Have you ever heard of Mbeya Manure? Join me as we will hear from our fellow farmer how to make local fertilizer called Mbeya Manure.

Sigtune Up and Fade

Last week we were in Lilongwe and we learned what farmers are doing to improve soil fertility. Today let us go to Nkhotakota in Traditional Authority Malengachanzi, specifically in Phangwa village, we will learn more from women who are using different soil fertility management technologies to increase soil fertility. We will first hear from Rose Chavula.

Guest 1: When it comes to rice, when it is time to plough, we broadcast the rice, when we broadcast, when the rain has come, we mix the rice with water, so we take the rice from a nursery and plant, so when the rice has emerged, and there is grass, we weed the grass and bury in the ground the rice so that the grass gets rotten in the soil and in that way we are also adding soil fertility.

Host: What are you doing to address the effects of climate change?
Guest 1: Indeed now-days the climate change is affecting us farmers like this year we had a dry spell, the rain came very late, we are also cutting trees carelessly and this also affects us, because trees help conserve water.

Host: *So what is your advice to fellow farmers?*

Guest 1: They should take care of their soil because the soil fertility is declining and it is a problem.

Host: *That was Mrs Rose Chavula from Phangwa village in Nkhotakota ku Nkhotakota. I also chatted with village headwoman Chikako who grows maize, groundnuts and rice. Firstly, I asked her if there is food this year.*

Guest 2: No, this year I do not expect a bumper yield because the rain came very late.

Host: *So what are we doing to address the effects of climate change?*

Guest 2: In order for the soil to have good nutrients, we should not cut trees, we should practice Conservation Agriculture.

Host: *What do you mean by Conservation Agriculture?*

Guest 2: This is when, after harvesting, we do not burn the maize stalks so we cover the soil with maize stalks so we add nutrients to the soil when it is time to plant we just plant the maize and those maize stalks will have decomposed and there we will have added soil fertility.

Host: *Why are you saying people should not burn the maize stalks?*

Guest 2: Because when we burn the maize stalks we disturb the soil, and this affects production of crops.

Host: *Any differences between a garden with maize stalks covered and a garden that a farmer burnt the maize stalks?*

Guest 2: There is indeed a big difference, a garden which burnt maize stalks does not have the soil nutrients but a garden with maize stock covering will have more soil nutrients and the crop looks greener.
**Host:** Is it possible to use organic manure and still produce more?

Cue in: It’s possible, we can cut the maize stalks into strips, add groundnut dried leaves and mix with animal manure or human dung and then we let them decompose for some time when the manure is done we then apply to the soil.

**Host:** So we have been hearing about Vetiver grass, how does it help you?

Cue in: We are using vetiver to areas that are steep, so that we make banks and this helps when the rain comes the soil is not washed away and so the water is also conserved. Vetiver grass was introduced by the Agriculture Extension officer from Ministry of Agriculture. We do farming differently and we use different practices, and one can never do farming alone so we get advice from the Agricultural extension officers who have undergone training. They teach us and we implement what they teach us.

**Host:** That was Village Headwoman Chikako from Malengachanzi, in Nkhotakota, hey we have talked for a long time why don’t we break by dancing to this song.

Song plays then slowly fades

**Host:** Yeah! Who does not want to enjoy good music, farmers also want to enjoy, earlier on I promised that we will hear from our fellow farmer on how to make Mbeya fertilizer, a farmers’ own innovation, I now give you an excerpt of the interview with the lead farmer Mr Phillip Magwira, who was chatting with Sakina Majawa from Chanco Community.

Excerpt: Mbeya Fertiliser is made by using the following resources: 20 kgs of Chicken manure, 20 kgs of maize husks, 10 kgs of inorganic fertilizer can be ether basal or top dressing and ash small quantity, we then take a plastic, we take the maize husks, manure, inorganic fertilizer and mix them by slowly adding water and then it changes color, we taste the thickness by touching, so that it should not be too thin, We then keep the ingredients into a bag and tie it and keep it for 21 days, then after 21 days we dry the
fertilizer on cool dry place on a paper and then keep it in a dry Sack bag again ready for use.

Sakina Majawa: So how do you apply the fertilizer?

Phillip Magwira: It is not different from the way you apply inorganic fertilizer, you apply the basal to the crop 7 days after planting

What do you in applying?

Phillip Magwira: We use a teaspoon and measure one full spoon.

Sakina Majawa: What is the application ration of a 50s kg bag?

Phillip Magwira: 2 bags of 50kgs are enough for 1 hectare.

Sakina Majawa: When should a farmer make this type of fertilizer?

Phillip Magwira: Anytime, but it is recommended that the farmer should start making manure in June, after harvesting, and of course at any time, but has to be given enough time for the manure to be decomposed

Sakina: How do you keep the fertilizer?

Phillip Magwira: The fertilizer can be kept in sack bags for a longer period, as a lead farmer I pass on the extension advice from government in Millennium Villages Project, nowadays people complain of the high cost of inorganic fertilizer so if you use this type of fertilizer, we can improve pour production, we will have an increased yield, and you can also do business by selling the fertilizer at a cheaper price, so as farmers we will benefit and government will also benefit because of increased productivity

Host: That was Phillip Magwira a lead farmer from Zomba, I believe that we have learnt something new from him. He has said this type of fertilizer increases soil fertility but also saves money and it can also be used in winter.

This is all I had for you in today’s program of Chuma Chiri Nthaka, the program comes to you with support from Soil Health Consortium and it is
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From me, Nambewe, Pauline Kalumikiza Mbukwa, join me again next week on Friday from 4:50 pm on Maziko Radio Station the voice of the people, if you have comments or questions, please call or send sms on 0993 449 228.