



# Report from SADC regional farmer speak out on farm input subsidy programmes

Gateway Conference Centre, Windhoek,  
15 August 2018



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On 7 April 2015 the African Centre for Biosafety officially changed its name to the African Centre for Biodiversity (ACB). This name change was agreed by consultation within the ACB to reflect the expanded scope of our work over the past few years. All ACB publications prior to this date will remain under our old name of African Centre for Biosafety and should continue to be referenced as such.

We remain committed to dismantling inequalities in the food and agriculture systems in Africa and our belief in people's right to healthy and culturally appropriate food, produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agricultural systems.

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Design and layout: Adam Rumball, Sharkbuoys Designs, Johannesburg



## Introduction

Rural Women's Assembly (RWA) and African Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) jointly hosted a meeting of farmers and civil society organisations (CSOs) to share views and experiences on farm input subsidy programmes and public sector support for agroecology in the region. About 140 participants from Namibia, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Zambia, Malawi, Tanzania, Mauritius, Lesotho, Swaziland and Ghana attended the workshop. The gathering was part of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) People's Summit, a bigger event of over 800 delegates organised by the Southern African People's Solidarity Network (SAPSN) to coincide with the SADC Heads of State Summit happening at the same time in Windhoek.

The meeting started with a mystica organised by women farmers from RWA. Messages included the need to oppose harmonised seed laws that take away rights to multiply and distribute indigenous seed, no to GMOs, health and nutrition as a key issue, and markets for indigenous crops. RWA opened with some comments, followed by a short overview of Farm Input Subsidy Programmes (FISPs) from ACB. After highlighting issues arising from regional research work to date, RWA farmers from each country shared their views and experiences. Namibia's Deputy Permanent Secretary of the Directorate of Agricultural Development in the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry, Sophia Kasheeta, attended for part of the day to share the Ministry's farmer support activities with the meeting.

Numerous issues emerged from the discussions on FISPs and public sector agricultural support including:

- corruption in the input programmes,
- political and elite abuse,
- top-down and authoritarian models of development and input provision,
- cost and distance limitations to farmer involvement especially for poorer farmers,
- uneven farmer access to support,
- late distribution of inputs,
- lack of storage for seed,
- an over-emphasis on maize in many programme and not enough focus on indigenous and farmer varieties,
- destruction of indigenous seed and knowledge,
- no soil tests before providing fertiliser,
- rising food aid despite programme objectives of reducing food imports, ecological problems with genetically modified (GM) and hybrid seeds, synthetic fertiliser and herbicides, and inappropriateness of these inputs to meet farmer needs.

Participants identified priority alternatives and areas for diversification of farmer support, including support for agroecological practices, water infrastructure (dams, irrigation), farmer seed selection, seed banks, seed fairs and exchange, farmer study groups on seed, organic fertiliser production, crop/livestock integration, agroforestry, nurseries, and decentralised farmer-based agroecology schools/hubs.

The gathering noted that some participants were delayed by up to eight hours at the Namibian border, and a call was made for the recognition of the right to free movement of people across the region as the basis of progressive regional integration.

## Notes on proceedings

### Opening

Speaking on behalf of **RWA Namibia**, Patricia Gurubes opened the event by highlighting different challenges faced by farmers in Namibia, including gender, land, climate change and seeds. These challenges also affect others in the region, so we should share our victories and challenges to find solutions together.

RWA farmers led a mystica where women highlighted the following messages:

- No to corporate seed, yes to indigenous seed;
- Seed law harmonisation takes away rights to multiply and use indigenous seed. We don't want harmonisation seed laws that will damage our lives;



- No to GMOs;
- Health and nutrition; and
- Markets for indigenous crops rather than coming with stories about better seeds that actually are not better.

### ACB input

**ACB** gave an input on FISPs that included the following key points:

- Subsidies are only for the Green Revolution (GR) package which focuses on hybrid seeds, synthetic fertiliser and pesticides and on a few commercial crops like maize and soya.
- FISPs were started to subsidise these inputs. A lot of the agricultural budget goes towards funding input subsidies in some countries, especially Zambia and Malawi.
- While academic and policy research examines results, almost no research has been conducted by civil society organisations (CSOs) or farmers. Results from around the region show that while FISPs may help increase production a little, there is no real impact on the quality of life or incomes of farming households. Only a small layer of commercial farmers benefit.

ACB also discussed the problems with FISP, as follows:

- FISP displaces many farmer and local seed varieties through distribution of hybrids that cannot be recycled.
- Farmers are channelled to produce for export markets, including animal feed in Europe and China.
- Multinational corporations such as Monsanto, Bayer, Syngenta and Yara are the main beneficiaries, who make billions of US dollars in profit every year. Public resources are used to provide input subsidies, guaranteed markets to corporations, and subsidised outputs for global grain traders.
- Ecological damage. Standard nitrogen-phosphorus-potassium (NPK) fertiliser packages are provided without soil tests and tailored for a few crop types such as maize.
- Land concentration for some and landlessness for others who have nowhere else to go.



- Growing donor dependency since money for FISPs is often from donors including the World Bank, Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the European Union (EU). It is unclear how long the donor subsidies will continue, but should funds be withdrawn, farmers may be left without any support. Because all inputs come from outside, farmers may suddenly lose access to the inputs which have shaped their production choices.

We should discuss whether FISPs are the best use of public resources, based on thinking through the seed, soil fertility, and pest management alternatives. Alternatives should be based on what farmers are already doing and what they need. The alternatives should build on existing activities and respond to farmers' diverse priorities. Programmes rather need to build farmer resilience, independence and capability to supply enough food for the region without requiring external aid. Rather than public money flowing out of our countries and out of Africa, we must consider how to keep it inside, circulating amongst farming communities, and producing in and for local economies.

### RWA input

**RWA** highlighted the following:

- **Debt, dependency and export focus:** FISPs are supposed to be about food security, but we are producing to enrich other people.
- **Seed:** When we think of the origin of food security, seed stands out. Multinational corporations (MNCs) are playing around with the seed, and thus playing around with your life.
- **Access to land:** The issue of land also comes up, because we cannot grow in the air. Yet people from outside are coming in and taking the land.
- **The environment:** One participant asked what SADC would be today if "my great grandfather did what we are doing today? If we look at our children, can you imagine what our future is going to be? We want to protect the environment like our forefathers did, we have to protect the environment otherwise we are dead. I hope that from the declarations we have today that we come up with solutions."

Another participant said women farmers must speak out: "We are looking at solidarity, we want solidarity from our sisters and brothers producing food. FISPs have a good aim of food security, everyone agrees on food security. Nevertheless, when we look at the programme and research, it has proved to have challenges. It does not address the needs of many small scale farmers. In most countries, we have never seen anyone graduating out of FISP who is doing fine. As concerned citizens in SADC, as rural women and farmers, we understand we must voice out. We are looking for solutions here, alternatives which come from way back. These must be taken on board whether they like it or not. Countries should speak out in solidarity."

### Country inputs

#### Malawi

**RWA Malawi** said the annual budget allocated to the FISP was reduced last year. They added that fertilisers kill the soil nutrients, but we are pushed to apply more fertiliser. For one acre we need to apply 450kg of top dressing and basal. This takes a lot of resources, with costs incurred by beneficiaries. If we get fertiliser, we must add MK7,000 to the subsidy. There is corruption at the sales points, where we are asked to pay MK4,000 or MK5,000 in addition to the MK7,000. Transportation costs for inputs are a major additional cost because supplier shops are at trading centres while smallholder farmers are staying far from these centres. The FISP therefore needs a lot of money from farmers and the poorest farmers cannot afford it. We need government to balance the allocation of resources especially between FISP and other interventions. They should revisit the fertiliser component which occupies more than 90%. This is unsustainable. We must encourage agroecology, and the intensification and promotion of crops that do not require fertiliser. FISP is meant to increase productivity but is destroying the soil.

**SCOPE Malawi** concurred with what RWA said, pointing out that the FISP is a big challenge in Malawi: "900,000 people are targeted now but after that only about 30% access fertiliser. Agro-dealers say there is no fertiliser when farmer arrive, and this



is wasted transport. The 900,000 is just a figure mentioned by government but is not the actual figure.” SCOPE Malawi agreed with the recommendations being made by RWA.

### **Zimbabwe**

**RWA Zimbabwe** said government distributes maize and guarantees a minimum price. However, farmers do pay a little amount for transport. A local-level the chairperson for the ruling party distributes inputs, but the process is not done well as government does not follow the plan, and allows looting and selling of fertiliser. Distribution takes place at gatherings where a few are wearing party T-shirts. The elders will be scared because they know in their minds they must vote for that party. This year FISP was distributed for vote buying.

FISP is one-size-fits-all, it gives you the type of seed that is not required in your area. Zimbabwe has command agriculture managed by the military. The government is commanding us to take what we don’t need. There is late distribution of inputs. There is no storage for seeds, so if it arrives early it may not survive until planting. Mostly farmers are not given a full package. Some are given 10kg maize, while another may get 50kg fertiliser.

Since beneficiaries are mainly men while women do most of the work in the field, dialogue is needed with MPs, Department of Agriculture officers, and rural women’s movements in many districts: “Everywhere we need rural women to discuss seeds and challenges. We have spoken with the President. He was writing what we were saying but we don’t know if he is going to be president because the process is not yet finished. We were calling for construction of dams, and for irrigation. Through workshops we managed to stand as women. Women must benefit from inputs. We have rural women as MPs, we have councillors here at this meeting.”

**Women and Land Zimbabwe** reiterated that FISP is a three-year programme done under command agriculture with the expectation of continuity. They said: “It is good to us as rural women and they are giving inputs to small-scale farmers, but they don’t even give priority to farmers to choose whether they want maize. We need small grains, they must be prioritised. We also need marketing support.”

When women want to sell their produce, they are forced to go back to Agritex officers to get a clearance letter whether you benefited from command agriculture or not. These extension officers are only targeting people who are part of the FISP schemes. Participants said government should also consider infrastructure in rural areas especially dams and boreholes, “because we are currently dependent on rain. When there is drought, we need to irrigate.”

### **Mozambique**

**Uniao Nacional de Camponeses (UNAC)** said the situation in Mozambique is similar to other countries, especially Malawi. They said: “Talking about seed, we have a similar situation where small-scale farmers are given vouchers but when they go to get seed from the agro-dealers it is not available, then the season starts. The programmes are not functioning well. Our approach is to invest in agroecology and use of local seeds. Currently we are working in four provinces on restoring local seed to show it is possible to raise productivity using local seeds”.



The government is also implementing a programme to promote mechanisation for small-, medium- and large-scale farmers, but it only benefits medium- and large-scale farmers: small-scale farmers are not benefiting. “The machinery is costly and there is no technical assistance. Distances to access are very far. The programmes are being used as political propaganda. Government is saying farmers are benefiting but when we go to the ground the services do not really exist. There is evidence that it is not happening and is only helping medium- and large-scale farms. This is similar to what is happening in other countries. As UNAC, we are implementing programmes on local seed without damaging soils, and preserving biodiversity.”

### Namibian government

**Namibia's** Deputy Permanent Secretary of the Directorate of Agricultural Development in the **Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry (MAWF)**, Sophia Kasheeta, thanked the organisers for inviting the Ministry to come and share what they are doing. She said: “Agriculture plays an important role in growing the economy and reducing poverty but the sector is underperforming especially in Namibia because women who are crucial resources in agriculture face constraints that reduce their productivity”.

MAWF in Namibia has several initiatives to empower rural women in livestock, crop production and processing through cooperatives and other organisations. On crop production, in 2012 Cabinet established a dryland/rain fed crop production programme, with agronomic interventions. Through the programme government provides subsidised inputs such as seeds and fertilisers and services such as planting, ploughing, ripping and weeding. The programme operates in ten crop growing regions of Namibia. Ms Kasheeta said the objectives were “to ensure and accelerate the provision of subsidised services for the use of improved seed, and soil management through appropriate farm management practices”. She said the goal was to reduce dependency on imported food, to create employment and sustained livelihoods, and reduce poverty and inequality. Most crops are being imported from South Africa.



Ploughing services for up to 5ha of land are provided through government-owned and private-sector tractors. Where private owners are involved, government pays a portion to the service provider and farmers also cover a portion, with the subsidy being determined annually depending on the budget.

The Namibian government is trying to improve soil fertility by providing subsidised fertiliser, because agricultural land, especially in communal areas, is overcultivated, resulting in low productivity. The Deputy said: “Soil samples are done to provide specific information on the type of fertiliser they have to use.” The government is also subsidising weeding services, because labour for weeding is a problem, especially where there have been HIV/AIDS pandemics and child headed-households are common.

Agricultural research centres (ARIs) produce most seed in Namibia. The ARIs improve seed, with seed then grown under supervision by seed growers (coops and farmers). The seed is then distributed at a subsidised price. Namseed is trying to mechanise and increase seed production; the five-year project, although not yet finalised, is funded with a loan from the African Development





Bank (AfDB). The project aims to enhance agricultural productivity to reduce annual imports of cereals, facilitate job creation and enhance household income. At independence no mahangu (pearl millet) was produced in Namibia but today 45% is produced locally. The government aims for further improvements in local millet production.

MAWF is also undertaking value chain improvement, including mechanisation and certified seed improvement, as well as institutional support such as capacity building and project management.

Namibia has a self-sufficient livestock sector, which exports beef. Livestock is also being distributed to farmers who do not have livestock, wherein farmers produce livestock and give some back to be distributed to other farmers. This has resulted in improvements in livelihoods. Farmers have skills and capacity on livestock compared with crops. There is also poultry distribution of one day old chicks to rural women for sales and own consumption. MAWF also provides animal health services, vaccinations and extension services.

## Discussion on Deputy Permanent Secretary's presentation

RWA Namibia opened their comments on crop production areas, expressing appreciation for what government is doing. However, they also commented that they know the government does provide fertilisers, “but unfortunately, we rural women who are deep in the bush have heard it with our ears, but we didn’t see it”. They pointed out that farmers who are near to centres may receive inputs, but those who are far in the bush do not, therefore they can sometimes only produce on a small scale. The government only provides two tractors per region, which is too few for so many farmers. Therefore, although the land is ploughed up to four times a year, many farmers members have “never got ploughing assistance”. The participants said that government must follow what is happening on the ground because “the policies are good, but the practice is poor”.

RWA Namibia thanked government for meeting them and helping farmers by providing seed, fertiliser, ploughing and weeding at half the price. However, they said services were late, resulting in production delays. They also said that because of climate change, farmers need information on the coming season and what kind of production to do. Conservation Agriculture (CA) is good but unless farmers receive information, they do not know what to do. Farmers also need training to improve production.

After the government presentation, and while the Deputy was still there some discussion took place. The session chair said that farmers have a lot in common with governments, e.g. wanting to address poverty reduction, women, productivity, inequality, HIV, and youth unemployment. The session chair was “happy that the issues are on the table and they are now open for discussion”.

A farmer from Zimbabwe gave thanks to the Namibian government for providing a comprehensive package but asked how much of that is going to rural women. In Zimbabwe women provide 70-80% of agricultural labour and constitute more than 52% of the total population. They are mostly rural where they survive on agriculture. Therefore,

women should be beneficiaries. A second question was that farmers and agricultural centres are producing seed under FISP but the participant asked what was being done about indigenous seeds: “What are you doing about that, are you preserving them, or do you want to see them disappear?”

A Mozambican participant explained that in Mozambique FISP requires a contribution from farmers, and asked what Namibia does to help poor women who do not have money to contribute. They went on to question the use of fertiliser to address poor soil: “Are these organic or synthetic? If they are artificial, have you seen improvements on soil fertility using artificial fertilisers?”

A Zimbabwean participant said they heard the Namibian government saying there are seed growers. They asked if the seed growers were small-scale or commercial farmers. They went on to explain: “Our experience is that government has a plan that doesn’t fit into the shoes of the ordinary person, that doesn’t take into account that rural women have more knowledge of their own situation and they can define their own way of doing things. How much of going to the people are you doing? We are indigenous people but there is little that is happening to change our lives for betterment in agriculture.”

The **Deputy Permanent Secretary** responded by saying it is true that there are very few tractors. They have been advised to auction the tractors and give them to the private sector, who will do a better job of providing ploughing services. They did a study and learned from other countries and opted to auction the tractors. After auctioning the tractors, she explained that “in the first year, the private sector did well, but in the second year we don’t know what happened, and in the third year the programme collapsed”. She said the government has, in past three years, now restarted the project by buying tractors: “The AfDB is providing loans for more tractors and constituencies. With time we will increase the numbers.”

On fertilisers, MWAF encourages farmers to use manure as they do not need to pay for this. But farmers incurred transport costs to use manure as the animals are kept far from where crop production takes place.



She agreed that farmers needed training on climate change. She said: “We have a CA project complimenting the dryland programme, encouraging minimum tillage. We have a poor ratio of extension workers to farmers. FAO recommends 1:700 but in Namibia we have 1:1,500. In some areas where we meet the ratio, distance is a problem. We are therefore encouraging NGOs, women’s groups and others to assist with training.”

Regarding the amount of resources that go to women, she said that Namibia was no different from what is happening elsewhere since most farmers are women. She indicated that at least 60-70% of government farm services are reaching women. However, she commented that they need to look at women as a proportion of total farmers. She admitted that they were not reaching all women and said that they were trying to address this, including the inclusion of women in budgets. The African Union (AU) has said that Namibia must increase its





agriculture budgets but Namibia had by far not reached those targets.

Most of the seed improvement at the ARIs was based on local, indigenous seed. Similarly, MWAf focuses on indigenous livestock. Sophia Kasheeta said there were only communal farmers, not commercial farmers, in crop growing areas. Most commercial farmers were not involved in seed production, as they focus on produce crops such as maize, for commercial purposes.

She said farmers who cannot afford inputs receive subsidies: “We have programmes targeted to vulnerable groups, including the San, those who cannot afford, who get free seeds and services. We would want to cover all farmers but given the constraints, we are trying to work together with NGOs in agriculture to cover where we cannot go. Currently we are covering about 40% with extension services.”

**Further questions came from the floor.** One participant asked: “How many women small-scale farmers do you support in one financial year, how much of the budget is annually allocated to these farmers, and what is being

allocated to them? If you say women are at the centre of your programme, we want to know how much resources. Governments say things they don’t do. You may have good intentions but those are not reality. Women fall off the agenda. We need to know the numbers, the money and the agendas.”

Another participant asked: “What seed is being produced and which companies are helping to breed? Are you using farmer-managed seed systems to help farmers access seeds?”

Another person pointed out that the Deputy Permanent Secretary did not reply as to whether MWAf promoted organic or synthetic fertilisers. They also asked: “On implementation, when will you implement what you are reading there?”

A participant from Namibia said that the region where they are living was not mentioned in the presentation: “Are there possibilities that we also access services? We have never received anything after ten years in the area. We hear on the radio about when to inject animals, we have water problems in our area but there is no help. So how do we

get involved and self-sufficient? I'm driving water 6km to my place, maybe only 2,000 litres for household use. When can I start planting even a backyard garden? On the ground there is no support. When we ask extension workers why they don't visit, he says only 500km per month is allocated and budget cuts are reducing even this."

Another participant asked whether seed choice took into account the amount of rain in an area. Another participant asked if MWAFF had a monitoring mechanism to establish whether or not targets were reached.

The **Deputy Permanent Secretary** responded to some of the questions and comments, as follows:

- 70% of 120,000 farmers, so about 80,000 female-headed households are being supported on dryland crop production.
- If grain coming from outside is GM it goes straight to miller and it must be labelled. Namibia does not allow growing of GM.
- If we had all the resources needed, we would say we are going to do this tomorrow. We have long term plans like the five-year National Development Plan (NDP). But it is dependent on resources to implement.
- On water, Namibia is one of the driest countries in sub-Saharan Africa. The water level in aquifers is also dropping. But there are activities we can do, such as vegetables, and backyard gardens using limited water. We are doing some dams, but they are of no use if there is no rainfall. More important is rainwater harvesting, we need water saving.
- There are monitoring and evaluation programmes both inside the Ministry of Planning, National Planning Commission, and internally MWAFF monitors activities through the Directorate of Planning and Business Development.
- Most distributed fertiliser is synthetic, but there is "a deliberate approach to do CA and promoting the use of manure, with the idea of slowly moving away from the use of synthetic fertiliser".

The meeting broke for lunch, and discussion and farmer sharing continued. The following captures the main points.

One participant said: "This morning we heard from women, then we gave government one and a half hours. This is a lot of time. We should not be afraid to speak truth to our governments if we need to. All governments say the FISPs are to support women farmers. But when you interrogate them you get vague answers. We hear about plans, projecting into the next five years, in the next ten years, maybe. We must listen with open ears to them. We must challenge them as some people did, saying you are not in our provinces. When they say there is no money in the budget for extension to reach you, how are they prioritising? Listen to what is happening. The government official couldn't even remember the amount of money that is supposed to come to farmers. But we must not only moan and groan."

The facilitators went on to explain the activities for the day: "We will have a session later on what we are doing to respond, and how we can learn from each other, and then a session about what we can do together. This morning sisters didn't stress what we have in this room today. There are farmer movements from many parts of Southern Africa, also from Ghana and Tanzania. These include UNAC, La Via Campesina (LVC), the Eastern and Southern African Farmers' Forum (ESAFF), there are many strong farmer movements here. This is an opportunity to build a common platform. In the last part we will talk about how we can build common action, what do we do?"

## Further country inputs

### Lesotho

**RWA Lesotho** said FISP "provides reduced price for maize seed and chemical fertilisers, and we are encouraged to do block farming. There are challenges. As small-scale farmers we feel that the subsidy programme is meant for the rich to make them richer, and the poor to get poorer. Farmers still have to pay something". They argued that FISP promotes corruption since "after voting for subsidies legislators became the first beneficiaries". They pointed out that FISP promotes monoculture, focussing on maize production and not on the seeds used by small-scale farmers; this compromises food sovereignty and nutrition. The approach taken by FISP "is producing land degradation as chemicals





are destroying soils. We have high levels of poverty because farmers have to buy seed every season. We are becoming dependent on chemical fertiliser.”

They argued that “Lesotho used to be food secure but since the subsidy programme where they are importing hybrid seed and chemical fertiliser we are experiencing food insecurity. Our country is in crisis or food shortage. China now brings food aid. We have a high unemployment rate. More small scale farmers are abandoning their farms to look for better opportunities. Seed is expensive as government is not doing anything to promote indigenous seed to produce and reuse. The FISP is undermining and destroying indigenous seed and knowledge. Seed is cultural. Something that can grow in Brazil is not likely to grow in Lesotho. Like if you breed something from the laboratory in America. If you separate seed from culture you are making a mess.”

### Swaziland

**RWA Swaziland** said that FISP is a crosscutting issue in SADC. In Swaziland, government implements FISP through Swaziland Agricultural Centres. However,

FISP is “not affordable for peasant farmers especially women because women don’t own land. Farmers must pay R2,500 each. Processes have changed so the government is giving the programme to. ... Payments are so strenuous and are hard to afford. Farmers get a card, they must fetch the card, go to the bank in town to pay and only then get access to the package and tractor services”. While small-scale farmers had discussed with extension officers for the programme to be decentralised, and provide access to subsidies for small-scale farmers. However, FISP “doesn’t promote indigenous seed and knowledge, only chemicals.” Furthermore, only 4% of the Swaziland budget goes to agriculture, mainly for sugar which is owned by the King.

### Zambia

**RWA Zambia** said that in 2017/18 input subsidies were allocated ZK1.7bn with a target of 100,000 small-scale farmers. The objective is to empower small-scale farmers “who are vulnerable but viable”. The subsidies prioritise household food security, but “the programme is oriented to private sector participation. Key players are the banks and the Zambia Integrated Management System

(ZIMS). Banks help with depositing funds, and the ZIMS helps with the network”.

Farmers receive e-vouchers and have to redeem a card via a special network. They explained that “there is a secret code for the card, and one farmer, one card. Private participation means agro-dealers are the suppliers. Ministry of Agriculture extension officers are used for data and farmer registration. FAO is the lead organisation.” They pointed out that the programme had challenges because “money doesn’t reach the vulnerable. Civil servants who are supposed to serve vulnerable farmers carry 50 cards”. Some farmers have not redeemed their card for two years, despite paying the money. They said “small-scale farmers are forced to negotiate with agro-dealers who swindle farmers, they hold the card and give the farmer a smaller amount. It is being used as a political weapon. If you speak against it, they say you are in the opposition party.”

The participants also explained that “soils are not producing enough. You get fertiliser and maize seed. The seed has a production potential of 10 tons, but we are producing 1-2 tons. It doesn’t make sense if you are promoting food security. Our soils are very acidic. If the maize becomes yellow or has stunted growth, there is a problem. There is no soil testing. The only testing is 200km from Lusaka where the testing machines are.” Because the cards are only active during the maize season, farmers end up buying maize seed. The herbicides provided also make the soil inactive for “a residue period ... [which] can affect the germination”. They said it would be better to diversify allocation to support environmentally friendly, sustainable systems.

As one participant explained “It is only us who can see what is happening on the ground. It will not provide support. The subsidy comes with a floor price for grain, forgetting that others produce without the subsidy.”

### South Africa

**RWA South Africa** said she comes from the Northern Cape, in the desert, where it is very dry. She described their struggles: “We have tried to make life better. I have not gone to school, I spent only two years at school. My



circumstances were difficult. I have heard many things this morning. In 2009, I was community-builder of the year. I wish I could speak all the languages to intimately share my experiences. When the government doesn’t take me seriously, I get fed up when I keep going back and asking in respectful way and nothing happens, then I go crazy. I go from district to province to national and I will do it respectfully. We have a small plot of 50m x 50m and a bigger one of 156 ha. We are 15 women working together. To get any benefits from government you must have airtime on your phone.”

### Tanzania

In **Tanzania**, between 2008 and 2014 the FISP used a voucher system. After government saw that programme had a lot of challenges it started targeting small-scale farmers through village executive officers who provided vouchers to farmers. However, the system was complicated and farmers did not always get vouchers. Fertiliser is now provided by agro-dealers, but agro-dealers demand high prices, even in farmers have vouchers. A participant explained that under the new system (since 2014), “the village executive officer is the secretary of the committee to decide who gets the subsidy. There are meant to be three women on the committee. Who benefits? Sometimes favouritism is there.” Farmers also don’t get inputs at the right time.



## Mauritius

In **Mauritius**, farmers are in an eco-socialist organisation. Based on its history of slavery and colonialism, the country mainly produced sugar cane for Europe. Most (90%) of indigenous forests were destroyed, and now small-scale farmers are trying to produce vegetables because “three quarters of what we eat is imported”. Government aims to encourage agriculture, but farmers need a permit, and the government is selling land to build cities. At the same time, “children of small scale farmers don’t want to work in the farms, they prefer to go to the towns. As a result, there is no transmission from elders to the new generations.”

The participants explained that organisations are trying to raise awareness: “We are fighting many struggles for food sovereignty. We also include seed rights, nature rights and animal rights in our work. Vegetable growers all use pesticides and fertilisers to meet market demand. We share seed door-to-door and in open meetings.”

More people want to produce their own food due to an increase in illness and disease because of what we are eating such as GM, processed and modified food.

## Zimbabwe

**Fambidzanai** on behalf of **Zimbabwe Seed Sovereignty Programme (ZSSP)** made comments on seed sovereignty in Zimbabwe: “The major challenge is perpetual dependency, with suppressed and suppressor. Our minds have been colonised to think this is a workable solution. There is a question of knowledge production. This is a playing ground for politicians, especially on nutrition and a focus on commodity products. Zimbabwe has a rise in malnutrition and infant mortality. Programmes focus on three or four main crops, they are not looking at all crops.

“Zimbabwe has command agriculture, with the use of pesticides and herbicides. It is becoming an issue. Farmers have no knowledge on how to handle this. There is manipulation by government.

“The World Bank’s Business Enabling Index gives countries higher ratings if they promote certification systems for seed. This is a

reductionist rather than holistic approach focusing on quantity rather than quality e.g. nutrition. We are working to promote alternatives based on seed sovereignty. We support seed markets, for farmers to be proud to own and exchange seed. We support community seed growers who are growing seed for selling in the community. Agroecology is embedded in all these activities. It limits external inputs and focuses on the use of existing materials. We have an agroecology diploma as an alternative for extension workers.”

## Alternatives

After farmers shared their experiences of the FISPs, a panel discussion highlighted alternatives and what organisations are doing in response.

**Women and Land in Zimbabwe** are doing study circle groups to bring women together to learn about the issues. They have developed seed banks using traditional crops, they select seeds, put them in the banks, and in planting season farmers will buy and grow. They are part of the Rural Women’s Land Movement. They meet every year. Farmers bring and share seeds. They have expanded to include women from the region. We started income saving groups which we share to buy and to pay for labour.

**UNAC** shared their work in Mozambique: “In my association we produce, select and keep indigenous seed. We have seed banks. Farmers exchange and sell the seeds. The farmers choose the better seed, they know which is the best, they select the seed. We used to rely on the seed government supplied to us. Sometimes they brought those seeds too late.

“It would be good that we also start producing indigenous seed. UNAC elsewhere is producing indigenous seed of cereals, legumes and tubers. We started six years ago. We had someone from the small-scale farmers’ movement in Brazil (Movimento dos Pequenos Agricultores, MPA) who trained us. Today we can do it ourselves. We also produce our own organic fertiliser. We don’t buy chemical fertilisers.



“We have trained our own extension workers. We don’t rely on government, because they never get there. Most UNAC extension workers are farmers. We have chosen agroecology. We face droughts and floods. We are feeling these issues of climate change long ago. We have looked for new strategies and alternatives to keep on producing.”

**RWA Zambia** are trying to promote indigenous seeds: “We come up with seed banks, then we want to do an integrated way of not only doing grain farming but also small livestock like goats and chickens for manure to apply in field. We have groundnuts and agroforestry. We plant nitrogen fixing species. We are also doing nurseries so we can distribute to farmers and plant. We are doing integrated farming, not only maize but other crops and animals. We want to build masses by doing awareness. We collect information on the challenges on FISP so when we start campaigning we are a big network in Zambia.”

**Zimbabwe Smallholder Organic Farmers Forum (Zimsoff)/LVC** in Zimbabwe said: “To overcome the subsidies from government we have introduced a programme on seed. Most farmers didn’t have seed. Indigenous varieties were getting lost because farmers are using conventional hybrid seed. Farmers identified

lost varieties which they then sourced from elsewhere. We distributed to farmers to produce and share with others.

“We have an agroecology school in Masvingo and are aiming to replicate it elsewhere in the country. Farmers come together to share and learn. We have seed fairs at cluster level leading to a national seed and food festival where we invite other organisations. This has been going on for five years. We also meet with consumers to introduce organic and traditional food.”

The **Peasant Farmers’ Association of Ghana (PFAG)** offered congratulations to RWA and said: “I am very impressed. I can see a demonstration of how powerful women can be if we choose to be. I am impressed with the messages being sent out to Bayer, Monsanto etc. They think that without GMOs Africa will starve to death. We have to prove them wrong.

“FISP was introduced in Ghana in 2008 to mitigate the effects of the food crisis. There was civil strife in some countries because of food shortages. The FISP was a smart subsidy directed to small-scale farmers to increase production and income and to lift them out of poverty. But we know how that went. In 2012 it also included commercial





farmers. Government was subsidising 70% of costs, mostly chemical fertilisers. When it was opened up, large-scale farmers grabbed everything. Small-scale farmers were left out of the subsidy programme. The subsidy was changed and is now only 24%, with farmers paying the rest.

Government has introduced a new agricultural policy called 'Planting for Food and Jobs'. The political agenda is to increase income and productivity and jobs in agriculture. The FISP is being used to import chemical fertiliser and seed. Farmers have become dependent. We thought there was too much chemical fertiliser. We also fight against the introduction of GMOs. We thought it was all a plan to introduce GMOs. We have to move out of it and find our own food sovereignty and seed rights.

"We partnered with the Centre for Indigenous Knowledge and Organisational Development (CIKOD) in advocating for an exit for chemical fertiliser. They are spending so much, and it is not sustainable. In the short term we will exit, so are looking for alternatives. We did a mapping of small scale farmers who were already doing agroecology/organic farming. We commissioned research because we need evidence to show a better alternative. The big thing that came out was that even with the

subsidy, there was no significant change in yield. Even without the subsidy there would have been a yield increase.

"We met with scientists and policy makers and shared the report with them. We called for reform of the subsidy. We started going into agroecology programmes. We have a demo farm to educate farmers on how to grow food without using chemical fertiliser as proof that we can grow good food sustainably. FISP will not last because of climate change and food sovereignty, with control of our own food systems.

"We are asking government to reform by investing more in agroecological practices, organic fertiliser, sustainable farming, training extension on agroecology. On the way forward, we have made some achievements. We now have 10% subsidies to organic fertiliser. We also promised to support local seed growers to grow local seed. Last year government imported seed with the excuse that local farmers could not meet demand, but they have promised to support us this year. We are using organic pesticides to combat fall army worm (FAW).

"We have set up a movement. It took a long time for the subsidies to stick, and it will also take a long time to ground agroecology. We are building a movement. We are

aiming for agroecological hubs in regions and districts. Farmers have become used to chemical fertiliser and will need to reorient. Agroecology is nothing new, it is what our forefathers were doing.”

**LVC Southern and East Africa** shared an open letter which is a result of one and a half years of work on climate justice and peasant agroecology. LVC needed to put something to government and the public. The plan is to submit the letter to SADC and East African Community (EAC) governments as an attachment to the Summit Declaration. We are asking you to join us by signing onto the declaration. We will also do this in East Africa.

**RWA Zambia** said: “We must continue with advocacy even when things are tough. We have seen some changes in the turn to the e-voucher, especially nutrition and diversification. It is not only fertiliser and maize but other things too. But now there is a shift back to the old system, with 40% to the old FISP, and 60% to the e-voucher. We are advocating to government to stay on the e-voucher. RWA released an issue brief in 2018 with ten other Zambian organisations. The message is that we ask the government to ensure that when they make a decision they must consult us first. We are asking for solidarity. Last week we were at the national agriculture show in Lusaka advocating on climate change and agroecology.”

## Way forward

Participants grouped into clusters to discuss key priorities for further work. Below is a summary of what was discussed.

### Agroecology

We should pose the discussion as reform rather than a total alternative. We should seek a shift in at least some resources used away from Green Revolution type of thinking towards agroecology. What do we mean by agroecology? We must look across seed, soil, water, etc. A policy change to agroecology includes foundational innovations in agroecology. If we only concentrate on seed but the soil is dead, it won't work.

We can focus on four foundational agroecological innovations: soil organic matter, improved local seed (short cycle), soil and water conservation, and intercropping/rotation. These would produce enough of a change to result in a shift. We can propose an increasing annual percentage of FISP for direct incentives to autonomous farmers who adopt a locally appropriate set of agroecological practices based on the four foundational principles. Farmers then get a payment after showing proof.

Food sovereignty through promoting and practicing agroecology and organic production including:

- Seed - promoting seed fairs, seed shows, seed exchange, seed banks, indigenous seed, legumes such as cowpeas, promotion of small grains for climate change, fruit, local (indigenous) seed in FISPs to come from local producers and distribute to small scale farmers, labelled packages with varieties, government must not provide their own seed or promote seed companies
  - Soil - organic fertiliser, compost, cattle and chicken manure, tea manure, agroforestry, shift away from chemical fertilisers
  - Water - promote irrigation – solar, boreholes, rivers and dams
- Integrated crop, livestock and agroforestry production
- Organic, botanic and biopesticides
  - Local food markets that support wholesome, nutritious local foods
  - Address the social and economic dimensions of agroecology including women, environment and climate change, water and agriculture, food, seed and land rights.

### Organisation

- Movement building, awareness and campaigns on agroecology, community level group formation to share, local, national and regional coalitions
- Create a pool of evidence that agroecology is a practical, implementable, better alternative to FISP
- Share indigenous knowledge, knowledge of seed value
- Farmer-to-farmer training, exchange visits
- Local agroecology hubs
- Monitoring and evaluation tools in place





- Policy engagement at all levels and dialogue with policy makers
- Community radio
- Seed and food fairs, seed shows

It was noted there is a tendency to advocate on specific themes, for example some work on seed, or anti-GMO, or land, or pesticides, or women. We need a broad movement that can bring about a change in government policy, with the emphasis on movement including farmers, consumer groups, NGOs, and scientists in agroecology. We need to build a wider coalition. It is not only about food production but about the food system. How do we connect with consumers? We must look for entry points.

When other groups are not happy they go into the streets, but farmers do not go into the streets. We need solidarity and to be united.

## Summary

The gathering heard from smallholder farmers about the need for diverse support from government. Weaknesses with the FISPs include that they ignore indigenous seed and knowledge, there is corruption and political manipulation, only some people benefit, and it is producing a food system that does not support producers or consumers.

Alternatives include:

- Build the agroecology movement and coalition, build evidence and do advocacy;
- Evidence of benefits of agroecology based on core principles and integrated production systems;
- Farmer-to-farmer learning and sharing;
- Soil – compost, manure, water conservation;
- Seed – diverse indigenous seed, seed banks, seed fairs, seed sharing;
- Biological pest management;
- The right for people to move freely in the region.

## Draft statement

A statement was drafted from the meeting but not finalised with participants (see separate document). Key elements of the draft statement were included in a wider Communique developed as part of the overall SAPSN People's Summit process (see <http://www.southernafricatrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/2018-SADC-People-Summit-Communique-Final.doc1-1.pdf>).

The People's Summit Communique has 7 content areas, of which the section on "gender justice and empowerment – land and agriculture" included the following on FISP:

- Governments should meet their Maputo Declaration commitments by allocating 10% of national budgets to agricultural and rural development policy implementation;
- Stop the use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in agriculture;
- Diversify inputs available through subsidy programmes to support small holder farmers particularly the rural women farmers;
- Limit and eventually phase out subsidies on multinational corporate inputs and shift to subsidies for diverse, locally produced agricultural inputs.

Participants at the meeting were also part of a march organised through SAPSN to publicly read the Communique arising from the deliberations. The Namibian President, Hage Geingob, taking the SADC chair this year, later received the Communique from a delegation who handed it over to him personally in Windhoek. Mr Geingob committed to ongoing interactions with farmers and CSOs while Namibia chairs SADC.

## Group discussion with Groundswell International and Peasant Farmers' Association of Ghana (PFAG) on Ghanaian activities on FISPs and agroecology

On 16 August, a group of about 20 met to hear from Groundswell and PFAG about the work they have been doing since the start of 2017 on FISPs and agroecology. These are some notes taken during the discussion.

Groundswell is working with partners in Burkina Faso and Ghana to reform FISP. All the things we heard about the negative effects, support for the Green Revolution, the negative effects of fertiliser and seeds on the soil, corruption, fertiliser companies etc. are the same in West Africa. The basic issues are the same. How do we mobilise to reform FISP? We don't want to say we stop the subsidy because many farmers depend on it, so farmers would not be ready to support that. We will share on how we organised ourselves in the case of Ghana to reform the FISP.

One starting point was to ask who are the **existing organisations** in Ghana that would be favourably inclined, who are like-minded, and already oriented to agroecology to join us to reform the FISP? Ghana is a large country with 40 ethnic groups in ten regions. We knew some people doing agroecology but didn't have clear knowledge of who the different organisations were.

So CIKOD, PFAG and Groundswell decided to start with **mapping**. Here we went out to every region to identify who are different organisations already engaged in agroecology, organic, etc. and who are not supportive of the Green Revolution type of thinking. We recruited somebody and identified some organisations.

What we expected was that if we found one group that is doing agroecology, they would



know the others working in their region and then we would go to them. But we found that in fact people did not know much about who else was working on agroecology. In the end we got a list of organisations from every region. What we can take away from the experience is that knowledge and understanding of who is doing what is fragmented, activities are isolated, they are not unified. If we want to reform FISP, we first have to get unity. One organisation cannot do it alone.

At the same time, we decided that it would be important to **build evidence to support agroecology** and to prove that FISP is not working, is having a negative effect on soil fertility, is not increasing yields, etc. We got a highly credible professor from the agribusiness department at the University of Ghana to do research. We researched on the cost of a bag of chemical fertiliser and the increase in the value of production, and whether production value was equal to the input costs. The answer was no, the increase in production was not enough to cover the costs. The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) from the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) did some studies too, with similar conclusions. Overall Ghana was spending an enormous part of its overall budget for chemical fertilizers and not achieving any significant increase in overall food production.

Then we **convened** people from all the regions of Ghana together **to share the results**. People got to know each other for the first time in many cases. In a second workshop we gathered scientists, researchers, Department of Agriculture and others to share the main issues and that FISPs are not leading to sustainable development. We also invited the media.

In the **second phase**, which started some months ago, we reconvened again to decide what is next? What should we plan to do? One main idea that emerged was to develop a **hub** or a hot spot for the promotion and spread of agroecology **in each region**. In doing this, our idea was that this process would help us raise awareness of the issues with the existing FISP and generate widespread support for reforming it. At this

meeting a second idea was to create stronger linkages between these hotspots. We made a **declaration to form an agroecology network**. One of the key objectives of this network would be to reform the FISP, and to convince government to redirect resources to agroecology.

What specifically do we mean by agroecology within our network? Each organisation was given the opportunity to say what they were doing and what they understood by agroecology, and how the strategies and practices vary in different contexts across Ghana.

In some places Conservation Agriculture (CA) may be practiced. Mulching is done in a semi-humid zone. Farmers are not ploughing but sow directly into the mulch.

In the north, there is work on agroforestry. This is not just about planting trees, there is a detailed methodology. It is called **Farm Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR)**. Many farmers were cutting all the trees to clear the land for farming except for cash crops, using slash and burn. We proposed they leave the trees and bushes in the fields. The stumps grow shoots, which can grow very quickly into trees that can provide mulch, organic matter, improve water absorption and other benefits

This FMNR approach builds on traditional knowledge. We asked: "How did people maintain soil fertility in the past?" They used fallowing, leaving the land idle, and shifting cultivation. The land rests and becomes more fertile. No fertiliser is needed. Over time, nature through the trees and natural vegetation covers the soil with mulch. The trees grow back because the roots are still there. They bring nutrients up from the deep soil and leaves drop and form a mulch. When it rains, the moisture stays in the soil. This is how it used to work in the past.

But now there is lack of land. So we can't do the same but we can do it in an adapted way. We call it simultaneous fallow. You don't cut the trees again and try to burn them. Rather leave a few main stems to grow and it becomes a tree. Most farmers still have roughly about 20-40 trees on their land. These are mostly economic trees that farmers



wanted to keep in order to harvest different fruits and other tree-based products. With FMNR, we urged farmers to go up to 80 or 120 trees on their land. But at the same time, they need to learn how to manage trees in a different way, to benefit, rather than hinder food crops. The aim is for farmers to allow the trees to do their work, let them penetrate the soil.

While this builds on traditional ecological knowledge, FMNR is a highly innovative way to manage trees and crops together for mutual benefit. In some places there are so few trees left that women farmers need to burn millet stalks or cow manure for cooking, rather than leave it to improve the soil. Or women farmers have to walk very far to find firewood. But with FMNR, rather than cutting the whole tree, farmers prune most of the lower branches and let the leaves fall on the ground. The cut wood is used for fuel, which is a major benefit for women. Sometimes enough fuel wood is produced even to sell for cash. But farmers can still plant on the land, and harvest crops because the trees are heavily pruned. After harvest, though the trees grow back.

This is just one new agroecology technique. Farmers did not know about it. In the more humid zones, for agroecology, farmers are also practicing no till agriculture.

We give these examples to show that **sharing amongst farmers** of what they are doing is key to motivate them to support the agroecology network. If our network only focused on advocacy, this may not be enough to sustain participation. People are interested in what others are doing. We **facilitate learning** between different regions of Ghana. We have also deepened our understanding of agroecology and the wider principles of agroecology.

**What we are hoping to do.** Our idea is that to be effective, our network needs to be decentralized, to be tailored to specific contexts and needs, but strongly coordinated for messaging, principles and advocacy. We have started to encourage the creation of a sub-network based in each region, but linking them together. Now we are working on key messages and policy changes we want from government.





But again, if people are just meeting on policy there is not enough to keep them interested. So we aim to form **hubs of practice in each region**. These can consist of four or five organizations, from which one is chosen to be a leader. It is decentralized. Farmers and organizations meet together and learn from each other. Our network will try to provide some resources to enable farmer-to-farmer training, and applying some of the new, low cost, knowledge based techniques, and to coordinate the process.

We call people together on how to do a campaign. That is how we are mobilising. We had a meeting three weeks ago. It was very inspiring. People saw some new ways of farming they didn't previously know. Currently 49% of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food budget goes to chemical fertiliser. We will advocate for a portion of this to be used to support agroecology. Rather than an input subsidy, we propose **incentives to farmers to adopt innovations** specifically:

- Soil organic matter (SOM),
- Crop rotation and intercropping,
- Soil and water conservation to prevent erosion,
- Use of improved short cycle seeds.

There is already evidence that some combination of these agroecology practices

can create a major improvement in soil fertility and yields. The idea we are discussing is that in each hub, to provide incentives to farmers on a pilot basis to apply these practices and get money based on some defined measures. We will help with training. In Ghana, as what we heard here, there are very few government agricultural extension workers. So, the network will organise training of farmers in each hub to learn the methods.

We are still to discuss. But emerging ideas are that it is not individual farmers, but communities who should apply. Then they set up a monitoring committee and they recruit the farmers to train. There must be sufficient numbers who are interested, and women must be included. Then government pays those farmers once they adapt or apply those new methods. We are still discussing the form of incentive. Rather than money on fertiliser, we plan to call for spending money on agroecology incentives.

This is an overview of what CIKOD, Groundswell and PFAG have done since the end of 2016.

The Peasant Farmers' Association of Ghana (PFAG) started by looking at climate change and climate resilient agriculture. We started campaigning. Our government is chair of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We are looking at small scale farmers' resilience to climate change. When we started we realised that if we don't stop government from bringing in too many chemicals, we will not be able to do agroecology. We diverted or added FISP into our climate change resilience and adaptation programme. We used every opportunity we could get, using media to send messages to government to rethink. We invited the media who interviewed us about what was this about. We told them government needs to rethink FISP. Government itself is constrained because FISP is political, it is used to get votes. We don't know which government is going to stop it even though it is too costly. The current government is so into FISP that they have started new agenda which is Green Revolution. The fertiliser subsidy was 24% and is now up to 50%. They are bringing in more subsidised fertiliser even though there is no money. This is our weapon. If we tell them

the research shows half of the agricultural budget is going to subsidies but there are other needs, for example post-harvest losses, roads, etc. These are windows of opportunity.

PFAG participates in the annual March Against Monsanto. This year with partners instead of demonstrating against Monsanto, we organised many farmers calling for agroecology. We sent a petition to the President to relook at the budget and investment in FISP and to divert some resources to agroecology practices. PFAG is one partner in an alliance. There are others too. We all are already doing things. We are building a common agenda on FISP, to bring together a wider coalition of organisations in each region. We can influence district and local processes because they are having more influence over budgets due to decentralisation. We bring politicians from local government to see, then link to local government budgets and build local coalitions. We hope that regions form their own networks and raise their own money.

It is important to involve mass-based farmer organisations. The campaign got credibility from PFAG involvement. An objective is the formation of an agroecology movement. We have had marches and mobilisation from local level upwards, and awareness raising.

There were some open discussions and questions following the inputs from Groundswell and PFAG.

Q: Is the work suitable for those with large farms? We have **small fields** now because communal lands are being sold.

A: It is more suitable for small farms because big farms use tractors and trees get in the way. 70% of farmers are on 2ha or less of land each yet they produce most food for Ghana. We want to transform all agriculture but starting with small scale farmers to get a mass of people and those are the ones affected by food insecurity, who can't afford fertiliser, and are on poorer quality land. The Farm Managed Natural Regeneration methodology is designed and best suited for small-scale farmers.

With agroecology practice your farmer will not need to buy fertiliser and will not need to



cut trees. It saves money because soil is being fertilised naturally. It may need additional organic input. Everything that rots is organic. Cover crops are central. Trees are also cover crops. It is economical for small scale farmers. They can grow multiple crops, beans, maize, sorghum, pawpaw, etc. This can all be done of an agroecology farm. Everything is green, well nourished, and tastes good. Farmers can sell the crops. There are also other activities as spin offs e.g. beekeeping, snails, small animals can graze on the land, integrated farming, and traditional medicines.

Q: The main challenge for crop farming in Namibia is **lack of water**. We have to pay for water, we can only plant when it is raining.

A: The Sahel is in Burkina Faso. It is arid. It rains for four months almost every day, then occasionally for two months, and then stops for 6 months or more. It is very dry. In the dry season you can also farm but you need water. But we do not agree that the best way is to invest in big irrigation. Instead, our approach is for micro water points in as many villages as possible. What some of our partners are doing is to put in a wide diameter well as a water point. We help negotiate long-term security for the land around the well to be given to women farmers. The water is used to



produce vegetables in the dry season. What we have learned is to take steps to prevent village land owners to give the women land until it is improved, then take the land back. So one way to avoid this is to involve local municipal government to draw up a by law or an agreement to say that as long as women use the land it cannot be taken away. The municipal local council is to confirm this. But we must provide a water supply. Small-scale water points are provided that women farmers can use to provide high value, nutritious vegetables. Farmers also do:

- Water harvesting for later use in the dry season;
- Use of leaves and mulch to save water;
- Boreholes – but not everyone can afford;
- Drip irrigation, using upside down bottles with a tiny hole in the lid to drip next to the plant. You put the water in the bottle and leave it to soak in slowly rather than broadcasting where it is not immediately needed;
- Over time an area can become naturally green;
- Circle gardens, where you combine your fertile soil in one place, and use of recycled water.

We look to agroecology to find innovations and techniques that will work. We can't do it alone, we learn from others in the area.

Q: In Zambia we do **extension** on permaculture working through schools. We work with them the whole year. If we wanted to include working with communities, how long would it take?

A: Not long. In all communities, there will be someone who is interested. Identify these people and then do farmer-to-farmer exchange. Bring farmers to see, then take farmers to support those who want to practice. It needs a small amount to cover costs of travel and it relies on decentralised spreading. It needs some support. We must mobilise farmers themselves to teach other farmers. In each hub, we can identify a champion farmer and give her or him a small

incentive to teach other farmers. This money does not go to hire extension workers.

Q: How do I use **manure**? I have chickens, and have four 50kg bags of manure, and also goat manure.

A: You must go with caution. 2ha will need a huge number of goats if manure is your sole source of fertiliser. Most farmers who have animals can triple or double the volume of their manure by combining with litter, compost, etc. You must let the manure decompose. It is a start but not enough to fertilise larger pieces of land. You can also use mulching, trees, cover crops, and other ways to add to manure. Maize and other crops will need other methods to add organic matter.

Q: What does **decomposed** mean?

A: Decomposed means the manure, if it is mixed with other residues, decomposes through natural ecological processes into compost. Raw manure can do harm if it applied directly. It is too strong and doesn't mix with the soil. It can be acid.

Q: What is the **difference between agroecology and CA**?

A: agroecology is a broad term of a family of different kinds of approaches that are based on working with nature, using ecological processes, such as permaculture or agroforestry, and CA is also a kind of agroecology, but focused on mulch, crop rotation, and no till. CA is one approach to agroecology amongst many.

There are common principles of agroecology. We work with nature, and do ecological recycling, using natural predators and ecological processes. It is knowledge intensive rather than input intensive.

We do the work at country level, and then decentralise in the country. We identify groups that are doing it and take it forward it together.



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