



Smallholder Agriculture Cluster Project

Success STORY

2024

Booklet



Hwange Farmers Food Secure After Adopting Traditional Grains



A Hwange couple, Mr. Robert and Mrs. Maria Dube, are food secure after heeding the call from the Government to plant traditional grains and adopting improved seed varieties. The couple participated in a demonstration facilitated by the Smallholder Agriculture Cluster Project (SACP) and emerged as a shining example of the benefits of following extension officers' advice to plant crops suitable for their agro-ecological region. They cultivated three Pfumvudza plots and planted the Macia variety of sorghum, known for its superior drought resistance and nutritional value.

In April this year, the couple hosted a field day to showcase their thriving sorghum crop. The event, themed "Promoting resilience and improved nutrition through the adoption of climate-smart value chains," began with a series of presentations by the Dube family. In the demonstration plot, Mr. Dube outlined the various steps they undertook to achieve such impressive results, especially in contrast to other crops in the area that had failed due to the devastating El Niño-induced drought, which the



government described as the worst in the past 40 years.

Addressing stakeholders, including government officials, traditional leaders, farmers, and the media, Mr. Dube shared, "When the season started, we initially planted some maize, but due to prolonged dry spells, it was a complete write-off. That's when we decided to try traditional grains after receiving training from SACP. By switching to the Marcia variety of sorghum and utilizing improved seeds, my family and I are now food secure. I encourage all farmers to heed the advice of extension officers; this will ultimately help us achieve greater food security, especially in these semi-arid areas facing challenges compounded by the El Niño-induced drought."

The Dube family combined conservation agriculture practices with innovative technologies, such as hydrogel, which retains moisture and releases it to crops during dry spells. From one of their three plots, they harvested an impressive 0.37 tonnes of sorghum, underscoring the effectiveness of their approach. Chief Shana, who attended the field day, praised the couple for adopting climate-smart initiatives from SACP. He noted, "I can see that this farmer listened attentively to all the training he received from SACP. His commitment to applying the knowledge gained will greatly benefit my community. I will task him to share his experiences with farmers in eight other villages, encouraging them to adopt the practices the Ministry of Agriculture has been promoting. This will enhance food and nutrition security in our area."

Matabeleland North Provincial Director, Mr. Dumisani Mbikwa Nyoni, encouraged farmers in the province to heed the Government's call to grow traditional grains. He stated, "The changing climatic conditions, including recurrent droughts, shifts in the rainy season, poor rainfall distribution, and long mid-season dry spells, have made maize cultivation in semi-arid regions like Matabeleland North increasingly risky. Therefore, it is crucial for farmers to embrace traditional grains and improved seed varieties that can withstand these challenges."

SACP National Project Coordinator, Dr. Godfrey Nehanda, who was the guest of honor, reiterated the project's commitment to promoting the traditional grains value chain. He added that this was being achieved by organizing farmers into clusters and connecting them with off-takers. Sorghum is a key value chain being promoted as part of the six value chains within the project.



Agricultural field days serve as catalysts for promoting innovation, sharing knowledge, and adopting technology while enhancing sustainability in the agriculture sector. These gatherings offer a forum for stakeholders to convene, exchange insights, and collaborate to strengthen resilience. The key goals of hosting agricultural field days include advocating for sustainable climate-smart agriculture practices, providing farmers with up-to-date information on seasonal trends, and fostering partnerships among diverse stakeholders to drive collective progress. Improved seed varieties, coupled with accurate seasonal forecasts, are essential in helping farmers navigate the challenges of climate change and achieve long-term food security.

Mutoko Farmers Goes Commercial After SACP Demo, Inspires 1 4 Other Farmers



The story of Mr Goerge Muchena of Chitora Irrigation Scheme in Mutoko is reminiscent of a journey a thousand miles that begins with a single step. Mr Muchena is a horticulture farmer at the scheme which grows okra, carrots, butternut, cabbage, fine beans, green mealies and tomatoes.

Mr Muchena is one the six farmers that volunteered to take part in a demonstration plot supported by the Smallholder Agriculture Cluster Project (SACP). The project supplied the farmers with 50kgs of Compound C fertilizer, another 50kg of Ammonium Nitrate and Belt, a type of pesticide. The project also supported the farmer with extension advice on off-season cropping as well as introducing climate smart initiatives such as tied ridges and deep ploughing.



Additionally, the project introduced a high yielding tomato variety, Trinity. The farmer was further advised on the use of organic manure and foliage fertilizer.

Mr Muchena planted his 0.06-hectare tomato crop on the 11 of November 2023. Mr Muchena planted 950 plants of the Trinity variety.

The farmer harvested 6000kg of tomatoes which he supplied to Choppiest Supermarkets at the price of US\$0.70 which earned him US\$4200. His costs of production amounted to US\$1200 and he further deducted fixed costs of US\$550, leaving him with a net profit of US\$2250.

After the successful demonstration by SACP, Mr Muchena planted the second crop in February 2024 and increased the hectareage planted from 0.06 to 0.5 using proceeds from the first crop. Mr Muchena used \$1750 from his first crop to finance the second crop. The farmer went on to plant 8000 plants in the extended plot, sold 2000kgs of the crop every week for 12 weeks. He managed to make an income of US\$14 400. From the income that he earned, Mr Muchena managed to buy a water pump, a water engine and 200 metres of irrigation pipes.

Due to the positive and profitable outcome of the first crop, famers were enlightened and 7 more farmers adopted the climate-smart tomato production techniques from SACP. Each of these 7 farmers also did 0.5 ha of tomatoes using SACP climate-smart technologies. A field day was held on the second crop and 7 farmers who adopted the SACP concept participated in the competition. Mr Muchena emerged as the winner.

The guest of honour at the field day, Mashonaland East Provincial Director for the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Rural Development, Mr Leonard Munamati urged farmers to adopt high yielding tomatoes varieties such as Trinity. He also encouraged famers in the irrigation schemes to use water efficiently and urged farmers to embrace group marketing. He also highlighted that Government was in the process of introducing village business units where farmers would utilize water from solarized boreholes to produces crops for sale.



Farmers were encouraged by the potential of the Trinity variety in terms of yield potential, disease resistance, fast growth rate and short time taken to maturity. This summer the Mr Muchena has planted a third crop on a 0.5ha plot. The crop is in good condition and at early fruiting stage. 14 other farmers at the irrigation scheme have adopted the Trinity variety as of October 2024.

SACP Supports Farmers To Grow Own Fodder

The Smallholder Agriculture Cluster Project supported the cultivation of velvet bean in Zvimba District as the project mainstreams climate smart agriculture into its initiatives.

The district is one of the 18 under SACP, where the project is promoting selected value chains, including livestock as it seeks to build resilience among smallholder farmers, create market linkages that will result in improved incomes.

The field day was hosted by the 30 member Chomutamba Agriculture Producer Groups (APG). For the fodder. The farmers managed to harvest 0.160 tonnes per hectare. This was in contrast with other farmers in the area whose crop was a complete write off due to the El Nino induced drought. For maize, the farmers recorded 2.403 tonnes per hectare. The farmers also grew cowpeas which is drought resistant and harvested 0.801 tonnes per hectare. Due to the devastating El Nino induced drought, other farmers in the area did not harvest anything.

The Mashonaland West Provincial Training Officer in the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Rural Development, Mr Lyodd Bongani Makwena urged farmers to embrace practical Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) Technologies SACP brought by to the farmers. These included Conservation Agriculture (Pfumvudza), use of hydrogel and diversified cropping. He noted that velvet bean is a good source of protein to livestock and encouraged farmers to have their own household plots where they grow fodder in order to save livestock during dry seasons.

The host APG's chairperson. Mr James Muronya expressed gratitude to SACP for the initiative on CSA



demo plots, noting that they had gained practical knowledge on the use of hydrogel and growing of velvet beans which they had underrated in the previous seasons. He added that farmers were ready to embrace the technology, after physically observing and learning from the Velvet bean demo plot.

Livestock which includes goats, cattle, pigs and poultry is one of the value chains that are supported by the project. Other value chains include horticulture, citrus, dairy and traditional grains.