic of the Congo and Namibia. According to the World Factbook, there are 1,246,700 square kilometers of land, with 1,600 of them being along the coastline; 47.3% of the land is used for agricultural purposes, and 860 square kilometers are irrigated land. Angola was once a thriving self reliant country that based their economy on agriculture. Now, the country relies solely on imports as a source for food. How could the prospect of the country change so drastically within a mere 40 years? How can this impoverished country, ranking at 101 out of 113 in the world make strides to advance towards a viable future that supports itself with natural resources? In order to stimulate small scale in Angola and for the positive changes to occur, one should try to understand how Angola arrived at it's present day challenges.

The current population of Angola is about 26,389,965 people. Within the age structure, 42.7% of the population is under the age fourteen, 20.72 % is of the age fifteen to twenty four, 29.6% is of the age twenty five to fifty four, 3.97% of the population is of the age fifty five to sixty four, and sixty five and on up is less than three percent. As of 2016, the birth rates are about 39 per 1,000 people, and death rates sit at a little more than 11 deaths per 1,000 people. Some causes of death include infectious diseases such as bacteria and protozoal diarrhea, Hepatitis A, and Typhoid Fever, Malaria, and Schistosomiasis. HIV/AIDS in Angola is also very prevalent as there are 315,400 Angolans living with the disease, and as of 2015, 11,900 deaths resulted from HIV/AIDS ("Angola" 2016).

The lack of health care access for Angolans is resulting in more vulnerability to disease and viruses within the country, and it is also costly. The hospitals and main pharmacies are located in the capital Luanda, though the few facilities do not have the necessary nurses or doctors. The quality of work among the hospitals is dramatically increasing, but the complex medical procedures still send Angolans to neighboring countries to get more intensive medical care. ("Healthcare in Angola").

"Angola's constitution provides for free primary education from the age of seven. However, schools suffer from a severe shortage of facilities, teachers and materials."(Education and Jobs). As stated by Just Landed, "Primary education is compulsory for four years, starting at seven years old until 11, and each school year has 171 days. Secondary education starts at eleven and lasts for eight years but many children do not continue with secondary education or higher studies. Especially in the case of girls, they tend to stay at home helping their families so they do not attend school as long or as often as boys."("Public Education in Angola"). Strong educational programs is a key to a success future for its citizens due to the age demographics currently in Angola.

An average family size in Angola is 8.6 people per household. Aunts and uncles of children are considered as "senior" brothers and sisters, while actual brother and sisters are referred to as "junior"

brother and sisters. The families typically live in separate homes within their community, however the elders normally live with one of their children. The women in the household are expected to uphold duties of being a mother, as well as caring for and maintaining the keep of the house. Some of her tasks also include collecting firewood, for both heat and cooking, working the crops or produce gardens for the family. They are also expected to care for and tend to the sick and elderly due to the lack of health care available (“Climate & Agriculture”).

The people of Angola eat and cook dairy products and meat. In addition, most farmers that grow maize sorghum, and cassava consume what they harvest (“Angola” 2017). The cuisine of the capital Luanda, derives from European and African influences. Seafood is a staple in multiple dishes due to the proximity and access of the coast. Another very popular food the people of Angola eat is “funge”, a thick paste derived from the cassava plant and a staple that the Angolans grow (“Climate & Agriculture”). Most of the foods Angolans can obtain are overly expensive due to the lack of ability to produce crops within the country. According to the US Department of Commerce, even though Angola is suited for a variety of crops and livestock, and has the natural resources to become one of the leading agricultural countries in Africa, the country currently only cultivates 10 percent of its thirty five million hectares of arable land.

Angola was once a leading exporter of coffee, and exported other goods such as corn, sisal, bananas, and sugarcane. An abundance of petroleum, diamonds, iron ore, phosphates, copper, feldspar, gold bauxite and uranium is also present within the land (“Angola” 2016). However, in 1975 on November 11th, a civil war broke out between conflicting ethnic groups, leaving more than four million people displaced and damaged local infrastructures that once flourished (Campos). This left the country living in civil war battle for more than 27 years which did not officially end until 2002 but, its aftermath has had a lasting effect on the land and people.

The decrease in agricultural productivity in Angola has affected lifestyles of most of the Angolan people. Angola, a country that once flourished by being self sufficient, now heavily relies on foreign imports to provide basic daily food needs for its citizens. Many of the Angolans, whether originally farmers or urban citizens, have become very poverty stricken as an effect from the civil war. The farmers are unable to farm the land their families once successfully cultivated an abundance of crops. Also, the tools they once used to plant and harvest are far gone after many families had to desert their homes in order to maintain safety (Campos). “In 2009, statistics showed that poverty is three times stronger in rural areas than the urban locations within Angola” (Borgen Magazine). For families that no longer could farm for their source of income, it resulted in long walks or finding other means of transportation to gain access to markets that sold imported foods. “Angolan markets may charge as much as five dollars for a single mango, even though the original box of 100 mangos sold for 10 dollars” (“Climate & Agriculture”). It is evident with the prices being inflated at this rate, poverty stricken families struggle to thrive or get basic nutrition.

Angola can recover and become a sustainable agriculture contender once again with programs, investors, government support, and education training. “Currently, Angola imports more than half its food, with some estimates putting the figure as high as 90%, the USDA reports. The annual food bill amounts to some \$5 billion”(Campos). With the help of numerous ideas that investors and the government are willing to implement, they will soon become a strong exporter of goods. The government is starting to

help bring agriculture back by developing the Capanda Agro-Industrial Zone that has built a hydropower dam along the Kwanza river. This has allowed multiple small scale farmers to start the production of cassava, sugar cane, soybeans, and dairy (Maritz). The ADPP is helping Angolan farmers also by implementing a program that trains farmers on low cost and low technological solutions to create better crops for the land they have acquired. These farmers have had the basic training of the skills that being an entrepreneur requires. They learn to implement diversified crops, ways of farming that are environmentally sustainable, and how to be efficient in the crops they choose to produce (“Farmer’s Club”). In 2015, the Angolan Government also issued a comprehensive plan to help stimulate the growth of livestock production as well as crops. By 2018, beef production specifically will look significantly better in Angola. The government is ensuring better veterinary care and health of livestock, strengthening herd production and genetics, and meeting the slaughterhouse regulations. This plan also entails restoring wheat milling in hopes that the production will reach 1,200 tons of wheat, 900 tons being used for flour, and the remaining 300 used for livestock feed (“Angola Agricultural Equipment”). While these projects and others are very promising for the future, the government and farmers will need to remain aware that climate changes, population growth, and energy demands could slow their initial progress.

Angola has a sub saharan climate that has a rainy season and a dry season. With the climate changing, another part that factors into the crops and livestock is having enough of a water source during the dry season (“Angola” 2016). An additional challenge with climate quickly changing is being able to use irrigation systems to sustain the crops and plants growing to further develop agriculture in hopes that it becomes the potential it once was at before the civil war broke out. But, because the water resource is limited to attain within basic human needs, crop sustainability is still questionable. Specifically, the water shortage Angola is experiencing is taxing the people right now. The lack of water availability ultimately limits farmers and other agriculturally related industries and creates unsustainable conditions to be able and grow crops in. According to USAID, the average temperature rose by 1.5 degrees Celsius between 1960 and 2006, with the most rapid increase being in the winter. The country's average rainfall decreased at a rate of around 2 mm per month over the same time span (“Climate Change Adaptation in Angola”). This not only affects the amount of money families have available for other resources, but also it affects the nutrients the crops will receive in the future and the yields farmers are able to have (“Water Crisis Hits”).

While some projects and help have already come for Angola, it still has not shown significant improvement since the government and other national organizations have begun to invest in the country. Angola is still importing a majority of their goods and the inflation is consistently high (“Angola” 2016). More investment from the government needs to go towards educating rural farmers that want to be able to sustain their own agriculture and sell at nearby markets. The farmers should be trained on how to care for their crops efficiently with the resources they have available, and work towards becoming more advanced with the tools and technologies they can use to produce crops.

One of the most attainable projects the government has set up is their comprehensive plan to stimulate the growth of livestock and crop production. Established in 2015 a comprehensive program to enhance the stimulation in beef production by improving veterinary health, herd production, strengthening slaughterhouse regulations, and building up infrastructures for private entities. Within the corn production, the Angolan government hopes to reach sufficiency in production for human and animals, and

lastly, working to produce more wheat for flour and for animal feed as well (“Angola Agricultural Equipment”).

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations has worked to serve Angolan farmers by giving them the opportunity to learn how to strengthen their smallholder production and nutrition and food security. These farmers are able to learn how to apply the skills they’ve learned to production techniques in their land and crops. Their programs are including women into the educational process, since most of the time the women of the household stay home and tend to the crops. A focus of the FAO is to maintain private partnerships and community based agriculture so that rural areas can thrive once more like the country has proven they can do in prior years. This program not only chooses to develop funds for small scale agriculture, but also is committed to improving health, poverty, job opportunities, and overall a better life for the people of Angola. (“Angola Country Programming”).

It is evident that there is hope for sustaining agriculture once more in the prosperous country of Angola. Still, the challenge of the ever-changing world sparks uncertainties and hardships for the country. As the climate changes, the amount of rain and water availability could affect how farmers are able to develop their crops or invest in livestock. But, in turn many government funds have been set aside in hopes of stimulating small scale agriculture within the rural areas of the country. Other organizations, and nonprofit businesses are showing interest to invest into developing agriculture in Angola. Along with that, many education systems have been set in place for farmers to learn how they can manage and sustain their crops and families needs. This is what the country should stick to and hold onto strong. The backbone of this country still can be sustainable agriculture with small holders. Keeping the country in tight communities that rely on each other will build the trust the country needs to pursue their full potential, and become important international exporters for the world we live in. If the people of Angola pursue their potential, there will be no stopping them, and other countries can look to them as an example in attaining the goals to end poverty and restore their own country. Angola more than anything needs to be given opportunities to rise to the challenge and take back what once was theirs.

Little by little, the people of Angola are making a change, and it is showing progress in gradual amounts, but it will sure make a difference in the lives of Angolans in years to come. The change and development can continue when the rural people of Angola are willing to take on the role of becoming sustainable farmers, developing their land, listening to the education opportunities they are provided with, and working hard to attain the results they want. Are there barriers to their future and success? Yes. Just as with any nation, the global economy is unforeseeable. Climate change or internal conflicts could slow progress and current programs, but Angola’s desire to achieve is consistent. Agricultural education, training and investments, and government support are key factors to their success. Hope is all around, and hope for Angola is here. Stimulating small scale agriculture in Angola again is a positive way the country will thrive once more.

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