

Chaseyama Agro-ecology Newsletter

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Improving rural household food Security and Nutrition

Editorial



Shadreck Masawi

It was a difficult task to choose which theme to focus on during this month's newsletter because of many inspiring events which are happening in Chaseyama and the entire low veld.

New farmers are joining the Permaculture club, water and soil management practises are happening, farmers are celebrating their success this farming season among others. So to really come up with a theme to focus on was so difficult.

This month we then decide to look at the thematic issue on improving rural household food security and nutrition.

We thought it good to share with the wider community how people in the low veld are coping in terms of securing food at household level and then to look deep into the issue of nutrition basing on their food production system.

Co-editors: Daniel Muchati, Jestina Matsitsiro, Gift Hanyana.

Improving household Food Security through small grains production



For decades now, farmers from the low veld areas have been surviving from growing of small grains such as sorghum, millet, rapoko, groundnuts, round nuts, cowpeas among others. Small grains have formed part of the main diet in these areas. As one of the areas which is located in Climatic region five where rainfalls are very low, soils are poor in terms of both nutrition and water holding capacity; farmers from Chaseyama have seen their farming systems basing on small grains production.

The production of small grains in the Low veld has taken ups and downs from the previous decades because not all farmers have been considering them as productive crops. It was so also because many farmers were giving trust in maize which is the staple food hence forcing their way into its production.

Disadvantaged by poor soils and little rainfall received in the region which does not support full-fledged maize production, most farmers have been facing food shortage with others relying on the government donated food supplies yearly.

According to Mr Obert Mubururu a

farmer from Ward 3, most people in his area have been constantly trying to grow maize but it failed them almost every year. He also added that, most farmers' blame poor timing on maize production rather than looking at which crops can be supported in their region.



Rapoko is one of the crops which do well in areas which receives little rainfall

As a result of the need to secure food in the low veld area, projects on embracing small grains were introduced by PORET (Participatory Organic Research Extension Training Trust) and other organisations working in the same field of agro-ecology. Farmers were trained in organic farming whereby they were advised to use compost and other biological fertilisers. They were also advised on growing small grains such as millet, sorghum which copy with the climatic conditions in their region. Mr Nyikahadzovi an Agritex Supervisor said during a field day in Rupise that, "farming is not all about maize production; it is about growing the right crops at the right place at

the right time." Growing of these small grains has led to a stable increase in the food security. Other farmers said that from the time they started growing small grains, their production in terms of food security increased two folds with others saying three folds.

From the message delivered by Mr Mapenya during a field day in Mutidzawanda Village, he said that, small grains production has helped his family to secure food; even during the time of harsh climatic conditions; they were still able to get something for the family.

Another farmer who hosted a field day this year, Mrs Murawu said that; for the past years, she was able to provide food on the table for her family through growing small grains such as sorghum. During the time when others were crying for food, her family was really enjoy a full basket.

Small grains improve household food security as they are drought resistant and they grow fast. There are sorghum varieties such as mukadzi usaenda which matures early so that farmers are able to get food during the time when most farmers will be busy buying food from the shops. For some families, they are helping to reduce the expenses of buying food for breakfast and lunch as there will be food on the table to do so. A farmer, who has, sorghum, beans,

cowpeas, monk beans, pumpkins, blackjack; his/her plate is full and they find it unnecessary to buy bread for the breakfast and rice for the lunch time.



Cowpeas do well in Chaseyama alongside monk beans and sorghum.

Small grains are the drive shafts for food security in the low veld but others are still finding it difficult to grow them as a panacea to food shortage. Some farmers have been saying that they have tried small grains but they were still not able to produce enough. After a visit by PORET Outreach Officers to the fields of some farmers, they discovered that the problem was not in the production of the small grains itself but it was mainly majored in the land preparation and good application of fertilisers. "Most farmers are still applying artificial fertilisers which has seen their crops dying," said Kumbirai Dube an Outreach Officer. To really address the situation, Mr Dube advised for more farmer to farmer exchange so that farmers learn from each other to help improve food security which is already in motion.

Food Security and balanced diet

Kudya kwakakwana kunovaka muviri

Food security and Balanced Diet; mutsara wechirungu unoreva zvinhu zviviri zvakada kuti fananei uye zvinofambidzana. Kazhinji-zhinji varimi vanowanzotarisa kuti mudzimba mavo mune chikafu chekudya chakakwana ere zvisinei nekuti chikafu ichi chinemapato mangani ezvinovaka utano. Zvichireva izvo kuti varimi vazhinji vanoda kurima kuti vawane chokudya pagore vasina basa nezvinovaka muiri.

Munzvimbo yeChakowa, Rupise neMhandarume, varimi vazhinji varikurima mhunga, nemapfunde zvinova zvinovapa anonzi macarbohydrates asi pasina mamwe mapato. Izvi zvinongobatsira kupedza nzara asi hazviunze utano mumba.



Kumwe Kwekudya kunovaka muviri

Ndizvo tinopedzisira toona vana vave kuita matumbu mahombe uye kurwara-rwara. Nekuda kwekushomeka kweutano munzvimbo, varimi vanokurudzirwa kudya chikafu chine mapato ose anodikanwa mumuviri. Izvi tinozviwana muzvirimwa zvatinokwanisa kurima muminda yedu.

Pafield day yakaitwa kwamai nababa Murawu mubhuku rasabhu Makuneyi, **Ambuya Johane** vakakorokotedza varimi ava nekuti vakakwanisa kurima zvinhu zvinovapa kudya kwegore rose uye zvichivavaka muiri.



Judith Bhingadhadhi achitaura nezvekudya kunovaka muviri



Tsvakai Dzokurasa

Chekutanga, mumunda mavo maive ne Mapfunde ayo anobatsira kupa macarbohydrates anotipa kuwana simba nekukura Zvakanaka. Vanatora Mapfunde avo voadzvura kuti achene vozoendesa kuchigayo. Nemapfunde avo vanokwanisa kubika Sadza uye maheu vonwa zvavo vachitandara nemhuri. Varimi ava vanofarirawo kudya Sadza rezviyo sezvo richipa utano uye kurapa.

Pamba pavo vanorima nzungu idzo dzinovabatsira nedovi uye mutetenerwa. Nzungu dzinotipa mafats ayo anodiwa kutipa kudziirwa mumuviri. Mafats aya kana kuti mafuta tikamatora akawanda uye akagadzirwa neumwewo mutowo anotikangansa utano. Saka varimi vakakuya dovi ravo vatowana kudya kwakanaka.

Nzungu dzinoshandiswawozve pakubika zvekudya runghanani iya yatinoti breakfast.

Varimi ava vanorimawozve nyimo nebhinzi. Zvirimwa izvi zvinoita Zvakanaka munzvimbo dzisina mvura nekuti dzinokurumidza kukura. Nyimo nebhinzi zvinotipa maproteins ayo anodiwa pakuvaka muviri yedu. Bhinzi dzinobikwa dzodyiwa nesadza kana mupunga zviri zvimwechete nenyimo.

Baba namai Murawu vanorima miriwo yakaita semubooru uye munyemba. Panguva yezvhizha vanokowa muriwo weguku kana kuti mutsine, munyevhe, uye mbuyayedhongi. Mirivo iyi inotipa anonzi mavitamins ayo anodiwa mumuviri wedu kusimbisa mabhonzu nekuwedzera ropa.

Pamashoko aAmbuya Johane, vakataura pamusoro pezvumwe zvirimwa zvakaita semagaka, ipwa, manwiwa izvo zvinobatsira pautano. Vakakurudzira varimi kuti varamba vachirima zvirimwa izvozvi nekuti zvinotipautano.

Kubva pamasoko akaturwa **namai Nduna** pafieldday iyi, vakatizve zvakanakosha kurima zvifuyo zvakaita sehuku nembudzi nemhaka yekuti zvinoita munzvimbo isina mvura yakawanda uye zvinobatsira pakurarama kuburikidza nekutengesa uchitenga zvekudya nekupfeka.



Mbudzi ndeimwe yemaprojects anoita kunzvimbo dzisina mvura yakawanda.

Nyaya iyi yakanyorwa na Shadreck Masawi ichibatsiranwa nevarimi vanoti Obert Mubururu, Uye Mifanidzo yakatorwa na Eleonora Matare uyo aiva muenzi anoremekedzwa pafield day iyi.

Discoveries, Important Quotations and messages

The Following are the popular quotations, messages and discoveries made and noted down by farmers during the field days.

Field Day Shati Village: Tendaimambo ward 2;

The Chaseyama Permaculture Club Chairperson Mrs Naume Mandonga explained that small grains are resilient and easily adapt to harsh climatic conditions.

Field Day Nechitima Village: Mr Zenda Ward 3;

We used to grow maize but due to the climatic conditions in this region, we thought it wise to grow sorghum instead.

Field Day Murazvu B: Solomon Tiayi Ward 2;

Mr Tiayi explained that, peace at family level is the key to development. When you are at peace, you can easily realise problems arising which you will say they are not problems but rather opportunities for development.

Field Day Jinga Village: Mr Pamberi Ward 3;

Mr Pamberi said that, erosion was speeded up by heavy trucks which were cutting across his field and left some big trails. He is also experiencing a change in production; where he was getting 20 bags of sorghum he is now getting only 5 bags of sorghum.

The Secret about Groundnuts

They can be your golden ball

Groundnuts are one of the productive crops in the low veld areas. Few groundnuts growers' harvest tonnes and tonnes of them yearly. However, as this being the case, groundnuts production has never been taken seriously by farmers from the region because of the mixture of lack of knowledge about groundnuts production and misconceptions of its requirements. There are few farmers who have seriously taken groundnuts as a golden crop which can change someone's life.

The first important issue to note about groundnuts is that most people thought that it cannot be organically grown and let's dismiss this as a misconception. Groundnuts themselves provide nitrogen to the soil as well they need compost manure to grow and produce high yields.

This year 2018, farmers seemed to improve in their undertaking of groundnuts. During a field day at Mr Maringe in Rupise, the **Agritex Supervisor** for the low veld told farmers about the importance of groundnuts. It was a follow up comment to the good hectarage of groundnuts which has drawn most people to come and see the good work by farmers. The field day was attended by PORET volunteers and officials, village heads, government departments, visitors from the international community.

According to MR Nvukahadzovi, groundnuts play an important role in our everyday life both to the other natural resources and to the human community at large.

The first important category is on the attitude of groundnuts is in its holistic relation with the soil and other crops. Groundnuts helps to fix nitrogen into the soil which is a very important nutrient needed. The remains of groundnuts after harvesting can be left to decompose into the soil to provide manure whilst when it is still in the soil, it helps in nitrogen fixing just like other crops such as Roundnuts and beans. This helps to keep the soil healthy and maintain the necessary bacteria needed in the soil.

Another category of the importance of groundnuts is found in its economic



Farmers towering Mr Maringe's groundnuts field during a field day in Rupise

importance in relation to the human use of the groundnuts themselves.

Groundnuts provide food for the breakfast before they are processed. They can be mixed with sheered maize and then boil them. They are also good in producing peanut butter for house hold consumption or for sell to other people. They can also be processed to make *maputi*. They can also be exchanged with maize or other crops which the farmer may need.

This year 2018, farmers in Rupise have taken a bold step into growing them in large portions as their main crop. The farmers have cited that it is very important in terms of good tonnage as well it can be easily converted into any other things which a farmer might need such as money, food, labour etc.

Mr Joshua Maringe said that he learnt about groundnuts from other fellow farmers who were growing them in the area. Due to the fact that they were not able to produce good harvest from maize and sorghum, they

thought it wise to concentrate on groundnuts as their main crop. After attesting its requirements, their life in the low veld has been made easier and now they are able to survive without fear.

Mr Nvukahadzovi told farmers during the same event that farming is not by doing what others are doing but it is about growing the right crop at the right time in the right conditions which matters most. He added on to say those farmers should look at what crops can do better in their area and then they should plant that crop.

Just like groundnuts which has secured its place in the economic zone for the people in Rupise, other farmers should also chose among the small grains, which crop can do better and give it a time to shine.

Below shows stack of groundnuts waiting to be sundried



Reflection of March and April Activities

Field Days

In the month of March, PORET, CPC and the Volunteers were busy with the field days. The field days were running under the main objective of integrating small grains and livestock production as a way of mitigating the effects of climate change. Thirteen field days were hosted this year and the people who host them were; the Pamberi, Katsingano, Tendaimambo, Murawu, Tiyai, Zenda, Musimwa, Mubururu, Mungoni, Maringe, Chieza, Machisi and Chimwaza families.

Introduction to Permaculture Course

In the month of April, selected farmers from the 3 wards were trained into the introduction to permaculture. The thematic issue was on understanding the principles of Permaculture as well as conflict resolution. The books they were using for reference were the introduction to permaculture book by Bill Mollison and also the three cycle of knowledge by Ellie Josef Westerman. The workshop was run by the PORET Volunteers and Officers. At the end of the workshop, farmers were presented with certificates.

Intensifying the Dream Project



In our last February 2018 newsletter, we discussed about the community dream project where we talked about the construction of fish ponds at PORET Community training site.

From the month of February up to now, PORET volunteers and CPC (Chaseyama Permaculture Club) members have managed to embark on a bold step of digging more swales and mini dams to help in water harvesting and as well collecting enough water for their dream fish farming project.

The project has been a dream from the past years but now the community is geared to see it happening on the ground. The reason for doing the water harvesting is not only in curbing fish farming but it is also in the management of the soil and water, production of crops among other line projects. This can be witnessed from the bowls dug just below the swales where the participants planted different trees. The trees will benefit from the water collected in the swales as well as in the bowls around each plant.

However this might appear to be a simple task, but there is still an answered question among the participants which, is what kind of fish can do and if these ponds will be able to perform their roles well. This question is still ringing among the farmers and now they have a compensating idea which is to give a try to locally available fish. For this dream project to happen, it

needs moral and other forms of support so that it becomes a reality and shift completely from being a dream project.



For assistance on how to boldly implement this project, people can visit the project site in Chaseyama or send emails to poretnews@gmail.com.

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- Weather reports

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BENEFITS OF ADVERTISING

- Easy marketing of your products
- Networking with farmers, manufacturers etc.

Participatory Organic Research Extension Trust

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