The World Bank’s Enabling the Business of Agriculture Index (EBA) is a unique tool for measuring the ease of doing agribusiness. EBA data, coupled with contextual analysis and consultations with key stakeholders, can inform priority reforms and allow for transparent result tracking over time and across countries. The index scores, on a scale of 0-100*, the strength of the legal and institutional environment for agribusinesses across eight topics: seed, fertilizer, machinery, finance, markets, transport, water, and ICT. Scores and detailed topical data can be used to inform design and monitoring of Feed the Future’s (FTF) agricultural reform efforts. As seen in the graphic, Zambia exhibits strengths in providing access to seed and fertilizer technologies and to important financial, communication, and transport services. By contrast, Zambia’s machinery operations and standards are weak. Overall, Zambia’s legal and regulatory framework is commercially-oriented toward strong private sector participation. However, many topic areas reveal a need to improve plant protection practices and other quality control measures. The following sections take a deeper look at selected EBA data relevant to USAID/Zambia.

Market indicators measure laws and regulations that impact access to agricultural markets for producers and agribusinesses. Zambia’s scores suggest strengths in producer organizations (79/100), weaknesses in plant protection practices (25/100), and onerous regulatory bottlenecks constraining agricultural exports (24/100). Strong plant protection regulations are necessary for commercially-oriented agriculture to consistently meet phytosanitary standards in destination markets. Zambia could improve this score by conducting routine pest inspections for imports of plant products and raising awareness of regulated quarantine pests. Zambia could also work toward streamlining its agricultural export regulations, which currently require four documents with a total duration of approximately nine days.

Scores reveal a strong integrated water resource management framework that follows international best practices to ensure wide representation and consultation of water basin/aquifer stakeholders. However, no water basin plans have been completed to date to test compliance with best practices. Permits are required for individual water abstraction and use, but only specify the volume of withdrawal and purpose of use; the place of abstraction, place of use, and return flows and quality are not required information to obtain water use permits. Overall, monitoring and enforcement of water use plans and permits are weak, with plan monitoring untested and no legal recourse for failure to comply with permit conditions.

*The distance to frontier score compares a country’s performance to the highest performing country (“frontier”). The higher the score, the more of a top performer the country is in a particular area.
Zambia is a regional leader in seed law and regulation. The law granting and protecting plant breeder’s rights is well-structured, granting private companies, including foreign nationals, the right to produce breeder and foundation seed with 20 year protection. Similarly, the plant variety and seed regulations law is also well-crafted, oriented toward private sector participation. However, time to register new varieties is currently 544 days, and could be reduced to align with Tanzania’s time frame of 333 days. Seed quality controls could also be improved by requiring traceability of plant materials and retaining records for two years, as in Zimbabwe.

Registration of new fertilizer products is relatively efficient and affordable compared to the sub-Saharan Africa average. However, registration could be streamlined by further reducing time and expenses, as well as eliminating field testing. Quality control of fertilizer products could be improved by expanding labeling requirements and prohibiting the sale of fertilizer products from opened bags, as in Tanzania. Zambia’s fertilizer imports and distribution is weighed down by legal and regulatory bottlenecks: importers must first register as traders and specify the import of fertilizer products limited to one year. Next, they must obtain a permit with complicated volume restrictions that add time and expenses to fertilizer imports, passing on these costs to the farmer level. Importer registration could be streamlined to register only as traders without fertilizer specificity, and expand time limitations. Similarly, fertilizer import permits could be eliminated altogether or imposed only at a trader level with no limitations.

Inadequate legal and regulatory frameworks in Zambia slow the growth of agricultural mechanization. Though Zambia excels in allowing the free flow of tractor imports into the country, it could improve its score by adopting best practices such as following established international standards for tractor performance and operator safety once in operation. The country currently requires tractors to be registered for all uses rather than the best practice of registration for on-the-road-use only. Yet it does not require regular inspections of in-use tractors, with recommended frequency every two years. The life span of machinery could be expanded by legally requiring machinery dealers to provide after-market service and parts. Adopting best practices will ensure machine safety and technical reliability. It is important to note that this topic evaluates the regulatory framework for tractors as a proxy for all agricultural machinery.

The Feed the Future Enabling Environment for Food Security program is a global support mechanism for Feed the Future focused and aligned Missions to address policies, as well as legal, institutional, and regulatory factors that affect food security. To learn more, please contact Lourdes Martinez Romero (COR) at lmartinezromero@usaid.gov or Nate Kline (Chief of Party) at nkline@fintrac.com.