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Social Protection and Agriculture

On 16 October 2015, Zimbabwe joined the rest of the world in commemorating World Food Day. This year's theme – Social Protection and Agriculture, Breaking the Cycle of Rural Poverty – brings attention to the role that agriculture plays in terms of food security, eradicating hunger and poverty, improving livelihoods, income generation and creating opportunities for people in rural areas.

Despite major strides, food insecurity and poverty challenges continue to stalk us. In the recent past, Zimbabwe has experienced recurrent and frequent droughts, seasonal floods, plant pests and disease (e.g. fruit fly, army worm and quelea birds), animal diseases (e.g. Foot and Mouth Diseases, anthrax, tick-borne diseases and Newcastle disease), wild fires, human wildlife conflicts and major human diseases and economic policies with negative impacts on food and nutrition access, availability and utilization.

Social protection measures are needed to urgently address these challenges. Studies show that in 2013 alone, such measures lifted around 150 million people out of extreme poverty globally.

FAO in Zimbabwe recently successfully implemented one such innovative programme through the use of a voucher system. In this programme, farmers were in the driver's seat, giving them the freedom to buy the inputs they needed most, rather than providing them with fixed starter packs of inputs they may not require. Participants contributed between 20 and 40 percent to the total voucher

value in the first year, with this contribution increasing to 50 percent in the second year.

Farmers from 24 districts in the country, received crop and livestock vouchers, redeemable at selected agro-dealers or livestock fairs. Crop vouchers were used to acquire agricultural inputs and pesticides, while livestock vouchers were used to purchase small livestock such as poultry, sheep, goats, stock feed and veterinary supplies.

Paper vouchers were used in areas where network coverage was low, while electronic voucher system was the preferred choice where mobile connectivity was available. The programme also piloted the use of vouchers through a mobile cash transfer platform "ECO CASH", with great success. The vouchers increased the purchasing power of the farmers, who procured local goods. This demand helped resuscitate agro dealer networks, ensuring a reliable supply of quality inputs across the country.

The programme was funded by the European Union, the United Kingdom's Department for International Development and the Australian Government's Agency for International Development.



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World Food Day is observed annually on 16 October, the anniversary of the founding of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. This year it is particularly important as the organization has turned 70. The main objective of the day is to heighten public awareness on the nature and dimensions of the long-term world food challenges, and to develop further national and international solidarity in the struggle against hunger, malnutrition and poverty.

Conversation with a successful beekeeper



Left Cephas Mlala and wife in the background showing basic honey processing equipment. Above is honey, honey combs, beeswax and propolis, some of the products of Mlala's bee-keeping venture

Over 500km from Harare, deep in the woodlands of semi-arid rural Lupane District in Zimbabwe; is Menyezwa village; home to bee keeper, livestock and crop farmer Cephas Mlala. As we negotiate our way through the forest on a winding gravel road leading to Mlala's homestead; he tells me he spent several years in the bush fighting the liberation war that brought independence to present day Zimbabwe. His narrative is centred on how he survived in thick forests which provided him not only battle cover but medicine and food. Showing that he's more than comfortable with the forest.

Mlala left home in the sixties and only returned at independence in 1980. As we arrive, I notice a beautifully built homestead integrated with plenty of trees and plants which could easily be mistaken for a mini botanical garden. Mlala is married with three children who all stay at this homestead. Fifteen of the family cattle and 12 goats he tells me have been let out in search of grazing and water, while over twenty indigenous chickens are roaming freely all over the yard.

Just like most farmers in Lupane District, Mlala ventured into livestock and crop production for food and income security. Agriculture is the major economic activity for people in this area. Crop farming is largely unsuccessful in this region which is characterised by poor rainfall and prone to recurrent droughts. To diversify household sources of food and income as well as increasing resilience to shocks Mlala started supplementing livestock and crop farming with bee keeping.

Could it be your bush experience carrying the guns and fighting for survival in the forests that explain why you keep dangerous insects that can possibly sting you or members of your family to

death I pose a question? "A lot of people ask me why I am not afraid of being stung by bees in my apiary and I tell them fear is a result of little knowledge. Once you know the rules of engagement when it comes to bee keeping, anyone can keep bees, its safe; death by bee stinging is unacceptable. Don't make the mistake of equating bees to enemies that you go to battle with. You can be attacked by bees to death while you are armed with your loaded gun" he cautions.

Turning hobby into business

Mlala started beekeeping as a hobby, armed with only traditional knowledge, and two hives in early 2004. "Bee keeping has very little start-up requirements; you only need a beehive, water, bee forage and minimal labour. I trained my wife and kids on how to manage the apiary and they help me" he explains as we tour his apiary few meters away from the houses. The only accident he recalls was when inquisitive young boys from the neighbourhood tried to help themselves with honey from his hives without his consent. Fortunately they survived. I hope I will not be stung by bees Mr. Mlala I remarked. "As long as you do not make noise or smell of perfume you are safe in the apiary" he advised. For three consecutive years Mlala said the proceeds from honey helped the family a lot and he even reinvested into more beehives.

By 2007 Mlala had five hives. However this was the same time the country experienced economic hardships; hence dubious traders started flooding the market with poor quality honey (boiled and/or laced with sugar). This affected market confidence in honey produced in most rural areas, and things started falling apart for Mlala. He experienced more problems that included bees absconding the hives, others dying from poisoning through pesticides applied to agricultural crops and severe frost during the 2011, 2012 and 2013 winters. These factors also adversely affected most bee forage in low lying areas of the country.

Project opens window of opportunity

In 2014, Mlala's life took a new turn when he was selected to benefit from the European Union and FAO funded 'Forest Forces' project, being implemented by FAO in partnership with Environment Africa. The project seeks to improve food security and income of vulnerable rural communities through participatory sustainable forest management and value addition to forest products and diversification of livelihood strategies.

Through the project Mlala received basic bee-keeping and advanced bee-keeping training organised by Environment Africa. "I learnt how to store, purify and produce honey; as well as some marketing techniques. This was my awakening moment" said Mlala. After training; Environment Africa gave a complete bee-keeping kit plus two hives to each of the farmers in participating wards. "This training motivated me to turn this hobby into a serious business.

From humble beginnings Mlala now owns 11 hives, 7 of which are colonized. "I harvest twice a year, around April-May and Nov-Dec. During the last April-May 2015 season I realised over USD 358 from selling processed honey harvested from this apiary." In between our discussion Mlala receives phone calls enquiring about his products. "Usually I have more orders than I can supply, despite that I do very little marketing" says Mlala. His main customers are individuals and small grocery shops within the district.

Diversifying income streams for food security

Apart from apiculture, Mlala also earns income as a resource person facilitating or hosting "farmer to farmer" training workshops on beekeeping. "This project has helped me in raising my profile; I have travelled to places as far afield as Hwange and Binga and participated at local and

national exhibitions. Travelling helps me to network, market my products and also to learn new innovative ideas of honey processing and its by-products" he said.

"I also produce flavoured honey, lotions, soaps, floor and shoe polish and candles from beeswax. The advantage of beeswax candles is that they burn cleanly, have a long light life span, quality of light is high and are environmentally friendly in comparison to other candles. Honey is also in demand for health and beauty products.

"Proceeds from my apiary assure me of income to cover my basic needs improving my family's nutrition significantly. I am now looking at ways in which I can increase honey production and expand my market." How does Mlala see the prospects of honey in this country? "The honey that we produce is pure and free of pollutants; it is the most sought after. As a nation currently facing a number of economic challenges I urge people to supplement other income generating activities with honey production, its easy and the prospects are very good." Mlala said.

Giving back to the community

Mlala is an inspirational figure who educates other farmers in his community. He gave land which was instrumental in starting up a community demonstration apiary called *Thuthukani* - which means helping you progress. Group members testified to the success of the apiary and how it led to starting a savings and lending scheme also called *Thuthukani*.

The group savings enabled members to purchase livestock and to meet emergencies when they arise. There is no doubt that beekeeping provides an opportunity for rural communities to supplement their incomes through the sale of honey and its by-products. The challenge remains for farmers to produce good quality honey in order to realise the maximum value from their produce.

The prospects

A standard Kenyan Top Bar Hive gives an average of 20kg per harvest and if a farmer has 6 hives they can harvest upwards of 120kg of which could be sold at an average price of USD2.50 per kg and the turnover would be about USD300. Assuming that labour costs, equipment and other variables are 50 percent of total revenue, the farmer makes a net of \$150 per season and there are 2 - 3 harvests per year depending on the availability of forage and other enablers of honey production.

FAO Forest Forces project

FUNDING:

The European Union (EU) and FAO

WORKING FOR:

Zimbabwe's smallholder farmers

WORKING TO: Improve food security and income of vulnerable rural communities through participatory sustainable forest management and value addition to forest products, diversification of livelihood strategies.

TOTAL INVESTMENT:

USD 5 million).

PROJECT DURATION:

2013 - 2017

"In areas prone to recurrent drought, natural resources should be considered as alternative source of livelihood. Natural resources (forests included) act as safety nets, providing food and income during lean or difficult times; they should therefore be managed in such a way that they are available today and in posterity"

Maxwell Phiri: FAO

Forest Forces programme Manager

"70 out of the top 100 human food crops, which supply about 90 percent of the world's nutrition, are pollinated by bees. Therefore bee-keeping is a serious food security and nutrition security issue"

Cliff Maunze: Environment Africa
Project Officer



Since 2013, FAO has been implementing a 4-year EU funded (US\$ 9.2 million) livestock project in partnership with LEAD working in Lupane district and Help from Germany working in Nkayi district.

The project is supporting 40 000 households consisting predominantly of communal area farmers who practise mixed crop-livestock production in the two districts of Matabeleland North Province.

The Department of Livestock and Veterinary Services (DLVS) is an associate offering technical support at national, provincial and district levels.



Frank Chinembiri (FC),
FAO Zimbabwe – livestock projects manager

EU Livestock project manager outlines implementation progress

Ques: What is the rationale for targeting Nkayi and Lupane Districts?

F.C: Nkayi and Lupane districts are endowed with large populations of livestock - about 194 000 cattle, 61 000 goats, 8 600 sheep and 27 000 donkeys and around 700 000 chickens. Both districts are in Natural Regions (NR) region 5 – characterised by low rainfall (less than 500 mm per annum). Frequent mid-season dry spells leading to perennial crop failures is common. Thus there is great potential to improve livelihoods of these communities through commercialisation of livestock production in the districts.

Ques: What type of livestock is the project supporting and why?

F.C: Chicken and cattle are the most populous species in the two districts followed by goats. Results of a baseline survey we undertook showed that while farmers derive livelihood from different species of livestock non-cattle owners wanted to use other species of livestock to eventually own cattle.

To this end the project is targeting all species of livestock but using dip-tank based

committees as entry points. That's why in terms of effort and project investment, more resources are being channelled towards cattle infrastructure development.

Ques: What are the key objectives of livestock project?

F.C: The key objective is to improve livestock health and production systems, productivity, marketing, value chains and income sustainability by smallholder farmers. Nationally the project is also supporting Ministry of Agriculture, Mechanisation and Irrigation Development (MAMID) to develop a gender responsive livestock policy, review of the regulatory and institutional framework.

The project also addresses food and nutrition security issues as well as seeks to protect people and their livelihoods (cattle), to avoid or limit the adverse effects of shocks.

Ques: What policy issues has the project successfully addressed?

F.C: The project supported the production of a draft gender responsive livestock development policy which has been

cleared by MAMID and now awaits Cabinet approval. Development of the different value chains strategies, regulations and legal framework will be addressed once the draft policy is adopted by the Cabinet.

Ques: What successes has the project seen so far?

F.C: Improved animal husbandry, health and productivity of livestock are the major drivers of livestock commercialisation. To achieve this, accessing functional common pool resources and services like dip tanks, water points, feedlots and sale pens is crucial. In addition to this, capacity development of farmers and Department of Livestock and Veterinary Services (DLVS) staff in nutrition and health, gender, animal health, animal husbandry, Farming as a Business (FaAB), borehole rehabilitation live cattle and carcass grading is also crucial.

To date all the 131 dip tanks have functional Livestock Development Committees (LDCs), all of which have received training in dipping services management, financial management and farming as a business.

Dipping chemicals have been provided and 75 percent of the targeted dip tanks

have been rehabilitated. Cattle-dipping has improved as per DLVS recommendations and we are already witnessing fewer tick borne diseases. In addition farmers' contribution through the dipping levy has more than doubled since project inception and the levy collected is seed money for the establishment of specific districts revolving funds.

All the project and extension staff in the districts underwent a Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards (LEGS), training. Following training the project will pilot an early warning and response system -EMPRES-I (information, intelligence, intervention).

Ques: How are you tackling the issues of water scarcity?

F.C: Boreholes are a major source of water for both humans and livestock in the two districts. The project has embarked on borehole drilling and rehabilitation targeting sites where there are community dip tanks. A total of 161 boreholes are targeted – 30 of them will be solar powered as a pilot.

Ques: What is the current status of livestock farming in these districts?

F.C: Like any other communal area in Zimbabwe Nkayi and Lupane farmers practise mixed crop-livestock production. Grazing is mostly communal, unorganised and with no fencing.

Collection of crop residues for feeding animals is a common practice while supplementary feeding is limited. Livestock productivity is low characterised by low calving (under 45 percent), and slow growth rates, high mortality estimated at 12 – 20 percent for cattle and up to 40 percent for goats. Calving and kidding rates are equally low at 47 percent and 65 percent for cattle and goats respectively.

Thus in general productivity is very low. Cattle offtake is estimated at 4 to 5 percent against a desirable output of 12 to 15 percent. What these figures imply is that there is big potential to increase productivity and hence production. The same low productivity levels are also seen in poultry.

Ques: What plans if any are there to extend the project to other regions of the country?

F.C: We have already seen some positive results of these interventions which can be easily extended to other districts – funds

permitting.

Notable examples include farmer organisation into groups, strengthening of LDCs, and capacitation of extension staff and establishment of market linkages to mention but a few. The project has also piloted podcasting – an innovative digital extension technology that improves smallholder farmers' access to knowledge and information – specifically digital audio podcasting through mobile devices as an extension model.

Ques: How is the project increasing resilience to shocks within smallholder agricultural production systems?

F.C: The key activities the project has undertaken to ensure resilience are: LEGS training, awareness creation, introduction of climate smart technologies like fodder production, feedlotting and promotion of solar powered units, intensive production systems and apiculture and early warning systems. All these are underpinned by an intensive training programme for both farmers and extension staff.

Ques: What are the challenges that the project has encountered and what measures have been taken to address these challenges

F.C: The funding for the project is in Euro however our operational budget is in USD. The Euro has considerably lost value to the dollar over the past year meaning the project has less operational funds. We had to prioritise activities e.g. scale down some operations like borehole drilling, solar powering of boreholes and suspended some studies.

The other notable challenge on the ground was marketing. This has been

partly attributed to lack of expertise and information flow to staff. Training and engagement of other market players especially establishment of market linkages and exchange visits have been effective. Initially we had some challenges especially in terms of communication and standard and quality of our work. This was a big challenge indeed. However, with improved communications and establishment of district implementation teams whose membership was broad based but nucleated at co-applicant and DLVS progress has been smooth with very few hiccups.

Ques: There have been livestock support projects in the past, what is unique about this four year programme?

F.C: The past projects were of an emergency nature - one year or less. Unlike these previous projects this is a four-year project. There is space and time to learn and adapt during project implementation, which is difficult in a one year project. Hence, it improves on achieved desired impacts and value for money.

Ques: What makes you happy about the implementation progress?

F.C: The critical point in implementing a project is team spirit and understanding of a common goal. This exist in all stakeholders involved in this project.

Ques: Are you meeting what was set out to be achieved?

F.C: Yes. The two Rural District Councils the District Administrators' office and all the other local stakeholders and leadership have been forthcoming and supportive of the project. Our work plan is up to date.



Infrastructure Development: In the foreground is the newly drilled borehole serving both animals and humans and in the background is the rehabilitated diptank in Lupane District

FAO, for the first time, participated at the Harare Agricultural Show, the premium annual exhibition in Zimbabwe.

The show provided an opportunity for the organization to interact with various stakeholders including donor agencies, government officials as well as the general public. This year's exhibition, officially opened by Mozambican President, Filipe Nyusi, was the 105th edition and was held under the theme, Enhancing Agricultural Productivity - Managing Climate Change.

One of the key highlights of the Harare Agricultural Show, held from 24 – 29 August, was the Zimbabwe Annual National Agri-business Conference, which was held at the side-lines of the main exhibition. The Vice President of Zimbabwe, Hon. Emmerson Mnangagwa, was the guest speaker at the agri-business conference where the FAO Subregional Coordinator for Southern Africa Chimimba David Phiri, presented on "Global efforts in ensuring food security in the face of climate change." Phiri elaborated on the threats posed by climate change and gave an account of the measures which are being undertaken to mitigate the effects.

"As FAO, we are working with government through the Ministry of Agriculture, Mechanization and Irrigation Development, to promote conservation agriculture with a particular focus on mechanization. We are also promoting appropriate livestock breeds and we are constructing and rehabilitating livestock production and marketing infrastructure which include dip tanks, feed lots, sale pens, housing, fodder banks and water points," said Phiri.

Phiri told delegates to the business conference who included Cabinet Ministers and business leaders that FAO was rehabilitating irrigation schemes that cover 1 850 hectares and added that the country has potential to increase area under irrigation.



ABOVE: Visitors going through information resources



From left: Anthea Kerr, Team leader, Humanitarian, Social Protection, Agriculture and Livelihoods, Private Sector, centre is Head of the Department for International Development (DFID) in Zimbabwe, Annabel Gerry and right is FAO Subregional Coordinator for Southern Africa, Chimimba David Phiri.

FAO Zim in Maiden Harare Agriculture Show EXHIBITION



FROM LEFT: Sibonginkosi Mudzuka and Trish Dlamini from FAO; EU Attaché Economic Cooperation and Food Security Section Séverin Mellac and the European Union Ambassador to Zimbabwe His Excellency Phillippe Van Damme

Below: Visitors to the Forest Forces section receive information on beekeeping



FAO is also promoting sustainable harvesting and value addition of non-timber forest products including beekeeping and extraction of oil from trees including baobab. Phiri added that FAO was also promoting appropriate post-harvest technologies which include metallic silos, improved granaries and Hermetic bags, so as to minimize losses.

The FAO stand was a hive of activity as government officials, representatives from donor agencies and interested farmers came to make enquiries. The European Union Ambassador to Zimbabwe, Philippe Van Damme described his visit to the FAO stand as 'stimulating.'

The Ambassador added that the EU funded projects were 'not charity but viable agribusinesses.' Van Damme said the EU was using a three track approach, that is livestock value chain, resilience, national resource management and would channel US\$100 million to support these in Zimbabwe in the next years.

The head of the Department for International Development (DFID) in Zimbabwe, Annabel Gerry, also visited the FAO stand. DFID is supporting improved agricultural productivity and nutrition in Zimbabwe through the US\$72 million Livelihoods and Food Security Programme. The Programme Manager from Embassy of Switzerland, Manuel Mutrux, also visited the stand. The Swiss Embassy is supporting rehabilitation of irrigation projects through FAO..

The items exhibited included literature on various topics such as farm management, livestock production, gender policies as well as HIV and AIDS. There were various wares on display including nutritious varieties of maize and beans (which drew a lot of enquiries), honey and other non-timber forestry products and irrigation equipment.

There was fun as a climate change quiz was held for school children and the winners walked away with various prizes including t-shirts, literature and coffee mugs.

FAO LIBRARY Announcement

The FAO library houses some of the finest local, regional and international collection of resources on food and agriculture, in both electronic and print formats.

Opening Hours:
Monday to Thursday
09:00hrs to 16:00hrs

Who is welcome:
FAO partners; agricultural researchers, regulators, educators, extension personnel; consumers of agricultural products are welcome to the library

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LEFT: FAO's Denford Chimbodza explains to interested visitor about Irrigation projects. **ABOVE:** Students win t-shirts in quiz about FAO". With them is FAO's Sibonginkosi Mudzuka

INTRODUCING ENABLING DIGITAL EXTENSION TECHNOLOGIES to small holder farmers

PODCASTING

Use of Information and communication technologies to improve smallholder farmers' access to knowledge and information – specifically digital audio podcasting through mobile devices as an extension model was the focus of the training in Nkayi and Lupane districts.

FAO, Help from Germany and LEAD, through the EU funded livestock project hosted the training to introduce stakeholders in the districts to this tool that enables access to knowledge on demand.

Stakeholders comprising farmers, project and Government Agriculture Extension staff took part in the training. It has been widely acknowledged that knowledge and information can greatly impact on agriculture production and food security.

Frank Chinembiri; Livestock Project Manager conceded that despite the existence of public extension service, inadequate financial, technical and human resources, language barriers, poor road networks and lack of transport are some of the challenges that inhibit the effectiveness of extension staff to reach farmers where

knowledge services are most needed in rural areas.

“We are piloting podcasting as a strategy to complement extension services in the project. Podcasting should be understood as complementing the existing approach and not a replacement of the extension officers” Chinembiri told the participants.

The training adopted a two phased approach that focused on learning digital audio content production techniques; dissemination of knowledge content through community-based structures such as paravets, dip tank committees and lead farmers.

This was followed a month later by technical backstopping visit to monitor the roll out process. The main training modules that were covered included: identifying priority knowledge areas, knowledge content development, conceptualising, script writing, scripting style for technical briefs, audio recording, editing, and conversion to digital formats and uploading on podcasting devices.

Content Development

During the theory part participants conceptualised and developed scripts on livestock production and crop production themes namely; marketing, supplementary feeding and breeding. To ensure validity and to safeguard the quality of the content products Matabeleland North Department of Veterinary Services Chief Animal Health inspector Mr Bhebhe worked with the participants providing oversight. By the time the training got to the practical use of recording devices, farmers, most of whom had neither used microphones and laptops to record or operated an MP3 player, were thoroughly immersed in the process. Farmers; had a go at recording their voices using local language. Only those with broadcast quality voices were identified and used to record the final products. Thereafter farmers demonstrated and simulated a knowledge dissemination meeting playing some of the audio recordings. Although many managed to grasp the knowledge dissemination techniques, some still need support to fully master the use of the technology.

Listening is better than reading: farmers speak

In particular farmers said the podcasting concept was a real eye opener and the audio component was helpful to some of the farmers who might not be able to read and write. One can listen while doing other household chores; and can replay several times to understand said the farmers. Nyathi, of St George Pen Feeding Committee in Jotsholo Village said “We received valuable knowledge on livestock diseases and treatment through podcasting and please avail more audio knowledge resources and equipment.” Members of the Siqhubekela Phambili group of Ward 15 in Jotsholo which is involved in an indigenous chicken rearing project said that they could identify specific symptoms on poultry with specific diseases as explained in the podcasts. Another farmer in Solobela Village suggested that the podcasting feedback mechanism needs to be strengthened if the farmers are to derive full benefit from the technology.

What knowledge do farmers want?

The topics of appropriate livestock breeds, crops; livestock supplementary



Farmers in podcasting training session

feeding; public health; food processing; livestock diseases; stock movement, livestock marketing, poultry production, environmental and water conservation, goat kid management child protection and HIV/AIDS, were mentioned as farmers' most immediate knowledge needs. Farmers also challenged Government to convert the numerous posters, hand-outs and brochures in their offices noticeboards into audio knowledge material that can easily be shared on demand. Although podcasting was being introduced under the auspices of the livestock project, there is need for all development stakeholders in the districts to collaborate to develop knowledge content in their respective areas of expertise. For example stakeholders from the departments of Social Services, Water and Environment and Health among others, can be invited to develop knowledge resources. This would ensure that the farmers and their communities are served with relevant knowledge on diverse issues that affect their lives.

Knowledge hubs are the future

The knowledge node model where future recordings would be held was set up in Nkayi at the Department of Veterinary Services offices in Ward 27. Such centres can be transformed into fully fledged resource centres providing knowledge resources in different formats. These could include publications and multimedia resources and allow communities to utilise the centres to access the knowledge resources.

The close working relationship (on podcasting) forged between the project partners including government augur well with the sustainability of podcasting post the livestock project. Given the sensitivities generated by Information and Communication Technology devices in the Zimbabwean political context, the participants agreed to ensure that all the necessary district structures, particularly the security sectors are aware of the Podcasting activities. In the same spirit the security sector structures can be involved during trainings and knowledge content development and recording processes.

Participants were left doubtless that podcasting was an effective tool that could help counter the challenge of inadequate reach in public extension services. If successful it will be scaled up and experiences shared with other project to replicate.

Deputy Minister Zhandu tours Lupane Livestock activities



From left Deputy Minister Responsible for Livestock in the Ministry of Agriculture, Mechanisation and Irrigation Development, Paddy Zhandu, Elma Zanamwe -Sikalala, FAO-Livestock officer and Nigel Saunders of Help from Germany discussing the livestock project implementation

Deputy Minister Responsible for Livestock in the Ministry of Agriculture, Mechanisation and Irrigation Development, Paddy Zhandu, recently toured Lupane District to get an appreciation of the progress of the two projects. He was accompanied by various senior officers from the Department of Livestock and Veterinary Services.

“It will not make sense for you to count the number of beasts that you have without putting value to them”

Speaking to smallholder farmers in Lupane during the tour Zhandu said it was important that they put value to their livestock. “It will not make sense for you to count the number of beasts that you have without putting value to them. It is necessary that you make sure that the cattle, for example, are treated well and this is your responsibility as a farmer,” said Zhandu. He added that farmers were supposed to improve and maintain facilities such as dip tanks as they have a bearing on the health of their animals.

The Deputy Minister also acknowledged the constraints that the

farmers faced, especially a restricted cattle sales system. The deputy ministers added that there would be a review of the levies that farmers pay to local authorities at the conclusion of cattle sales. Farmers complained that they were levied 10 percent of the total price of a beast and they wanted a review of the legislation.

Speaking during the tour, FAO Assistant Representative, David Mfote, said the farmers had shown commitment working together with the two implementing non-governmental organisations (LEAD and Help from Germany). He added that the two NGOs needed to ensure that the repaired dip tanks, sales pens and fattening pens were maintained well even after the duration of the projects by capacitating farmers.

“You have highlighted some of the constraints; some of the dip tanks do not have reliable sources of water, which may make it difficult to have a DLVS prescribed dipping regime throughout the year. We are aware of some of these challenges. Some of them are going to be addressed under the project but in some cases you may also have to be resourceful and find solutions,” said Mfote.



Right: The Game Changers Bay: European Union Ambassador to Zimbabwe His Excellency Philippe van Damme and David Phiri (FAO) chairing panel discussion. **Left:** Exhibition Bay: where FAO shared information resources with young people.

YOUTH and AGRICULTURE Challenges and opportunities

Multitudes of Zimbabwe's youth throng Harare gardens to interact with FAO in search of knowledge and ideas to actively participate in agriculture

There is consensus that a strong involvement of Africa's youth in rural development, agriculture and natural resources management will boost food security in the continent. With more than half of Sub-Saharan Africa's population now under the age of 25, and as many as 11 million young Africans expected to join the labour market every year for the next decade, agriculture in the continent has the potential to significantly gain from this demographic dividend.

The importance of Zimbabwean youth's involvement in the agricultural sector cannot be over emphasised given that agriculture is the backbone of the country's economy. However the perception that activities are characterized by drudgery, minimal financial returns and therefore meant for the least educated in society, continues to discourage many.

It is in this vein that as a build up to the 2015 World Food Day celebrations, the FAO office in Zimbabwe partnered with

Collaborative Development Foundation (CODEF), in "The Space" - an annual international platform convened by young people to share information and provide solutions and opportunities for growth for young people.

The event presented an opportunity for FAO to meet audiences and exchange knowledge and information that contribute to the development of youth in Agriculture. Multitudes of young people thronged the Harare gardens venue for the event and interacted with FAO "The Space" event was anchored on three bays;

- **Exhibition Bay** where FAO exhibited information resources and experts shared agricultural expertise with young people about FAO areas of programmatic focus.

- **The Inspiration Bay;** where an artistic narrative competition was running under a sub theme on WFD 2015 - Some entrants to this art competition will also participate in the global FAO poster competition.

- **The Game Changers Bay:** housed six panel discussions sessions on various key developmental issues with expert panels from embassies, government and the business community.

David Phiri, FAO Subregional Coordinator for Southern Africa chaired a panel discussion on "Social protection and Agriculture: breaking the cycle of rural poverty". Panel guests included the

European Union Ambassador to Zimbabwe Philippe van Damme and the Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Mechanisation and Irrigation Development, Honourable Paddy Zhanda.

High interest rates and high collateral requirements from financial institutions were cited as some of the barriers hindering young people from starting their agriculture based businesses.

The discussions also noted some of the challenges facing the agricultural sector ranging from lack of financial services to inadequate private sector investment and low technical expertise necessary for more youth to engage into agriculture. However, it is more important than ever that youth in Zimbabwe take on agriculture as a viable option for employment.

"Agriculture should be considered as a profession, we cannot all be farmers, just as much as we cannot all be accountants," said Mr Phiri. Many young people were delighted to find out that FAO office in Zimbabwe offers a resource library which they can utilise free of charge. The Space event which took place on 18 September 2015, presented an opportunity for the organization to reach out to young people and amplify messages especially those in line with the World Food Day Theme for 2015 and youth participation in Agriculture.

ESSAY COMPETITION

Making a living from livestock

Livestock, which contributes 30 percent of total agricultural output in Zimbabwe, has a great potential to contribute to food, nutrition and income security, especially for households in the semi-arid and drier parts of the country. Although incomes from livestock have contributed to the poverty reduction for many Zimbabweans, importance of livestock production is not often appreciated and with the preferred choice of work being off farm jobs. As such, it is important to 'catch them young' and by engaging the youth so that they get to understand and appreciate the importance of agriculture to livelihoods.

It is against this background that FAO in partnership with the European Union, Help from Germany and Lead initiated a livestock essay competition for secondary schools in Nkayi and Lupane districts under the theme 'Making a Living from Livestock'. The livestock essay competition sought to raise awareness about the project and the importance of livestock for people today and for generations to come.

The essay competition also served as a precursor to World food day 2015, running under the theme Social protection and agriculture: Breaking the cycle of rural poverty. Social protection, involves a blend of policies, programmes and interventions that aim at protecting poor and food-insecure people and to lift them out of poverty and hunger. The USD \$ 9.2 million EU funded livestock project addresses the aspect of social protection as it seeks to increase household food, income security and nutrition through commercialisation of an integrated and sustainable smallholder livestock sector.

Nine essays which clearly articulated "making a living from livestock" were selected as winners from each district. This was followed by prize giving ceremonies in both districts. Speaking at the Lupane prize giving ceremony, FAO Zimbabwe Head of Operations Jean-Claude Urvoy emphasized the importance of engaging young people in developmental programmes. "Today's young people are crucial for shaping our future and it is imperative that they are empowered to develop to their full potential. The competition hoped to inspire society to learn from young minds while empowering the young people and ensuring that their contributions are taken into account", Urvoy said.

Minister of Small and Medium Enterprises and Co-operatives Development Honorable Sthembiso Nyoni, who officiated at both district ceremonies, presented winners with certificates and prizes that included satchels, books, stationery and school fees vouchers. She thanked FAO for sponsoring the livestock essay competition and for its continued effort in improving agricultural productivity and alleviating rural poverty in Zimbabwe.

One of the winners Mandlenkosi Nyoni said he was happy to have entered the competition and hopes that FAO will run the competition again next year so he can have another chance to shine.



Jean-Claude Urvoy hands over certificates to winners



Lupane winners show off certificates



Minister Sthembiso Nyoni hands over certificates to Nkayi students

Coordination in the Agriculture sector



Constance Oka

Head of FAO Zimbabwe Coordination and Outreach Unit

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Behind the scenes players with a mammoth task

Creating an environment where representatives from Government, United Nations agencies, donors, NGOs, farmers' unions, research institutions, private sector and other partners, share information, exchange ideas on best practices and lessons learnt, is crucial for a coordinated response to emerging agriculture and food security needs. This ensures minimum duplication of activities thus ensuring better results.

FAO's coordination role in Zimbabwe is hinged on a number of pillars which include strengthening Government led coordination efforts at national and subnational levels, providing agricultural information and technical advice, of which FAO is key in this regard. Coordination also entails standardising agricultural approaches and developing guidelines for the sector, piloting, assessing and promoting new technologies.

For Constance Oka, Head of FAO Zimbabwe's coordination and outreach unit, the centrality of the organisation's role in interfacing with various stakeholders in the agricultural sector requires very good working relations. "FAO enjoys excellent working relations with the Government, donors and non-governmental organisations. The activities of donors, the Government, NGOs as well as the private sector are interlinked often calling for joint programming and the creation of synergies to drive the agriculture development agenda forward," says Oka.

FAO has, over the last decade, received significant support from donors such as the European Union, DFID and USAID to support coordination of agriculture sector activities. Government is mandated to coordinate the sector through the Department of Economics and Markets (under the Ministry of Agriculture, Mechanisation and Irrigation Development) with which FAO enjoys an excellent bilateral relationship. "NGOs play a key role in agriculture development projects. Their participation in coordination efforts is important in streamlining the geographical distribution of agricultural projects in order to effectively distribute

resources allocated to the sector hence minimising overlaps and under coverage," adds Oka.

On being asked what makes a good coordinator, Oka says: "FAO has developed a credible reputation as an honest broker between the Government and development partners. FAO facilitates meetings between the Government, donors, NGOs and other stakeholders; thus providing a platform to share information, to discuss and debate on topical issues, to set guidelines and standards and to monitor projects in the sector.

It seems it is all rosy working within the coordination unit but Oka says there are times when things go wrong. Oka says: "Like any other job, there are good and bad days at the office. Organizing multi stakeholder meetings can easily turn a good day into a bad one. It is possible that a day before an important coordination meeting one of the presenters will cancel and then you receive an email of another meeting that is scheduled for the same date and time. When you are still wondering what to do, you get a call from the facilitator saying they had to travel on urgent business. At this point you are wondering whether to cancel or go ahead with the meeting," says Oka.

Apart from presenters failing to turn up, there are times when equipment 'conspires' to stop working and one has to run around to get a replacement or make it work again. Such hurdles have to be cleared as the coordination meetings are important and Oka adds "In most cases things are not as bad as they seem. It all works out well in the end."



UK aid funded programme takes farmers to “school without walls”

Alab James, a 49-year-old farmer from Guruve District in Mashonaland Central Province counted himself among successful farmers who did not require any additional capacity development. This was before he joined Musarara Farmer Field School recently established in his village. “I did not understand it when people talked of a school. Most of the farmers around did not go very far in terms of education and thus we doubted if going to school would benefit us. After all we have been attending farmers’ workshops thus wondered what this so called school would bring,” says James.

He would break from the interview to suggest something to other farmers who were marking a demonstration plot at one of the selected field sites. The farmers would consult each other making sure that they paid attention to detail. There was no room for unnecessary mistakes, one of the farmers says.

FFS is a time bound activity (generally one agricultural production cycle, involving a group (commonly 20-30) of farmers. It is facilitated by extension staff or – increasingly – by farmer facilitators (FFs). The method emphasizes group observation, discussion, analysis, presentation and collective decision-making and actions. FFS aims to build farmers’ capacity to analyze their production systems, identify problems, test possible solutions, and eventually encourage the participants to adopt the practices most suitable to their farming systems”.

“Things changed from the very first day that we attended the field school as we gathered here in the open. What struck me first was that there were no classrooms like we know them, no chalkboards and indeed very little to write. The government’s agriculture extension officer erased any hesitation we still harboured when she explained to us that it was a school where we would learn by doing thus there was no need for the usual classroom set up,” adds James.

The basic component of FFS is setting up of a Participatory Comparative Experiment, whereby the farmers put the FFS concept into practice and compare proposed good agricultural practices against traditional practices.

The properly constituted farmer field school approach, where facilitator training is undertaken by a certified Master Trainer was introduced in the district by the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development (DFID) funded Zimbabwe Livelihoods and Food Security Programme (LFSP). FFS aims to build farmers’ capacity to analyze their production systems, identify problems, test possible solutions, and eventually encourage the participants to adopt the practices most suitable to their farming systems

“I was getting worried that despite all my efforts, my crop yield had plateaued, not that it was very low but it remained the same. At the field schools, we discussed issues to do with climate change and its effects on production. More horizons were opened in each lesson as we continued

to learn by doing. Since we were able to observe, discuss and analyse together, we are certainly not going to repeat the mistakes we have been making,” adds James.

James is eager to start preparations for the impending farming season as he is now armed to tackle some of the perennial problems he has been facing. “As we go back to our homes, we will be able to share information with others on what we have learned, especially because it is not only about crops but livestock as well. For example we were involved in making livestock feeds by mixing stover with urea and this was an enriching experience, as we never thought of mixing the two.

The farmer field school approach, a relatively new concept in Guruve generated interest among farmers and Tsitsi Tafungavamwe says she was excited that the learning methods made it possible to transfer skills learnt at the demonstration plots to their individual fields. “We will also share information which is very vital for any farmer,” says Tsitsi.

In Guruve, a total of 20 extension officers were trained over a three-week period to facilitate farmer field schools. The group spread across 16 wards in the district is expected to start farmer field schools in their respective wards this 2015/16 agricultural season. Jennifer Hire, an FFS Master Trainer from Uganda, said the enthusiasm shown by the participants assured her that the farmer field school concept would spread in Guruve.

LFSP

The Zimbabwe Livelihoods and Food Security Programme (LFSP) is a USD\$ 72 million programme funded by the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development (DFID). The Agricultural Productivity and Nutrition (APN) component of the programme is managed by FAO and is designed to improve food, nutrition and income security among target smallholder households. It is actively addressing the specific constraints that smallholder farmers, particularly women, face in raising the productivity of their farms and participating in markets. The Programme is implemented in eight districts: Mutasa, Makoni and Mutare in Manicaland, Gokwe South, Kwekwe and Shurugwi in Midlands as well as Guruve and Mt Darwin in Mashonaland Central province.



COMESA and FAO affirm their commitment to close collabora-

Towards achieving some of the set targets in the Malabo Declaration

FAO and the Common Market for East and Southern Africa (COMESA) have committed themselves to an enhanced and more structured collaboration as they support their respective Member States in the areas of agricultural development and international trade. The affirmation came at a landmark joint 2-day meeting that ended on 25 June 2015 in Harare. This is the first meeting of its kind between FAO and the regional trading bloc.

David Phiri, the FAO Subregional Coordinator for Southern Africa, said the groundbreaking meeting was important in that it marks a departure from the ad hoc and sporadic forms of collaboration in the past. “The seeds of today’s meeting were sown when I met with the COMESA Assistant Secretary General (Programmes), Ambassador Kipyego Cheluget, in Zambia in November last year and we deliberated on how we could strengthen our existing collaboration further to ensure more synergistic programmes. We agreed to meet and discuss issues more structurally,” said Phiri.

The Harare meeting sought to cover ground on exploring the possible areas of collaboration and joint implementation. In addition, there were deliberations on how to structure the enhanced collaboration as well as building trust between FAO and COMESA.

The FAO Subregional Office for

Southern Africa hosted the meeting, which was also attended by FAO staff in the FAO Subregional Office for Eastern Africa and Regional Office for Africa.

Common interests, overlapping mandates

FAO and COMESA, with common interests and overlapping mandates in areas of agriculture and trade, have collaborated on the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) and Conservation Agriculture, among other interventions. The formal meeting sought to provide a road map on future engagement.

Nalishabo Meebelo, Deputy CAADP Coordinator at COMESA, who led the delegation from the trading bloc, said the current thrust requires collaboration to achieve some of the set targets in the Malabo Declaration. “The Malabo Declaration targets, for example, are very ambitious and we cannot continue with the business as usual approach to achieve them,” said Meebelo. The Malabo Declaration on, “Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods”, was adopted by the African Heads of States in 2014 and it has a set of concrete goals to be reached by 2025. One of the seven commitments that were adopted is that of Ending Hunger in Africa by 2025, itself following a recommendation

to that effect of the African Union/FAO/Lula Institute High Level Meeting held in Addis Ababa in June/July 2013.

Meebelo added that the first point of departure could be revisiting an existing Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed in 1987 between FAO and the Preferential Trade Area (PTA), which was the predecessor to COMESA. “We may need to review that MoU and see if it addresses current issues, we may need to redraft and bring it to the current context,” added Meebelo.

At the end of the 2 days of deliberations it was agreed that FAO would provide technical support for the elaboration of both the COMESA Regional Agriculture Investment Plan (RAIP) and a programme aiming to removing obstacles to regional agricultural trade as well as to link farmers to markets.

Priority areas for collaboration were also agreed and included the CAADP/Malabo process, Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (plant and animal health and food safety), climate change, livestock, fisheries, water resources, trade and investment; as well, technical focal points were nominated for each technical area. A joint team will take the agreed actions forward as both organizations committed to holding annual strategic level meetings and more frequent technical level consultations.

World Food Day 2015 Highlights

The Ministry of Agriculture, Mechanization and Irrigation Development (MAMID) and the United Nations led by FAO and WFP on October 16 commemorated World Food Day (WFD) at Gwebi College of Agriculture; under the theme - Social Protection and Agriculture, Breaking the Cycle of Rural Poverty.

This year it is particularly important as the Organization turned 70. The main objective of the day is to heighten public awareness of the nature and dimensions of the long-term world food challenges, and to develop further national and international solidarity in the struggle against hunger, malnutrition and poverty.

The WFD commemorations were attended by development partners, local farmers, students and people from surrounding areas. The event gave an opportunity for the MAMID as well as FAO and WFP to reiterate the centrality agriculture and social protection play in managing natural resources, protecting the environment, and achieving sustainable development, particularly in rural areas.



ABOVE: Officials tour Gwebi College of Agriculture farm



ABOVE: AGRITEX Director and WFD steering committee chair Mr B. Mache chats to FAO staff



LEFT: Part of the crowd that attended the commemorations and **RIGHT:** Vharazipi and crew members of ZIYA cultural arts group entertaining the crowd



LEFT: David Phiri; FAO Subregional coordinator for Southern Africa and Representative for Zimbabwe with representatives from the Swiss and Japanese embassies in Zimbabwe. **RIGHT:** Winners of WFD art competition





Invasive *Eucalyptus* Pest

Threatens Livelihoods



Hope Lies in another “Pest”

Forests play a central role in people’s lives as they can benefit from timber and non-timber products. Forest resources are a source of livelihoods as they provide wood fuel, timber for various household uses as well as extraction of fruit and oils for consumption at the household level and sale. Forests are also vital for protection of soils and water resources upon which agriculture hinges.

In Zimbabwe, where an estimated 66 percent of the land is under various forest types, the *eucalyptus* tree plays a pivotal role in people’s livelihoods as it is used for many purposes including honey production, provision of fuel wood, fencing and roofing poles and other environmental benefits

The tree, originally from Australia, has a rapid growth which makes it ideal for planting by smallholder farmers across the country. Various government programmes encourage the planting of the *eucalyptus* and the latest has been to ensure that tobacco farmers grow own plantations for curing of the crop rather than rely on natural forests which are being depleted.

Smallholder farmers heeded the call to grow the *Eucalyptus* tree and there are small plantations across the country which have become a source of livelihood for various communities. However, this source of livelihood is under a serious threat from three insects which feed on the *eucalyptus* and have caused serious damages since they were discovered in the country. The three invasive insects, which do not originate from Zimbabwe, have spread rapidly and are affecting almost all *Eucalyptus* species in the country.

The three invasive insects, bronze bug, blue gum chalcid and red gum lerp psyllid, are very small bugs leaving a trail of destruction across the country. Their body size does not compare with the huge damage they cause and the impact on people’s livelihoods. In order to mitigate the effects of the three invasive insects, FAO working with Government through the Forestry Commission, implemented the pilot Invasive Alien Species project that sought to come up with solutions through use of proven biological control methods. To effectively implement this, there was need to capacitate the Forestry Commission and Agricultural Officers. Farmers were trained and organised into Farmer Field Schools in Integrated Pest Management. The project is implemented in five provinces, Manicaland, Midlands, Mashonaland Central, East and West, was through a Technical Cooperation Programme..

A natural enemy of the blue gum chalcid, *nasseri*, was bred and released to some of the affected areas. The Forestry Commission, which is responsible for research and breeding of the natural enemy of the invasive insects, is reporting some early promising results.

In Hwedza District, Mashonaland East, members of the community owned Nyamutsika woodlot have benefitted from the Farmer Field Schools and are able to identify the various pests and institute measures to minimise the damage to the *Eucalyptus* trees. Diana Matyatya a member of the plantation says they have learnt a lot from the project and this is not only to do with the three invasive insects. “We have also been taught on how to manage the plantations including making sure we have fireguards.

Our main problem has been the pest which is causing damage to our trees. These trees have become a source of livelihood as we are selling them and using the proceeds to pay school fees for our children. We are excited to hear that there is another pest which will be brought to fight one of the invasive species,” says Ms Matyatya. She adds that they also make sure that the seedlings they plant are free from the invasive species.

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