



Field Days

“Field day is not a feeding day”

Sithole Godfrey (AGRITEX Officer Mhandarume)

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PORET Trust ZIMBABWE- Food Forest- Agro-ecology- biodiversity

The Importance of Field Days

Newsletter Team

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Field Days are well known for being the day of celebrating what a farmer has achieved in his or her field. Normally they are done to reward the best farmer, the one whom the officials have identified as the best farmer in the area. The main idea being that, field days promote farmers to work hard each and every year so that people will come and learn

from him or her and at the end of the celebration the farmer will be then rewarded.

However, the approach which was traditionally used to select best farmers to host seed fair is now quite different from what Seed Committee and PORET are using. Field days are now used as a way of promoting sustainable agriculture. The Chaseyama Permaculture Club members tour around farmers' fields identifying the permaculture principles employed by a farmer. Their main look is on the use of organic components so as to promote sustainable agriculture. There is a quiet number of things which they look at which include; organic farming using manure, diversity, crop vigor, water and soil management among others.

Mr Muererwa Edmore the vice Chairperson of seed has this to say, “We went around peoples fields to identify if a farmer was employing some permaculture principles. After then we select a crop which we want other farmers to come and learn from.”

Learning through field days

It doesn't matter who is in charge

By Cephas Tsinakwadi

On the 17 of February 2017, some farmers in Zvokuitirwa village gathered at Mai Paul Machisi a widow farmer. This woman farmer lives and works with her two male siblings named Paul of 16 years and Peter of 14 years of age.

The main objectives of the day were to encourage many households to have and build their own seed banks, to encourage diversity farming at household level, to see the importance of water harvesting.

The host farmer said that she and her two sons started digging holes in October in preparation for planting. When the rains come, she had to plant her seeds with the first rains. She said she did not allow weeds to disturb her crops. She grew sorghum mupostori and good groundnuts. She highlighted that the swales are helping her to keep moisture in the field.

In farming we meet various obstacles, Mai Paul also meet some of them but she kept on moving. There is a weed which is affecting her crop called witch weed and also a disease called smart (more about them in the next issue.) despite these challenges, the farmer is expecting good yields.

This shows that field days are important as they promote farmer to farmer knowledge exchange as opposed to some traditions where people think that field days are feeding days.



Field day at Mr Tiyayi



Zihuu Field day

Mr Taurai Sithole said that, “This year’s field days were properly organised. They were not just general field days based on favoritism but we were looking at the crop varieties which a farmer has planted this season. Our main focus is on the preparation of the seed fairs where we want to reduce cheating among farmers.”

Yes, another exciting moment at Mrs Joyce Mupunga

By Cephas Tsinakwadi

Now farmers are gathered in Jinga village at Mai Joyce Mupunga home for yet another exciting field day.

Mai Mupunga is a widow farmer who does farming with the help of her grandchild. The two are very industrious which results in bumper harvest.

On the sixth day of March, local peasant farmers came for a field day at her home, some 2 and half kilometers from Chaseyama business center towards the east. Present on this day were the local farmers and a PORET official from PORET Centre Mr Masawi. The day was attended by 22 members who were 8 males and 14 females.

The host farmer led the rest of the people present into her field and explained how she worked. She said she started protecting her field in July and August. She then dug holes in September and put her first seeds in October with the first rains.

She highlighted that during winter, cattle drank from her small dam in her field. After drinking they will then rest under the big fig tree. They leave their droppings which eventually will become manure.

The farmer appreciated the visit for she said she also learned from others. She chose to grow Mupostori type because it gives very

good yields. To be a successful farmer, she said, one has to plan and work.

Objectives of the field Days at each farmer

Baba Misheck Mwatsika

- Promoting small grains in the low veld areas of Chimanimani.
- To see the importance of water harvesting
- To see the good rewards of early plantings

Mai Paul Machisi

- Encouraging farmers to do community seeds banks
- To encourage diversification at household level.
- To consider water, soil conservation so as to attract tourist.
- To show the good advantages of early planting.

Zihuu

- Learning about groundnuts farming in the low veld.
- Farmers to learn about climatic adaptation when doing farming.

Musimwa

- ✚ Promotion of water harvesting

- ✚ To see the goodness of early planting

Baba namai Tiyai

- ❖ To see the advantages of practicing permaculture in the low rainfall areas and good water harvest methods to produce good yields.
- ❖ To have adequate seeds for food production

Mrs Joyce Mupunga

- To learn about seed banking
- To see the results of early planting.

Mwanambo

- ✓ To promote early planting
- ✓ To promote small grains in dry land areas.

Makuneyi

- To see the importance of early planting.
- Learning about how to grow sorghum and produce good yields.

Masetere

- The importance of early planting
- A basket full of food
- Organic farming and natural pest and disease control

Mwandikutse

- The importance of good spacing and early planting in maize.



Products of early planting- Musimwa Field Day

Collaboration between PORET and government departments

PORET collaboration with the government department and sister organizations has made it possible to reach the wider area. When PORET started working with the Chaseyama Permaculture Club, their focus was centralized in Ward 4 in Jinga Village because of the reason that this is its birth place. After years of hard working in Chaseyama, it began to see the need to spread the gospel into other areas in the low veld.

From Jingah, it spread to Hotsprings where it set up some seed committees there. This year saw its wings spreading as far as Mhandarume ward 2 increasing its coverage. Due to its increased coverage, it identified that there are many people out there who are thirst to receive the gospel of permaculture and they have welcomed the program with both hands.

One thing for sure is that, it was not going to be possible without collaborating with government departments especially Agritex officers and also working with TSURO. Mr Mubako and his team are honored for working with PORET to reach a wider area and identifying possible things which farmers are vying for. Thanks to Mr Nyikahadzoyi and Mr Sithole Agritex officers from Ward 2 Mhandarume, Mr Jowerere from ward 5 Hotsprings Agritex, for making 2017 a good year for PORET.

This year, we are hoping to work with other government departments so as to reach all people which include the Ministry of Youth Indigenization and Economic Empowerment, Ministry of Woman Affairs and the local council and the District Administrator, local leadership and other departments not mentioned here so that the work done by PORET is spread in the low veld.

Witch weed and Smart

Farmers visited during the recent field days were complaining about witch weed (*Rutiti in Ndau*) and smart (*Manunje in Ndau*) which were now affecting their crops. In trying to come up with solutions, various methods of treating them and avoiding them were discussed.



Witch weed

Witch weed is a small bush weed which process reddish flowers. It is mainly found in the areas with high nutrients and especially in sorghum. This weed when it fully broadcast itself in the fields, it destroys the crops.

Its main cause is repeating to grow the same crop in the same field especially sorghum. So when you repeat to plant sorghum, the weed will consciously grow affecting your crop. To avoid its wrath, farmers are urged to do early planting so that when the weed came out, it will find the crops already harvested and also to do crop rotation exchanging with legume crops because it cannot affect them. More is still needed to give solution to end this dangerous weed.

Sorghum head affected by smart

Another disease affecting sorghum is smart or manunje. The diseases affect the head of the sorghum making it to rot and produce some black dust. This disease is caused by a combination of factors which include high



field. This will make them to run away and they will not come back.

Our main important focus is, equipping farmers with natural pest and disease control so that they eat unpoisoned food.

rainfall and not practicing crop rotation. This weed is dangerous even to human health when consumed. So farmers should practice crop rotation and do harvest early. One of the major things to note is, when a farmer identified a head affected by smart, he or she has to put a plastic on its head and cut it. The head is supposed to be burned because if the head is mixed with other good heads, it means all the crops are affected as the powder can spread easily.

There are also signs of *magunyenyeny* a black and striped insect which eat cowpeas, groundnuts. These insects are dangerous and they can destroy the field. To avoid them, one farmer said you have to kill some of them and pluck off their heads then leave them to decay and then spray them in the

Note!

This is our third newsletter. We kindly ask our audience to write to us on the issues they want to see in the newsletter. We need to hear from you.

For comments and feedback, write to us on 0778312138, or email feedback to shadreckmsw@gmail.com. Or whatsapp on 0778312138. We also accept letters and you can deliver them straight to PORET offices in Jinga Village.

Coming up

Field Day Visit to DOFA 7 April (Rusape)

Permaculture Design Course by John Nzira-9-15 April (PORET Centre)