

CHASEYAMA AGROECOLOGY NEWSLETTER



*Jinga Village, Chaseyama,
Chimanimani District,
0773025438*

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CELEBRATING THE DIVERSITY AND RESILIENCE OF ZIMBABWEAN FOODS AND BEYOND: THE 2024 HARARE GOOD FOOD, SEED, AND MUSIC FESTIVAL

The 2024 Harare Good Food, Seed, and Music Festival was a vibrant celebration of the diversity and resilience of Zimbabwean foods, traditions, and agroecological practices. Held from September 13-14, the festival brought together more than 100 organisations with thousands of people participating during this event. The event was attended by people from Zimbabwe, South Africa, Uganda, Ethiopia, Zambia and Malawi. The festival provided a platform for farmers, organisations and corporates to come together and celebrate their shared commitment to food sovereignty and seed preservation.

PORET sent 31 participants to the event which include Farmers, Youths, PORET staff and representatives from Agriculture Extension Workers. For most of the youths, it was their first time to be at such an event and they were inspired to start working on the production and perseveration of traditional seeds.

One of the key highlights of the festival was the food and seed fair, which showcased traditional Zimbabwean dishes prepared with indigenous ingredients. Participants were treated to traditional dishes demonstrating the importance of maintaining traditional food knowledge and using locally sourced, diverse seeds. The event also featured a dynamic seed exchange where farmers shared and traded a wide variety of seeds, ensuring the preservation of biodiversity and the continuity of resilient seed systems. Musical performances from local artists added a cultural flair to the event, with genres ranging from mbira to gospel, reflecting the diverse cultural fabric of Zimbabwe.

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Above: some of the PORET participants at Harare Good Food, Seed and Music Festival

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

As we share with you this October Newsletter, we are filled with gratitude for the progress and achievements we've witnessed. From celebrating the diversity of Zimbabwean foods to expanding our agroecological work across Chimanimani District, this month has been an inspiring journey for PORET. It has been particularly uplifting to see how agroecology continues to empower communities, preserve indigenous knowledge, and ensure food sovereignty in the face of climate change.

As we look ahead to the remaining months of the year, I invite everyone to remain steadfast in their commitment to sustainable agriculture and community development. Together, we can continue to make strides towards a more resilient future.

Julious Piti (PORET Director)

Editorial and Feedback: Shadreck Masawi
Cell: 0787648785
Email: shadreckmsw@gmail.com

Continued from page 1, Beyond the celebration, the festival emphasized the urgent need for collective action in promoting agroecological practices that safeguard food security. With farmers, youth, and activists from across the region in attendance, the event fostered meaningful

discussions on how to scale up agroecology and ensure that local food systems remain resilient in the face of climate change. PORET is proud to have contributed to the success of this event, which serves as a reminder of the power of community in driving sustainable change.

PORET PARTICIPATES IN SKI'S 10TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION



Above: SKI Partners posing for a photo

In September, PORET had the privilege of participating in the SKI (Seed and Knowledge Initiative) 10th Anniversary celebration, a significant milestone for agroecology and seed sovereignty across Southern Africa. The event, which took place from September 10-12 at Bronte Hotel in Harare, was attended by SKI partners from Zimbabwe, Zambia, South Africa, and Malawi. It marked a decade of shared successes and collaborative efforts towards promoting agroecological practices, seed sovereignty, and sustainable farming in the region.

The highlight of the celebration was the launch of the book *African Perspectives on Agroecology*, a ground breaking publication that amplifies the voices of African farmers, researchers, and activists who are championing the agroecological movement. The book reflects the diversity of agroecological practices across the continent and showcases innovative solutions that farmers have developed in response to challenges such as climate change, land degradation, and food insecurity.

For PORET, the SKI 10th Anniversary was a powerful reminder of the transformative potential of agroecology. PORET Manager, Blessing Chamudondo and the team, delivered a moving

reflection on PORET's role in restoring ecosystems and strengthening local communities through agroecology. "The journey has not been without challenges, but the results we are seeing today, healthier soils, stronger communities, and more resilient food systems, affirm that agroecology is the way forward," said Chamudondo.

The celebration was not only a look back at the successes of the past decade but also a platform for envisioning the future of agroecology. Partners shared insights on how to deepen their collaborations, expand agroecological practices in the face of climate change, and strengthen seed networks across the region. The event also featured lively discussions on how to empower farmers to take control of their seeds and land, ensuring that food systems are equitable and sustainable. PORET remains committed to working with SKI and its partners to advance the agroecological movement across Southern Africa.



Picture above: SKI Partners during the first day of the workshop

RESTORING BIODIVERSITY AND RAISING WATER TABLES WATERSHED PROJECT IN THE THREE RIVERS



Above: Farmers making gabions in Chigwegwe gully – along Nyanyadzi River

The communities around the Changadzi, Mvumvumu, and Munyanyadzi rivers in Chimanimani are making significant strides in restoring biodiversity and raising water tables through the on going watershed management project. Supported by PORET, these communities are implementing a variety of water harvesting techniques aimed at regenerating the local environment and ensuring water security for future generations.

The watershed project focuses on building swales, gabions, and small dams along the riverbanks to prevent soil erosion and increase water infiltration into the ground. This not only helps to recharge underground water tables but also creates microclimates that are conducive to the growth of native plants and trees. As farmers take the lead in these restoration efforts, they are witnessing positive changes in their ecosystems, including healthier soils and the return of wildlife to the region.

“Before the project, we saw the rivers drying up, and the land was losing its fertility,” shared Shadreck Muronde local farmer in Dzitiro Village in Changazi. “But now, with the water harvesting techniques we are learning and hoping to see water levels rise, and the soil coming back to life.” The watershed project is a critical part of PORET’s larger mission to empower communities to restore their landscapes and strengthen their resilience to climate change.

By working together, these communities are creating a sustainable future for themselves and their children. As the project expands, PORET continues to provide training and support to ensure that farmers have the knowledge and resources they need to restore their environments and secure water for agriculture and daily life. This project exemplifies the power of community-led action in addressing environmental challenges and promoting sustainable land management.



Pictures above: shows gabions being constructed by communities to along Nyanyadzi, Mvumvumu and Changazi rivers

CELEBRATING THE SUCCESS OF FOOD PROCESSING SUCCESS IN CHIMANIMANI



Above: farmers who took part during the food processing celebrations held in Zvokuitirwa Villae

On the 24th of September, farmers from 6 villages in Chimanimani gathered at Zvokuitirwa Permaculture centre to celebrate PORET's food processing initiative in Chimanimani, a project designed to empower women and youth by adding value to locally grown farm products. Led by Grace Gumba, this initiative has transformed the way farmers in the District process and market their produce, offering new opportunities for income generation and food security.

This project is directly benefiting more than 100 households by virtue of being the member of the food processing program. These farmers are drawn from 6 villages which have so far benefited from the solar driers.

Using solar dryers provided by the project, farmers have been able to preserve a wide variety of fruits, vegetables, and herbs, extending the shelf life of their products and reducing post-harvest losses. The ability to dry and store produce has allowed farmers to access new markets, where there is a growing demand for dried products. For many women involved in the project, this has been a life-changing experience.

“Before the project, I had no way to store my vegetables, and they would spoil before I could sell them,” shared Cecilia Muzvidzo a farmer

from Zvokuitirwa village. “Now, I can dry them and sell them throughout the year, which has greatly improved my income.” The project has not only increased the economic resilience of farmers but also provided a platform for women to take leadership roles in their communities.

Grace Gumba, the driving force behind the project, is passionate about empowering women through agroecology. “This project is about more than just food processing; it's about giving women the tools they need to improve their livelihoods and take control of their futures,” Gumba explained. PORET is committed to expanding this initiative to reach more women and youth in Chimanimani, ensuring that the benefits of food processing are shared widely across the region.

Coming Up Next

1. Soil and Water Management Training Workshops to be done in Changazi, Nyanyadzi and Mvumvumu River from the 14th of October to the 1st of November.
2. Capacity Building workshop with committees in charge of Rivers – November.
3. National Tree Planting Day – 1 December at selected sites.

For more information, get in touch with us on, +263 773025438