

Earth, gender and food security: Maria Zaloumis' journey of feminising Agric-business in Zambia

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This article explores the interconnectedness of the earth, gender and food security in the Zambian context using the narrative of Maria Zaloumis (a female Zambian farmer) in the public sphere. It draws on a narrative research design by the restorying of Maria's trajectory in Agric-business as informed by the African ecofeminist theory. The study shows that Maria was described as an emerging young farmer and an emblem of female entrepreneurship. Her trajectory mirrored the intersection of the earth, gender and food security through her portrayal as a woman who endured life tragedies of losing a child, and being a victim of gender-based violence in her marriage. She drew inspiration from her mother (venturing into farming was linked to her mother), the earth (farming was an outlet for healing from her marital challenges) and religion (attributed her success to God as a member of the Baptist church). Maria's account which resonates with the injustice suffered by the earth and shared by women through the environmental crises affirms that in the midst of suffering, women could still contribute to food security by turning a crisis into an opportunity and fostering a life-affirming theology.

Contribution: The article contributes to scholarship on the earth, gender and food security by bringing to the fore the ways in which women have contributed to changing the Agric-business landscape through the intersection of the earth, gender and religion from the Zambian context. It also adds a new perspective to women's empowerment and the preservation and stewardship of mother earth.

Keywords: earth; gender; food security; feminisation; media; ecofeminism.

Introduction

This article explores the interconnectedness of the earth, gender and food security in Maria Zaloumis' Journey of feminising Agric-business in Zambia. It seeks to answer the research question: What is the interconnectedness of the earth, gender and food security in Maria Zaloumis' journey of feminising Agric-business in Zambia? This research question is addressed through two main research objectives, namely to describe the portrayal of Maria Zaloumis' journey in feminising Agric-business in Zambia in the media and to explore the intersection of the earth, gender and food security in Maria Zaloumis' journey of feminising Agric-business in Zambia. Maria Zaloumis, popularly known as the Zed farmer owns Tuzini Farms, a Lusaka-based commercial farming company that specialises in growing tomatoes (Mubanga, *Daily Mail* 12 March 2018). Her success story in Agric-business earned her media publicity, which required scholarly engagement. Therefore, the research question is premised on the recognition that although female participation in agriculture is increasing worldwide (Asadullah & Kambhampati 2021), the contributions of women to Agric-business remain unexplored in many contexts. For example, women often do not take credit for much of their farming (Kristjanson et al. 2014). At the same time, food security is recognised as a global challenge, which threatens mainly smallholder farmers in developing countries (Nkomoki, Bavorova & Banout 2019). The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO 2018) observes that the increase in food insecurity poses a global concern in achieving the second sustainable development goal, which calls for a commitment to end hunger, reduce food insecurity and improve nutrition by 2030.

The research question is grounded in the discourses of feminisation of Agric-business. Kawarazuka et al. (2022) use the concept of feminisation in relation to agriculture (feminisation of agriculture) to describe changing labour markets that pull men out of agriculture and in turn increasing

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women's roles. Existing literature on the feminisation of agriculture affirms that within the commercial agriculture sector, men and women often hold different types of positions, with men dominating the permanent salaried jobs in agriculture (Bain 2010; Pearson 2007). On the contrary, women are frequently employed as casual or seasonal workers. For example, in a commercial fruit production company in Northern Ghana, women account for 80% of 600 low-wage casual workers (Kawarazuka et al. 2022). Women and girls are often particularly vulnerable to food insecurity. Thus, women's roles in managing household food security and contributing to national food security remain significant.

This article relates the feminisation of agriculture (and Agric-business in particular) to the increasing roles of women in the sector. Agric-business refers to all activities and services along the agricultural value chain, which can create job opportunities and generate income (Roepstorff, Wiggins & Hawkins 2011). As women continue to play significant roles in Agric-business but without much recognition, the article draws attention to the fact that gendered labour patterns in agri-food systems are changing, often with women taking a more visible role in smallholder agriculture. It also problematises the notion that women were moving into commercial agriculture, often as casual wage labourers in harvest, packing and processing (Kawarazuka et al. 2022) by focusing on the ways in which women have contributed to changing the Agric-business landscape through the intersection of the earth, gender and religion from the Zambian context.

The article takes the perspective that women have the potential to be an innovative and dynamic part of the agricultural sector, which enables them to contribute to enhanced food security at all levels. The article unfolds by highlighting the context, theoretical lens and methods before engaging with the ways in which the earth, gender and food security are interlinked in Zaloumis' journey of feminising Agric-business.

Earth, gender and food security in Zambia

The Zambia National Agricultural Policy identifies agriculture as the key driver of the economy to supplement mining that was the largest contributor of foreign exchange earnings and national revenue (Government of the Republic of Zambia [GRZ] 2013:2). The FAO (2018:xi) also revealed that the GRZ has made improvements in mainstreaming gender equality and women's empowerment in the agricultural sector. For example, the government had allocated financial resources to advance gender equality in agriculture and various initiatives to improve women's productive capacities and strengthen resilience to shocks. Despite these initiatives, women continued to face challenges of unequal access and control over productive resources and sustainable agriculture. For example, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN 2018) reported a gender-based difference in the average amount and quality of land accessed; the land of female-headed households in general in Zambia is six hectares

which is smaller than men's. In this context, men also tended to utilise the prime land for their preferred activities leaving marginal land (which is often further away from the village) for women's farming activities. Given that there are few women role models in Agric-business, it was deemed significant to explore the narratives of such women in the sector.

In relation to the food security context, Mulenga (2013) observes that most urban dwellers are not food buyers and depend on food purchases. Access to food in urban areas depends on the availability of food in the market, food prices, and formal and informal incomes, a scenario that signifies the value of farmers in urban settings who contribute to the urban food basket. As observed by Lee-Smith (2010:487), 'urban agriculture is a feature of the food supply in many African cities'. As such, it has been advocated as a solution to food insecurity among poor households. In the case of Lusaka, Hampwaye, Nel and Rogerson (2007:553) observe that structural adjustment and the consequent downscaling of the key copper mining sector seem to have forced more people into various informal survival strategies, including urban agriculture. The trio further notice that despite the apparent growing significance of urban agriculture, as illustrated by significant recent vegetation clearances around the city, the official policy remains ambivalent and it has not been adequately supported or catered for in urban planning. In this context, the contributions of farmers to the urban food basket were significant for reducing food insecurity.

Urban agriculture is also gendered. Hampwaye et al. (2007) observe that gender is an important consideration in discussions of urban agriculture as high levels of women's participation in urban agriculture are recorded in many developing world cities. In several urban areas, this is explained by the desire of women to strengthen their ability to feed their families 'independently of the unreliability of their menfolk' (Ellis & Sumberg 1998:217). International research documents the particular benefits of urban agriculture for women who are responsible for family food provision. For example, low-income women benefit from urban agricultural activities that allow them to successfully combine their multiple roles in subsistence, production and environmental management (Hovorka 1998, 2002). Other studies have shown that urban agriculture is an adaptive strategy of women to protect household food security either through direct provision of a supplemental food source, as a food reserve, or as a means of stretching other sources of income (Hovorka 2002:4). Urban agriculture is thus considered a primary strategy, which is deployed by women to maintain livelihoods and protect subsistence production. Furthermore, for Slater (2001), an urban food garden also offers low-income women a symbol of stability and acts as an emotional refuge from fear and violence. The entry of female farmers such as Zaloumis into urban agriculture at a commercial level could be understood in relation to these gender dynamics.

Accordingly, food insecurity is a gender justice issue. For example, Chibende (2011:12) observed that the majority

female-headed units lacked labour and often suffered the consequences of food insecurity and poverty in her study in Kalulushi on Zambia's Copperbelt. Therefore, women and girls bear the brunt of food insecurity. This is because low status and lack of access to resources mean that women and girls are the most disadvantaged by the inequitable global economic processes that govern food systems and by global trends such as climate change. Despite this, women constitute the majority of food producers in the world and continue to make a significant contribution to food security.

Theoretical framework

The African ecofeminist theory is used to make meaning of how Zaloumis' journey of feminising the Agric-business in Lusaka reflects the intersection of earth, gender and food security. Ecofeminism refers to a diverse range of women's environmental activity (Baker 2010). According to Ojomo (2010:54), ecofeminism as a school of thought seeks to end all forms of oppression, including the oppression of the environment. This is by linking the domination of humans by fellow humans based on race, gender and class on the one hand, and human domination of the earth, on the other. This implies that the environment and the various environmental problems the globe is facing are feminist issues because the problems of injustice women and nature are facing are similar and they can be addressed using a similar framework. Similarly, Warren (2000:1) observes that ecological feminists (ecofeminists) advance the view that there are important connections between the unjustified dominations of women, people of mixed-race, children, and the poor and the unjustified domination of nature.

Brizioli (2021:13–16) highlights the main principles and assumptions of ecofeminism by observing that the core aspect of ecofeminism revolves around the link between women and nature through the so-called feminine principle implies an inner and biological linkage between Mother Earth and women. One of the main assumptions of ecofeminism is the central role of women as mothers or nurturers of life and their natural vocation to respect, protect and take care of the environment. By this, women carry out these roles without claiming exclusive rights or imposing enclosures. As such, women do not consider themselves as owners of the earth but they cooperate with biological resources to let grow and make grow.

In adopting African ecofeminism, the article takes the perspective by Chemhuru (2019:6) that 'ecofeminism is a broader feminist view concerned with understanding environmental justice while the African ecofeminist perspective is part of this broader perspective, but being grounded on the African context'. African ecofeminism is used as a lens given the theoretical link between feminists and environmentalists that emphasises the role of women in environmental protection (Hosseinnezhad 2017), which is in this case extended to food security. Several elements constitute eco-feminism. These include the human and nature separation (in which case humans dominate nature); women and nature

being traditionally aligned in terms of symbols and terminology; and women being visible in local grassroots movements to save the environment (Ruether 1975). Of these elements, this article engages more with ecofeminism's focus on women's strides to contribute to the wellness of the earth as applied to the feminisation of Agric-business. Accordingly, ecofeminism is understood as a social movement (the communities of women that are) engaged in restoring and preservative work of the earth. By so doing, the article not only converses with women theologians (Chirongoma 2012; Chisale 2021; Rakoczy 2012; Siwila 2014) who have engaged with ecofeminism but also extends the conversation to urban agriculture through restorying the narratives of women such as Zaloumis who have contributed to shaping the Agric-business landscape in the Zambian context.

Research design and methods

The article draws on a study that employed a qualitative narrative research design through the restorying of Maria's trajectory in Agric-business. It specifically used a biographical study type of narrative research design, which is a form of narrative study in which the researcher writes and records the experiences of another person's life. This understanding is informed by Czarniawska (2004:17) who approaches a narrative research design as a specific type of qualitative design in which a narrative is understood as a spoken or written text, giving an account of an event or action or series of events or actions, chronologically connected.

Setting, population and sampling techniques

The study was situated in the media context in which the interest was to trail the narrative of Maria Zaloumis as portrayed in the public sphere. This was also driven by the limitations posed by the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic in which fieldwork was hampered. The narrative of Maria Zaloumis was purposively chosen as the interest was to trail the account of a young and popular farmer in Zambia in the media. The context of the media was also purposively chosen, given the growing influence of the media among young people. As observed by Hackett et al. (2014), the media is a dynamic archive for research. As such, the media accounts on Zaloumis were chosen based on availability.

Data collection and analysis

The main data collection method was document analysis. In this regard, the data sources constituted different forms of media, both private and public in the form of newspapers, magazines, photographs and social media postings. The data were collected in the last 6 months of 2021. The collected stories about her were analysed through restorying in which stories were gathered and analysed for key elements of her journey in Agric-business. This was followed by rewriting the stories to place them within a chronological sequence (Ollerenshaw & Creswell 2000). Guidelines on using documentary sources (Bryman 2004) were also adhered to.

Findings and discussion

The findings and discussion are presented in a narrative style following the themes that emerged from the study's objectives. These were centred on the portrayal of Maria Zaloumis as a farmer in Zambia and the intersection of the earth, gender and food security in her Agric-business journey.

The portrayal of Maria Zaloumis: A young female farmer

The themes in the portrayal of Maria Zaloumis revolved around her biography and her depiction as a young farmer and torch bearer of female entrepreneurs, youth and gender activist, and one immersed in community outreach.

Her biography

In her story shared with Christine Chisha, Zaloumis introduced herself as follows:

I am a tomato farmer in Zambia. My mother, a constitutional lawyer, and my father, a businessman, sometime back, bought 43 hectares of land for the family and they started farming. As a trained medical doctor, specialised in cardiology, it never occurred to me that one day I would be growing crops. My biggest wish was to care for the sick. (Buruchara 2018:32)

She attended her primary and secondary school education at Nkwazi, Mpelembe, and Lake Road School in Zambia (Musenga 2020). In 2003, she travelled to Australia:

I did nursing and later trained as a doctor in Australia at the Australian Catholic University. I returned to Zambia in 2015 but struggled to get a job. I have never practised as a doctor though I worked as a nurse for some time in 2014. (Interview with Chisha, in Buruchara 2018:32)

In 2008, she and her ex-husband Manjuzi Nyirenda got married in Zambia. In 2015, her father lost his memory because of Alzheimer's disease and his productivity on the farm grounded to a halt, forcing her to return to Zambia, mainly to help her mother nurse him.

She started her farming journey by accident:

I started farming by accident. My mom went on holiday and left me with a small patch of tomatoes on the farm. I made up my mind and decided that if I was to be successful in agriculture, I needed to change the way I did things ... At that time, half a hectare was fetching about K120000¹ a week and I thought it was more profitable because a job could never pay me that kind of money. (Mundano, *Daily Nation*, 07 December 2021)

In her first year (2016), she grew various crops such as broccoli, spinach and cabbage, with a bias towards tomato because that was her passion. She realised that being a farmer, one needed to specialise. She started supplying Choppies at the time and immediately became their main supplier. Besides supplying Food Lovers,² she also started

1.This was equivalent to approximately \$6005.89.

2.Choppies and Food Lovers are some of the major chain supermarkets in Zambia.

going to the Soweto market in Lusaka to supply her produce. Musenga (2020) also notes that from the 13 hectares, Zaloumis harvested between 250 and 400 boxes of tomatoes everyday giving her approximately daily revenue of \$500 (5000 Zambian Kwacha) at the lowest price of K50 per box.

Her portrayal

Zaloumis was represented in different ways through themes, which ranged from being a young farmer and torch bearer of female entrepreneurs, youth and gender activist to one immersed in community outreach.

Young farmer and torch bearer of female entrepreneurs

One of the prominent representations of Zaloumis is that of being a young commercial farmer and a millionaire farmer (Meet Maria Zileni Zaloumis, the Millionaire Farmer, Musenga, *Zambia Agric-business society*, 20 December 2020). She was also represented as an emblem of female entrepreneurship (Mundano, *Daily Nation*, 07 December 2021), the youngest to sit on the Zambia National Farmers Union (ZNFU) board and the youngest director of the farmers union after she was voted into that position by the farmers (Mubanga, Lumpa, Young people changing their narratives, *Daily Mail* 12 March 2018), African pride insurance Ambassador and National Chairperson for Fruit and Vegetables under ZNFU (Mundano, *Daily Nation*, 07 December 2021).

Her portrayal as a torch bearer in Agric-business could be understood in relation to her being an outstanding farmer in a context that is characterised by numerous challenges among women in the sector. For example, in a study conducted in the western part of Zambia, FAO and UNDP (2019) showed that female-headed households, with fewer financial resources and information (compared with male-headed households), were particularly challenged by unpredictable weather and increasing incidents of pests and diseases. Chibende (2011) also showed that women's households remained poor and vulnerable to food insecurity thereby impacting their health and quality of life. Therefore, her portrayal as a young and successful woman farmer points to how urban agriculture has been feminised in a successful way, while that of being an emblem of female entrepreneurship recognises the struggles of women as they venture into Agric-business. The portrayal as a true emblem and torchbearer of female entrepreneurs (Mundano, *Daily Nation*, 07 December 2021) also signifies the everyday struggles of women. Zaloumis recounted that:

Due to the Alzheimer's disease that dad suffered from, he would not farm anymore, and I had to come to help mom nurse him but that is where my story changed into a sad affair. I lost my child upon arrival and then divorced with my ex-husband ... I was jobless for six months without a stable income. My life became unbearable, but I thank my family because everyone played a critical role in helping me to heal. (Mundano, *Daily Nation*, 07 December 2021)

As concluded by Anyansi-Archibong (2021), research reports, publications and magazines describe and attest to the resilience, courage, motivation and other characteristics of current generation African female entrepreneurs. Therefore, while Anyansi-Archibong (2021) relates the achievements to these traits of African women entrepreneurs, Zaloumis' account demonstrates that the achievements of young women could be linked to food security. It also suggests that while women suffer like the earth, they also nurture life through Agric-business.

Youth and gender activist

Zaloumis was also portrayed as a youth and gender activist. As a youth activist, she urged youths to venture into the farming business as the sector presented immense opportunities across the value chain:

She urges youths to embrace agriculture to earn a living instead of waiting for white collar jobs. In agriculture, there is a ready market for farm produce, and as farmers, we need to take advantage by supplying to local markets to earn a living...She also urges youths to develop a saving culture and invest on their businesses as access to finance is still a big challenge. (Njombo, *Daily Mail*, 27 March 2018).

Additionally, Zaloumis challenged young people to change their mindset about agriculture being a sector for the uneducated because it had immense benefits, which could not be compared with anyone with a white-collar job. She stressed that Agriculture was supposed to be a preserve for young people whether educated or not because it needs energy and it is highly rewarding (Mundano, *Daily Nation*, 07 December 2021).

As a gender activist, Zaloumis advised women to look ahead in their lives and stop thinking that they can only succeed in life if they were married, adding that most women had remained disadvantaged because they were scared of stepping out of an abusive marriage. She thus saw herself as an example of the potential that youths have as well as a testimony to women that they could still make it in life despite their past lives:

I feel that a woman can do anything she wants. Of course, she needs that support from her husband but when she doesn't get it, she must leave him. Why are you still staying in an abusive marriage? I was a case of GBV. I moved out and here I am, more successful than I was when I was in that marriage. I personally do not believe in 'Shipikisha' [endurance]. (Mundano, *Daily Nation*, 07 December 2021)

'I urge women not to look down on themselves because there is no limit to what they can do' (Interview with Chisha 2018). Her strides to empower the youth and women through advocacy signify her contributions to end injustices among women who continue to suffer like the earth. Women could be seen to suffer like the earth in that the injustice suffered by the earth (seen through the climate change crisis, for instance) has a gendered impact on women. For example, gendered

roles make women more susceptible to the negative impacts of climate change given that they are primary gatherers of water, food and fuel (Schueman 2022). In Zambia, the gendered impacts of the environmental crisis resonate with the plight of women in that besides dominating the subsistence farming sector, they are also primary caregivers and more vulnerable to poverty. Her encouragement for young people to venture into agriculture also stresses the quest to improve their livelihoods and use the earth sustainably.

Advocate for agric-business and community outreach

Zaloumis was also represented as one concerned with agricultural policies and immersed in the life of the community. She urged the government to introduce agricultural policies favourable to youths and women. She reminded the government that there is a need for structured markets that will ensure law and order and a fair playing ground for both farmers and retailers (*Daily Mail* reporter, 18 August 2021).

Besides engaging the government on youths and women in Agri-business, Zaloumis was also immersed in the life of the community. On weekends, her workers enjoyed the privileges of a literacy programme at which many of them were taught how to read and write. Furthermore, she supported children who were under the care of the Mwachikoka Baptist church in Lusaka and was mentoring 20 youths at Kabwata Methodist Church once a month for free (Mundano, *Daily Nation*, 07 December 2021; Musenga 2020).

The foregoing portrayal depicts both struggles and strides to make a difference, which make Zaloumis part of the ecofeminist social movement in which women are engaged in the work of restoring and preserving the earth.

The intersection of gender, earth and food security in Zaloumis' journey

Zaloumis' representations of a young farmer and torch bearer of female entrepreneurs, youth and gender activist, and an advocate for Agri-business mirror the intersection of gender, earth and food security. This portrayal recognises the contributions made towards transforming the narrative of young female farmers, including the difference young females can make to Agric-business and food security in the contexts, which disable women to shift to activities capable of delivering higher returns and employing others. As pointed by White et al. (2015:xi), throughout Africa, women struggle to enter and operate highly productive and profitable agricultural enterprises. While Africa boasts the highest share of 'women entrepreneurs', these women are disproportionately concentrated in the ranks of the self-employed rather than among the employers (White et al. 2015). Her narrative also shows the potential for women who (like the earth) suffer injustice and make a difference in their brokenness. As argued by Warren (2000), there are connections between the unjustified domination of women and the unjustified domination of nature. Similarly, women and nature have the potential to rise above injustice through ecofeminism's quest

to reduce all forms of oppression, including the oppression of the environment.

Her inspiration drawn from her mother to venture into Agric-business also affirms the mother's role in her successful journey and the shared distress of the earth and women. For example, upon returning from Australia:

I lost my child upon arrival and then divorced with my ex-husband ... My mom played a huge role in helping me to get over all these challenges I faced, and she remains the pillar on which I lean when things don't work accordingly. (Mundano, *Daily Nation*, 07 December 2021)

In addition, her portrayal of a youth and gender activist in the context of Agric-business resonates with the ecofeminist strides to end the oppression of all manners for the good of the earth. Her quest to include youth and gender activism in her Agric-business mirrors the context in which young people and women continue to experience numerous challenges in Agric-business. Mulema et al. (2021) observed that barriers to effective youth engagement were lack of start-up capital, low profitability of enterprises, and personal aspirations in their study on barriers and opportunities for youth engagement in agribusiness in Zambia and Vietnam.

Her encouragement to youths to take up Agric-business could not be detached from the perspectives of young people on farming. For example, studies have shown that despite the potential of agriculture in providing youth employment opportunities and efforts in various contexts, there has been a slow response by the youth. For example, Magagula and Tsvakirai (2020) show that most youths do not consider agriculture as a lifelong career that can sustain their lifestyle but they view it as a poor man's activity or one that is reserved for those who failed in school. Similar reasons centred on the disinterest of the youth in agriculture have also been made by Njeru (2017). In addition, youths view the sector from the farming perspective with backbreaking work (laborious) generating low productivity and offering less in return (Barratt, Mbonye & Seeley 2012; Yami et al. 2019). While these reasons may not be applied in a general sense, they point to the need to reconstruct perspectives on Agric-business among the youth. Hence, her example and advice to young people to venture into farming as a business could be seen as a contribution to transforming the urban agriculture landscape and to the well-being of the earth.

Her strides were driven by her own experiences of life in which she turned her misfortunes into opportunities by drawing on the earth as farming was an outlet for healing from her marital challenges:

She believes hard work and a mixture of misfortune was what shaped her life to become one of the best-performing commercial farmers in Zambia and advises women to be determined and resilient if they are to achieve their dreams. 'This farming really helped me to heal because it is founded on what I wanted to achieve. I wouldn't have been where I am today if not for what I went through. Because I wasn't comfortable at home due to all

the bad things I went through, it helped me to be focused', she recounts. (Mundano, *Daily Nation*, 07 December 2021)

While her experiences of an abusive marriage enabled her to speak out against gender-based violence, she identified the earth as an outlet for her marital challenges in ways that confirm conclusions drawn by scholars such as Slater (2001) that an urban food garden also gives women a symbol of stability and an emotional refuge from fear and violence. At the same time, urban agriculture was an adaptive strategy of women to protect household food security either through direct provision of a supplemental food source, as a food reserve or as a means of stretching other sources of income (Hovorka 2002:4), which often has a connection with gender-based violence. Daneel (1993:3) also observed that the holistic approach to healing also involves the maintenance of a viable equilibrium between human beings and their environment.

Her narrative also shows that religion could be a tool for contributing to food security and healing the earth. For example, her religious orientation was part and parcel of her success as she attributed her success to God as a member of the Baptist church. Musenga (2020) also recounts that she attributed all the glory and success, which have made her the youngest commercial tomato farmer in the country in less than a year of venturing into the sector with passion, hard work and faith in God. She vividly remembers when she started in August 2016 when she committed her plans to God and asked God to help her become the youngest commercial farmer in Zambia. Her focus was not on making money but making a difference in the lives of many through Agriculture (Musenga 2020). Moyo (2004) notes that even in 21st-century Africa, religion still plays a vital role in gender construction and thus it could be a tool for empowering women in different spheres, including Agric-business.

Furthermore, Zaloumis' contribution to food security through her Agric-business points to her footprints in contributing to the food basket in her community and beyond. My biggest dream was to feed entire Africa despite only exporting to the Democratic Republic of Congo and Angola currently, she told Chisha (2018). Other than growing tomatoes, Zaloumis also kept cattle for beef. Her narrative exemplifies how through her struggles, she was able to contribute to food security through her Agric-business. The foregoing also points to lessons in her narrative that long for turning misfortunes into opportunities. In addition, the notion of mother and earth remain pillars for a gendered contribution towards addressing food insecurity as exemplified in Zaloumis' account.

Conclusion

This article explored the feminisation of Agric-business through the narrative of Maria Zaloumis with the quest to show the intersection of the earth, gender and food security in the context of urban agriculture in Zambia. The article concludes that she was presented as the emerging young farmer, the ZNFU fruit and vegetable chairperson and the

youngest person to sit on the ZNFU board, an emblem of female entrepreneurship, a youth and gender activist, and one immersed in the life of the community.

Additionally, the article concludes that her trajectory mirrored the intersection of the earth, gender and food security through her representation as a woman who endured life tragedies and a victim of gender-based violence in her marriage. The inspiration from her mother, the earth and religion also enabled her to venture into Agric-business and ultimately contribute to food security and the transformation of the urban agriculture landscape in the country. From an eco-feminist lens, her account which resonates with the injustice suffered by the earth and shared by women through the environmental crisis affirms that in the midst of suffering, women could still contribute to food security by turning a crisis into an opportunity and fostering a theology of hope and life.

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N.M. is the sole author of this research article.

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Disclaimer

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