

- Networking, knowledge and product sharing: the 2023 edition of the seed and food fair.
- Farmers from Zvokuitirwa Village benefiting from the proceeds of Mushroom Production
- Monitoring and evaluation workshop
- Farmers and stakeholders from Chimanimani visited agroecology sites in Harare

CHASEYAMA AGROECOLOGY NEWSLETTER

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NETWORKING, KNOWLEDGE AND PRODUCT SHARING: THE 2023 EDITION OF DISTRICT SEED AND FOOD FAIR

The District Seed and Food Fair is an annual event which is hosted by Chaseyama Permaculture Club in collaboration with Participatory Organic Research Extension Training (PORET). This event helps farmers to network with other farmers and learn on (1) how to grow different varieties of seeds and also (2) how to process and package food. The seed and food fair event is prepared starting with the village or ward based seed and food fair. Farmers organise themselves and conduct the seed and food fairs at the village level. Two members from each village are selected to represent the village at the District Seed and Food Fair.

This year's seed and food fair objectives were to share seeds among farmers and to share knowledge on how to process the locally grown food items. A total number of 111 seed varieties were on display from the major 10 crop varieties that are grown in the region. Also a total number of 105 food items were on display this year which all forms the balanced diet.

The 2023 edition of the District Seed and Food fair was attended by 129 exhibitors. 84 farmers exhibited in the seed category and 45 farmers exhibited in the food category. This is an increase from the 2022 edition where 74 farmers participated in seed displays. Women continue to dominate in these events with a total number of 78 women participating in the event whilst only 6 men participated which saw men participation dropping by 3 from 9 men who participated in 2022. In total, the event was attended by 600 people which saw the attendance increasing from 246 people who attended last year.



Above: some of the seeds on display during the seed fair

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

This time around, I would love to thank farmers in Chimanimani for their commitment towards revitalising their local seeds and food. During the food and seed fairs, farmers participated whole heartedly with a number of seeds and food items displayed. As an organisation, we are noticing that Chaseyama Permaculture Club is developing into an organised group of farmers with vision to grow their own seeds and promote the traditional food. We will continue supporting the club and make sure that the youths are also participating in these activities.

Julius Piti

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This year, the event was attended by members of the community, farmers, government officials and the traditional leaders. The Senior Government officials present were Honourable Chikuni who is the Member of Parliament in the women's quota and Honorable Nokhuthula Matsikenyerere who is the Minister of State for Provincial Affairs and Devolution for Manicaland Province. She was also the guest of Honour during the event. The event was also attended by a 16 member delegation of farmers from Bikita who are working with Earthlore Foundation.



Hon Minister Matsikenyerere delivering her speech

The event was graced by a number of exciting activities. During the first day, farmers participated in music and dance. A number of farmers participated in singing and dancing. During the second day of the event, the farmers participated in poetry, dramas, music. Entertainment was also provided by Gudyanga Primary School traditional dance group which provided an amazing performance.

During the event, farmers managed to showcase their seeds and various processed food. The participants were able to interact with people explaining to them about the different types of seeds they have, how they grow them and their advantages. They also explained about various methods of food processing, types of foods and their health benefits. The event saw farmers displaying products which include open pollinated varieties, traditional seeds, and different food stuffs.

Various people participated during the session who include Minister Matsikenyerere, Honorable Chikuni, traditional leaders, farmers, and media personnel. The availability of the media personnel improved visibility of the works that farmers are doing in Chimanimani.

During her speech, the Guest of Honour thanked farmers for the continued support and advocating for the traditional seed and food. She expressed satisfaction with the type of displays made by the farmers and she encouraged them to continue advocating for their traditional seeds and food.

During the post event interviews with farmers and PORET officials, everyone expressed contentment by the occasion.

Mrs Virginia Karisawu- PORET Outreach Officer said that;

“The seed and food fair event this year was attended by a good number of people. The participation of this year's seed fair was high compared to last year. Also the attendance was high.”

Also Mrs Judith Bingadhadhi – Farmer from Hapare Village, was excited to be part of the 2023 edition of the seed and food fair which she said was one of the best.

“There is change from last year's event. This year the event was well prepared and farmers have improved in their displays.”

“Today I learnt that farmers are now understanding the concept of seed fairs. We used to think that seed fairs are all about winning prizes but now we have matured enough to understand that it's all about preserving our seeds and knowledge sharing.” Said Rebecca Chimimba – Farmer from Chibuwe Village

The event ended with a vote of thanks from PORET Director Mr Julious Piti who thanked everyone for being part of this historic event. He encouraged farmers to continue doing the good work towards upholding traditional seeds and food.

FARMERS IN ZVOKUITIRWA VILLAGE BENEFITING FROM THE PROCEEDS OF MUSHROOM PRODUCTION



Farmers in Zvokuitirwa packing mushroom spawn

Farmers in Zvokuitirwa village in ward 3 are enjoying the fruits of mushroom production. Last year, they managed to grow mushroom which they sold and gave them money. This year, they resumed their mushroom project on a high note.

Using the proceeds from last harvest, the farmers have managed to buy seeds, and other material to continue with their project. This time around they added few more bags as they said that they now have some knowledge of producing mushroom.

To start production, they invited PORET Outreach Officer Mrs Virginia Karisawu to assist them in preparing their mushroom for production. During planting, few members were selected to do the preparation and planting of mushroom.

According to Mrs Eliza Mwasarira, she said that, *“we chose few members to come and plant our mushroom. We didn’t want many people since we are starting with few bags. We also agreed that some members will come for watering and other activities.”*

Mushroom production is one of the projects which farmers are taking serious in Chaseyama. Farmers have been trained on the production and they have witnessed how good it is to manage and they also learnt about its benefits. Apart from being easy to manage, the project is helping farmers with income for the club.

According to Chipo Moyo, she said that, *“we are doing mushroom because it’s one of the projects which we saw as a club that we can do and get money to fund some of our projects we want to do as a club. We have other projects which we want to fund hence we decided to fund them using proceeds from mushroom.”*

Other villages are also venturing into mushroom production, some for the first time. There are farmers in Bumba who want to be trained and implement the mushroom project.

If handled well, the mushroom project is going to transform the livelihood of people in Chimanimani. It’s because of the availability of resources to use such as the planting rooms, and organic matter which is used in the process.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION WORKSHOP

PORET has managed to conduct Monitoring and Evaluation workshop from the 26th of May to 2nd of June 2023. The workshop which was attended 32 participants (19 males and 13 females) from Chaseyama Permaculture Club, farmers from Ziva Kwawakabva in Mutare and farmers from Hwange was held at PORET training centre.

This monitoring and evaluation workshop is one of a kind which helps farmers and project officers to execute their duties well. It helps the farmer’s to understand what monitoring is and what evaluation is.

A wider perspective by many farmers is that the term monitoring and evaluation can only be used by the Project Officers. This was corrected during the workshop were by the Facilitator Mr Blessing Chamudondo who is the PORET Programs officer led the discussion which cleared this assumption. The participants managed to understand that monitoring is done mostly by farmers themselves on a daily basis tracking progress of the inputs and outputs. Monitoring is done on a daily basis in the fields, gardens, in the livestock and poultry projects and in any other activity.

FARMERS AND STAKEHOLDERS FROM CHIMANIMANI VISITED AGROECOLOGY SITES IN HARARE



Picture above: Delegate from Chimanimani touring a garden at Fambidzanai where sacks are used to grow crops.

On the 28th of July 2023, 29 people who include farmers, youth leaders, Chaseyama Permaculture Club main committee, three school teachers from Hotsprings Primary School, Chaseyama Primary School, Chakowa Secondary School and village head Mr Tinashe Jinga visited two agro ecology sites in Harare. The participants visited Fambidzanai Permaculture centre and SCOPE (Schools and Colleges of Permaculture) which are all located in the Mt Hampden area at the outskirts of Harare CBD.

The main focus of this visit was for the participants to witness the various permaculture designs and practises which are being implemented by these organisations. The participants managed to tour around various projects which are being done at SCOPE and these include techniques in soil building, plant propagation project, herbs, Pyramid container garden, Dandaro hut.

SCOPE focuses on projects that empower youths especially in schools to develop green schools as well as incorporating youths into development projects.

During the discussion which was done at scope, the participants managed to learn a lot about the importance of permaculture.

The participants managed to learn about the importance of soil building to a farmers and also the importance of plant propagation both as a business and for the restoration of tree species.



Picture above: The picture shows a pyramid container garden where a variety of crops are planted.

Village head Jinga expressed his gratitude by saying that if farmers continue to implement agroecology good practises, the community is going fight hunger. He said that fertile soils is the basis of good farming practises because crops needs good soils which are fertile for them to provide good and health plants.

FEATURING IN OUR NEXT NEWSLETTER

Good Seed and Food Festival 2023 Edition

In the month of September 2023, farmers who participated during the District food and seed festival will attend the National Good Seed and Food Festival which will be held in Harare. Few farmers will be selected to represent Chaseyama Permaculture Club at the event. Some farmers will be displaying seeds whilst some will be displaying food items. This event will rape up 2023 seed and food fairs.