



ZAAB
Zambia Alliance For Agroecology & Biodiversity



**Kasiti Agricultural
Training Centre**
Promoting Sustainable Organic Agriculture



REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA
MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE
ZAMBIA CENTRE FOR HORTICULTURAL TRAINING-CHAPULA

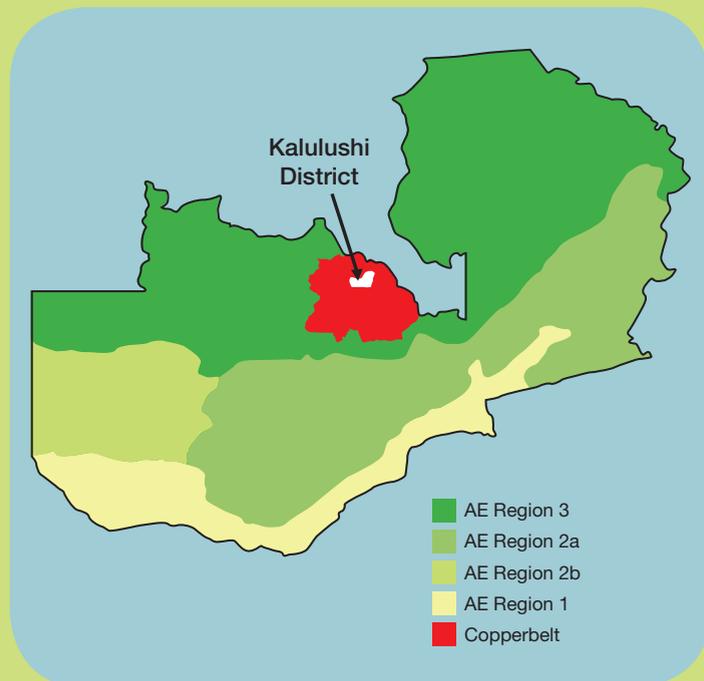
Transforming the Farmer Input Support Programme (FISP) to diversified agroecology practices

in the Kalulushi District, Copperbelt, Zambia

BRIEFING PAPER JULY 2019

Introduction

This briefing highlights key issues raised at a farmer exchange and learning event held in May 2019 in Kalulushi District, Copperbelt. The district lies in Agroecological Region III, with relatively higher rainfall. The overall objective of the meeting was to share and exchange ideas on transitioning to a smallholder support system for diversified agroecological farming.



The context

Smallholder farming systems in Africa face grave threats

- Intensifying climate crisis
- Biodiversity loss
- Indigenous knowledge loss
- Poor soils
- Urbanisation and population growth
- Multinational corporate takeover in seed and food systems
- Extensive use of synthetic fertilisers and agrochemicals
- Promotion of monocultural crops

Government support focuses on the Farm Input Support Programme (FISP)

- The FISP is very expensive, with most of the money going to pay for commercial seed and fertiliser.
- These resources could support other important parts of farmer support such as:
 - Extension, research and training
 - Other farming systems that include agroecology/sustainable organic agriculture (SOA)
- Farmers say that the FISP creates dependency and is limited to the rainy season and only a few crops – maize and soya.

“I urge farmers to interact and discuss what they know, and to come up with resolutions to inform government to transform the farm input support programme into a long-term sustainable programme.” Joseph Phakati, Principal, ZCHT Chapula

“Between 2010 and 2017, in Zambia there was a 100% increase in fertiliser but yield per hectare has stayed the same or even declined.”

Daniel Kalala, KATC

Agroecology supports people and communities in maintaining their spiritual and material relationship with their land and environment



Theresa Mutaka demonstrates production of liquid manure on her farm

“I am trying to do organic farming. When you go to the farm you can see different types of things – small ruminants, broilers and local chickens, production of medicines for vaccines and treatment. I am doing minimum tillage. I use wild plants to treat pests in the small garden. There is still a challenge of soil pests – nematodes. I use manure and liquid manure for foliar fertiliser. Some methods are in the process, some are already matured. I started cultivating the land using conservation, not burning after harvesting but rather burying residues in the soil, also diversification, increasing the number of crop types, and using ashes to remove insects.” **Theresa Mutaka, farmer, Kalulushi**

“Many people ask if there is a market for the products, will I sell at the same price as conventional products? From our experience, even if you sell at the same price, the SOA farmer makes more money because she spends very little.”

Daniel Kalala, KATC

Farmer-managed seed systems

Farmer-managed seed systems account for 75% to 80% of total seed use in Zambia.



Farmers reuse, adapt and share this seed with one another.



It is very important because for generations this system provided food for our forefathers.



Farmers, mostly women, are the main stakeholders in this system.



Diversity on the land ensures diversity on the plate, removing the issue of malnutrition.



Why then do farmer seed systems and practices have no government support compared to the commercial seed system?

“There is no way to separate what we put in the soil and what we put in our bodies, the things we use to grow the food and our health. Once you start poisoning the soil, you end up poisoning yourself.” **Juliet Nangamba, CTDT**

Socially just

We must take responsibility for how our farming is affecting the people around us.



Social justice is about selling others food products that you are proud to eat.



We also need to take care of resources for future generations.

Environmentally friendly



The idea of soil fertility is to **feed the soil** and let the soil feed the crop.



On-farm recycling of nutrients – for example, animal manure, which returns to the soil most of the nutrients that the animal took when it was grazing.



Even for farmers without livestock, there are ways to return nutrients sustainably, for example the use of **legumes** either as green manures or cover crops and retain crop residues.



Biodiversity in the field and holistic soil fertility management are also good ways to manage pests and diseases.



Try not to disturb the soil except where you are growing your crops. Keep the soil covered at all times, with living and dead organic matter. This keeps water in the soil for longer and contributes nutrients to the soil over time. Use locally adapted seeds with a history of productive use in the area.

Agroecology

is a good response to the urgent challenges facing food and farming systems in Zambia and Africa

“The farmer is the custodian of the soil and the land. Feed the soil first.” Daniel Kalala, KATC

Provides income



The input costs for agroecology are much lower than in conventional systems that require the purchase of expensive synthetic inputs.



Farmers receive similar prices for the products, so a saving in input costs goes directly to the farming household.



Agroecology promotes diversification of on-farm incomes, gives farmers greater financial independence and increases resilience by multiplying sources of production and livelihood. This encourages independence from external inputs, and reduces crop failure.



Improvements in soil, water and biodiversity lead to increased yields and dietary diversity over time. This contributes to improved health and cost savings for households.

Participants visited a demonstration plot hosted by ZCHT, and the farms of Mrs Mutaka and Mr Sakala. Participants discussed and identified the following priorities:

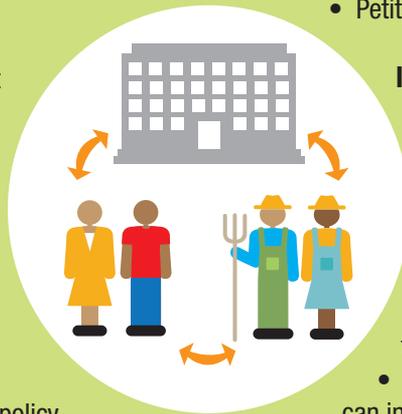


“Start small, implement and see whether it is working well and appreciate, then extend.”

Mary Sakala, farmer, RWA Mumbwa

Farmers' role

- Start by doing agroecological practices yourself and share ideas locally amongst people you know.
- Identify others who are interested and form local agroecology groups. Organise demos of things that are working and visit each other's farms.
- Continue sharing diverse seed between farmers, at seed fairs and between local farmers and seed banks.
- Participate in agricultural shows to share diverse agroecological produce and knowledge, at district, provincial and national levels.
- Share information and experiences, through radio programmes and farmer to farmer exchanges.
- Advocate and lobby for agroecology in agricultural policy.



Government's role

- Include agroecology in curricula at schools, universities and agricultural training centres.
- Provide training to farmers and public sector on agroecology.
- Use media such as radio programmes, involving farmers in sharing information on agroecology in different languages.
- Diversify the FISP to include inputs other than fertiliser, such as organic compost, small livestock (e.g. goats, chickens), or incentives for those who adopt a set of defined agroecological practices, as part of a transition from high input agriculture.
- Facilitate establishment of seed banks for local varieties.
- Promote markets for diverse seed and food products, including local markets and increasing Food Reserve Agency purchases of traditional maize.

“FISP is just a programme that came but it can also be removed, so we must be able to produce without it.”

NGOs' role

- Develop agroecology curricula, together with others, and provide training to farmers, other NGOs and extension officers.
- Document best practices for sharing with government.
- Facilitate establishment of seed banks for local varieties.
- Use media to disseminate info on agroecology in different languages.
- Petition on agroecology, network, and share spaces.

Involving the youth

- Ensure the youth learn about agroecology at schools, universities and agricultural training centres.
- Work with youth who are already organised into clubs or groups.
- Bring children into the fields and farming activities from a young age so they can gain the skills and knowledge.
- Inform farmers when calling a meeting so they can include youth amongst the participants.

“The most important thing is for farmers to say they want to start. It is not a huge thing, you just begin where you are. Seed can be exchanged. Let's not wait for a lot of demos or it will be difficult.”

Chola Mulenga, ZCHT Chapula

A multi-stakeholder dialogue

The Zambia College of Horticultural Training (ZCHT) Chapula, Kasisi Agricultural Training Centre (KATC), Zambia Alliance for Agroecology and Biodiversity (ZAAB) and African Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) co-hosted the field visit and dialogue.

Fifty-six participants included farmers from cooperatives in the district; and representatives from KATC, Community Technology Development Trust (CTDT), ZAAB, Rural Women's Assembly (RWA), East and Southern Africa Farmers' Forum (ESAFF) Zambia, ZCHT-Chapula and ACB; as well as the National Coordinator for Public Agricultural Colleges, the Ministry of Agriculture Kalulushi District Agricultural Coordinator (DACO), extension services and agronomists, and journalists from the National Agricultural Information Service (NAIS).



acbio.org.za

13 The Braids Road, Emmarentia,
Johannesburg, 2195, South Africa
P O Box 29170, Melville, 2109
+27 11 486 2701



ZAAB

Zambia Alliance For Agroecology & Biodiversity

zambianagroecology.org

ZAAB Secretariat
32a Leopards Hill Road, Kabulonga,
Cnr Latitude Hotel, Lusaka
+260 763887225
+260 973717086