

The 4th Zambia Traditional Seed and Food Festival – 2021

Theme: “Sustaining Traditional Food Systems for Nutrition in a COVID-19 World”

Venue: Nakatindi Hall and Grounds, Civic Center, Lusaka

Date: 15th – 16th October, 2021



1.0 BACKGROUND

Food is at the heart of Zambia's diverse cultures spread across the Seventy-Two (72) Tribes. Food has been part of the migrations and celebrated as part of the sacred rites across cultures. Traditional ceremonies and other gatherings have reconnected people to their ancestral heritage that puts food at the centre of life. Every person connects to their health, identity, culture and community through food.

Production of Food in Zambia is highly influenced by both traditional and conventional systems. These systems are shaped by the structure of the agricultural policies, influence of direct foreign investments and global food trade and logistics. The majority of Zambians in the rural areas depend on their own foods while most of those in the urban areas are supplied by the rural areas and imported foods. The food and agricultural sector also generates' livelihoods for local communities and provides opportunities for employment.

According to the World Food Programme in Zambia, "smallholders are the country's largest population of food producers. They are responsible for up to 90 percent of the food produced in Zambia, with women accounting for about 80 percent"¹. At the same time however, at least 50% of Zambians are chronically hungry. Stunting rates amongst children remain at an unacceptable 35% - and come with lifelong and intergenerational consequences (WFP Zambia, 2020).

From a development perspective, recognising and supporting smallholders, particularly women, who produce diverse food for household and local market consumption, is an undeniable imperative. Food production and consumption impacts almost all other national development objectives. As the Stockholm Resilience Centre shows, unless there is a radical transition to a more sustainable food system, the world will largely fail on every other Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) commitment.

The modern food system, that includes production and its inputs, transport, trade, processing, marketing, consumption and waste, is the biggest contributor to global ecological degradation, land-use change and unsustainable consumption, that is driving climate change and poor health. Zambia's farmers have already witnessed the effects of changing weather patterns and increased desertification. Unsustainable agricultural production mechanisms that are based on external inputs, chemicals and monocrop production of 'empty calories' is further driving the broad negative impacts of climate change in Zambia.

Covid-19 has exposed the vulnerabilities of Zambia's food system. Food commodity prices have increased within a short period of time, limiting access for both the urban and rural consumers. The entire food value chains and supply chains have been hit hard. Coupled with the legacy of dominance by commercialised food systems, the risk of hunger remains high.

Civil Society partners, producers, processors and consumers are coming to a common table to discuss the changes in the food systems of the country. This is largely motivated by the need to have a responsive, effective and sustainable food system that celebrates food sovereignty and culture. To contribute to this debate and demonstrate farmers' capacities, a consortium of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) organized the 2021 National Zambia Traditional Seed and Food Festival under the theme **"Sustaining Traditional**

¹ WFP Zambia Country Brief July 2020
https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000118401/download/?_ga=2.182728101.223513132.1598515630-1423603433.1598515630

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Food Systems for Nutrition in a COVID-19 World”. The 2021 National Seed and Food Festival was a continuation of the campaign for the country to revisit and recognise its abilities to define its food systems in the advent of COVID 19. The Festival was aimed at reinvigorating efforts by local partners to support reforms in the agriculture and food sector by placing emphasis on farmers’ rights, consumers’ rights and the health of soils, water and energy systems. The event served to amplify voices for change through public awareness of a production system that embraces agroecology through policy and legislative reforms.

1.1 Objectives of the event

- I. To celebrate farmers’ knowledge and raise public awareness about the contribution that traditional seed and foods and their management systems make towards community cohesion, national food and nutrition security, and long-term public health and wellbeing - particularly in the light of the ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic
- II. To raise public awareness about sustainable production, marketing and consumption through the lens of Agroecology, and its central role in shaping Zambia’s development capacity, attainment of the aligned SDGs as well as climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies
- III. To draw attention to critical and timely Zambian policy and legislative frameworks that influence the transition to a sustainable food system.



Picture: Local food recipes in their glorious diversity and colours

This year, the festival was held over a two-day period, on the 15th and 16th October, 2021. On the first day, Farmers exchanged knowledge on Farmer Managed Seed Systems (FMSS), Agroecology, their challenges,

lessons learnt and what they thought would be the best way forward as regards to policy. On the second day, farmers showcased their diverse seeds from different parts of the country. They participated in a cooking competition and some of them raised some income from sale of local seeds and foods. It is estimated that a total of **150 People** from around Lusaka attended this years' festival.

2.0 THE FESTIVAL

2.1 Day 1: Farmer Dialogues

The dialogue took place in an atmosphere of sharing and learning, and Like Juliet Nangamba intuitively put it *"we are having a family meeting"*, farmers felt at home among their peers; they felt free to share their experiences, challenges and expectations. They challenged themselves to do more while expressing their expectations from their government and CSOs present. Participants were drawn from all the 10 provinces of Zambia, who all had unique yet common experiences and challenges.

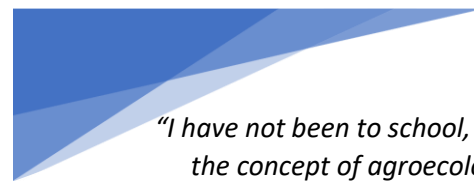
The conversations started with a panel discussion, where 4 farmers, namely Mr. Lavet Mulanji, Mrs. Dorcas Shonga, Mrs. Fevent Hang'andu and Mr. Jesper Zulu, shared their experiences with local seeds and food, some of the medicinal and nutritional properties of the seeds they grow, their experiences with sustainable organic agriculture (agroecology) and why they adopted it; and finally, a call to fellow farmers to transition to agroecological ways of farming, to revive indigenous seeds and pass on indigenous knowledge to the next generation. During this session, farmers reiterated that they were happy with their seed even though it is not legally recognized as seed, they requested for continued capacity building in sustainable organic farming so that they can fully transition. They affirmed that diversification is key to climate resilience, food and nutrition security and disease and pest control. They stated that they came to the festival to learn summarized righty in the Bemba proverb from Mr. Josphat Luo *"Amano ni mbuto, balondola fye!* (knowledge is like seed, one has to seek it)"

2.1.1 Plenary of the Farmer's Dialogue

Key points from the farmers' discussions:

- ✓ Both crop and livestock diversification are key to achieving household food and nutrition security, and is essential to transitioning to agroecology (sustainable organic farming)
- ✓ Seed diversity = food diversity
- ✓ Seed was given by God, we choose our seeds over the hybrids
- ✓ Sustainable organic farming is not for the lazy, it is labour intensive in the first 2 – 3 years, but becomes easier in subsequent years - one needs to work hard
- ✓ Farmers need to learn how to prepare organic manure/fertilizers, but also how to treat manure to prevent emergence of weeds – it is important
- ✓ The nutrients in chemical fertilizers are immediately taken up by the plants once applied, they leave nothing in the soil. Organic fertilizers, green and animal manures on the other hand, lead to the build up of organic matter in the soil – farmers need to make wise decisions
- ✓ The consumption of processed foods and foods produced using toxic chemicals have lead to non-communicable diseases and cancers – eat organic food
- ✓ Our children need to know about our seeds and foods – knowledge needs to be passed on from one generation to the next
- ✓ Interesting that some foods are grown in some regions and not in others – this platform provides an opportunity for learning from others

- ✓ Young people need to embrace agroecology
- ✓ Small scale farmers are not normally involved in the development and/or review national policies that affect them
- ✓ The message is “plant trees” to mitigate against climate change
- ✓ The government is the one that gives power to the private sector – they need to give that power back to us by allowing us to register our varieties too
- ✓ Farmers are excluded from policy review processes and yet they are key stakeholder in agriculture and other related policies – these policies are about us, for us, we need to be consulted
- ✓ Mushroom production is easy and yet lucrative, materials are readily available. There is need or more farmers to be trained
- ✓ Government has never invested in local seeds multiplication because they seem to be misguided that local seeds are useless compared to the seeds produced and marketed by multi-national corporations – foreign commercial seed companies. We are losing our seed as a result
- ✓ *“We need herbs to prevent and treat human diseases. I have never used conventional medicines when sick, and I am rarely sick because my body is already strong. I just use herbs” – Josphat Luo*
- ✓ Palm oil trees are very profitable, you can even extract the oil on-farm. Millet is used in alcohol production, so there are many companies that buy it
- ✓ There is need to establish local seeds banks so that we do not lose our seeds over time
- ✓ What is important is soil fertility. People in Southern province have been migrating to other provinces since the 1980s because they cannot grow crops in the depleted soils of Chirundu for example. Yet others are reviving these soils and are now able to produce profitably – it is senseless to shift because without the knowledge, they will deplete the soils where they have shifted to as well.
- ✓ CTDI is helping farmers in chirundu to develop their own early maturing variety of sorghum, in collaboration with scientists from SCCI.
- ✓ We need more people to know about agroecology, community radio programmes can be developed to spread the word
- ✓ There is need to establish and register an association/union for farmers practicing agroecology so that their organic products can be marketed differently
- ✓ Farmers challenged to think and question why they have been small scale farmers all their lives – they have never moved from that bracket despite massive investments in programmes such as FISP which are targeted at them. *“We grow in age, but not our businesses” – Annedy(a farmer and agro-processor)*
- ✓ Farmers should invest in value addition
- ✓ Anne Mutale Katongo asked a few pertinent questions that the farmers and stakeholders were asked to interrogate;
 - i. What is agroecology and why is it important to us? We need to define it in the simplest terms and possibly translated into local languages



“I have not been to school, but I understand the concept of agroecology, it’s direct connection to nature and the way things were designed by God”

Luckson Siabwizu - Sinazeze

- ii. How can we stop using chemical fertilizers when we are not prepared? There is a lot of apprehension still, on what the alternative would be
 - iii. Who is supposed to prepare the farmers for this transition?
- ✓ As much as we talk about the roles that the government must play, we, the farmers need to demonstrate that it can be done, by adopting agroecology, scaling it up and producing results. That is when they will believe us
- ✓ Most farmers do not understand the implications of the seed and related policies and national strategies. The CSOs that work with farmers can help by simplifying and translating them into local languages
- ✓ While conventional farming focuses on production and profits at whatever cost, agroecology focuses at production and profits in the context of environmental and entire ecosystem protection and restoration – it is in tandem with nature
- ✓ Government must support sustainable organic farming by facilitating the creation of markets for organic products
- ✓ Farmers' dependency on FISP is to blame for the loss of our seed. There is a seed war going on and for most commercial seed companies, it's about the profits. Farmers should not be deceived, we need our local diverse seeds to reclaim seed and food sovereignty
- ✓ Youths have to be involved in the seed work and in agroecology
- ✓ Farmers who use chemical fertilizers look down on those that use on-farm organic manure, they think it's because they cannot afford the fertilizers. This perception can be changed with massive sensitisations – government must definitely get involved in promoting and supporting mass production of organic fertilizers to change this perception, and so that farmers can access them through agrodealers.

HEALED BY LOCAL HERBS AND FOOD

A Testimony by Stephen Musonda from Northern Province

"Some time back, I lived in Ndola. In 1980, I started having pain in the legs and stomach. My wife was witness to this, I would spend nights writhing in pain and unable to sleep due to this pain. I knew there was something wrong with my body, but I didn't know what it was and the medicines from the hospital were not helpful at all. My wife then took me back home to the village, in Chief Chitoshi's area. My mother started treating me with herbs and feeding me local food. The herbs healed me, the food helped me to regain my strength despite the fact that I wasn't even able to walk when I left Ndola. Now am able to walk, run and do manual work without any problem, I feel stronger than I was when younger. I attribute this recovery and strength to the (Bemba) food and herbs that I was given, I wasn't given any conventional medicine at all!. I encourage my fellow farmers to implement what we are taught on their farms, our foods work miracles"

Mr. Musonda aptly named his farm "Memorial Mixed Farms" in line with the diversity of crops and small livestock that he grows and rears.

This was then followed by a facilitated discussion involving all the farmers and stakeholders present. At the end of day 1, farmers had made the following requests:

2.1.2 To the Government

- i. Recognize farmers' seeds – farmers love them and their diversity
- ii. Involve farmers in review of seed and related policies – they are key stakeholders
- iii. Support mass production of organic fertilizers so that they are available in agro-shops across the country
- iv. Support the creation and development of markets for organically produce food so that farmers get value for it, like it is done in developed countries
- v. Include indigenous seeds/foods and Agroecology in the school curriculum, starting from primary school, to ensure knowledge is passed on from one generation to the next
- vi. Transform FISP to make more responsive to farmers' needs, incorporate agroecological farming practices, adopt strategies that will work for the farmer. In its current form, FISP has failed to achieve its objectives since its inception
- vii. Create and support local seed banks at all levels
- viii. Involve health personnel and health researchers on food debates. So many cancer cases in Zambia and the health fraternity, health researchers are quiet. We know Africa is dumping ground for chemicals rejected in the west for causing diseases, we need to hear the voices of health experts
- ix. Promote agroforestry. Trees are being cut at an alarming rate and not being replaced. Involve the youths in tree planning and/or regeneration, because they still have time to reap the fruits and will therefore be interested

2.1.3 To the CSOs

- i. Invest in research on why SHF have been stagnant, document and propose solutions – how FISP can work for SHF for example.
- ii. Promote and facilitate trainings in value addition
- iii. Escalate what you are already doing – mushroom production in particular should be promoted if it is as simple to produce and as lucrative as purported by one cooperative in the meeting
- iv. Support radio and other outreach programmes in order to get as many farmers as possible to adopt agroecology. Currently, only a fraction of SHF have adopted some or all of the agroecology practices and principles
- v. Facilitate the formation and registration of an organic/agroecological farming union or association for farmers, which can be recognized like ZNFU
- vi. Promote crops that are suitable to each region – not all regions are suitable for maize production. Focus on each region's comparative advantage, then trade can take place between regions to ensure food and nutrition security
- vii. Translate the seed policy and other related policies into all Zambian languages to help the farmer understand their implications on them
- viii. Translate agroecology (definitions, principles and practices) into all Zambian languages to help spread the word, SHF need this message!
- ix. Be our watchdogs, help monitor policy review and implementation since farmers do not easily get information. Farmers are ready to support advocacy actions when mobilized

The Farmers concluded that they were committed to do the following:

- i. That they will practice what they are taught – so many trainings and workshops have been conducted, but adoption rates are low.

- ii. To involve youths – there is a wealth of knowledge sitting with the older generation that youths can learn from in order to develop interest in local seeds and foods, in agroecology for sustainability and farming in general
- iii. Instead of just complaining about what government is not doing, farmers committed to do their part to demonstrate to the government that they know what they are talking about for them to listen. To show government that its possible to grow local seed, the benefits of local seeds and agroecology. This is possible only if they actually grow traditional foods and adopt agroecology
- iv. To not shun their traditional seeds and foods – this knowledge should be passed on to generations to come

2.2 The Seed and Food fare

The second day of the even was characterized by seed and food displays by farmers from all the 10 provinces of Zambia. It was graced by the Human Rights Commissioner, Mr. Murdford Mwandenga, as Guest of Honor; and in attendance were officers from the Ministry of Agriculture (Seed Control and Certification Institute), Nutrition Commission, the Deputy Mayor of the city of Lusaka, the Acting District Commissioner of Lufwanyama District, and Principals of 2 Farm Training Institutes namely Chapula (Copperbelt) and Namushakende (Western Province).

The festival was lively with traditional songs and dances performed by Vokapo Cultural Ensemble, and modern contemporary music performed by a famous Zambia hip-hop artist, Roberto and the Explosion Band. A variety of local foods and drink (munkoyo) were served to the invited guests for lunch.



Picture: The beauty and diversity of Farmers' seeds

2.2.1 Key Points from the Guest of Honour's Speech – Mr. Murdford Mwandenga

The guest of honor started by recognizing that 16th October was the day which the world commemorated the World Food Day.

- Zambia is grappling with many challenges including effects of climate change that have led to hunger, malnutrition and stunting in children
- That this festival is about the right to food and nutrition, which is among the fundamental rights and an inclusive right which is crosscutting.
- The major elements of the rights to food being that food must be available, accessible and adequate
- He lamented that traditional seeds and foods have been relegated to the back seat, in preference for hybrid seeds and modern often processed foods.
- The diets of many Zambians is limited and so narrow concentrating on few vegetables and grains
- Local foods and medicinal plants are by far more nutritious than most of the preferred food
- He expressed hope that the festival will help rekindle the interest of Zambian in traditional seeds and foods.
- This festival was about the right to food and nutrition, which is one of the universally recognized fundamental rights, and is generally an inclusive and crosscutting right
- The major elements of the right to food are that food must be available, accessible and adequate.
- The Zambian constitution does not provide for the right to food and nutrition in the bill of rights, but only concerned with civil and political rights.
- It is the hope of the HRC that sooner than later the constitution will be amended to include social and cultural rights which will include the rights to food and nutrition.
- As such, the HRC will continue to lobby for the amendment of the constitution.
- The African Charter on Human and People's rights to which Zambia is a party guarantees certain rights and individual freedoms, also guarantees certain rights of entire peoples of Africa is committed to ensuring that Africa gives prominence to local foods and seeds – demonstrating that the Commission as concerned as the farmers are with the right to food and nutrition.
- He appreciated the diversity of the seed and food display and urged farmers to hold on to their diverse local seeds and foods.
- He thanked the organisers of the festival and pledged that his office will always support the festival.
- He urged the organisers to advertise the event widely in order for other people to participate since it is a very important event

2.2.2 Opening Remarks from the Deputy Mayor of the City of Lusaka – Ms. Ketty Nanyangwe

She recognized that Zambia is very rich in food and culture, and that it is important to equip our farmers with knowledge about the contribution that traditional seeds and foods make towards household and national food and nutrition security, and the wellbeing of the people. Farmers play a critical in ensuring that there is enough food for everyone.

She welcomed all participants to the Nakatindi hall (Civic centre) and reminded participants to adhere to the COVID-19 guidelines during the event. She thanked the organisers for choosing Lusaka and the Civic Centre in particular to host the event.

2.2.3 Comments from the SCCI Representative – Ministry of Agriculture – Ms.

She gave an introduction of the Seed Control and Certification Institute and its mandate. Notable points from her speech include:

- That the informal seed sector constitutes 80% of the farming community – they feed us
- Seed is the genesis of food and the SCCI supports all seed related activities
- SCCI recognizes that local seeds are more resilient against extreme weather conditions – the millets and sorghums for example.
- Having seeds that are sustainable will lead to food security at national level
- SCCI has a unit under the Inspectorate department that trains farmers in seed production and small-scale farmers were encouraged to form groups and register for training
- Under this programme, farmers' seeds can be certified as quality declared seeds that can be commercially sold – an important opportunity to our local farmers
- Farmers are also welcome to get information from SCCI at any time
- She commended organisations like CTDT for the great work they are doing in preserving the local germplasm through the establishment of seed banks in communities
- The Food and Agriculture Organisation is also promoting the sharing of seeds or germplasm between farmers.
- She encouraged farmers to visit the SADC gene bank and access local seeds where possible.
- She congratulated the organisers of the event for the thorough preparations and pledged that the SCCI will continue to support this annual event

2.2.4 Remarks by the Representative of the Southern African Organic Knowledge Hub – Muketoi Wamunyima

- Challenged the City of Lusaka to establish local food outlets – restaurants – which can become tourist attractions because of the diversity of foods
- Stated the objectives of the knowledge hub as 1) to collect knowledge on organic agriculture; 2) to disseminate this knowledge which is locally adapted; 3) to create linkages on marketing for organic products; 4) to increase the coordination between stakeholders in the organic sector
- This festival provides the platform for achievement of all the 4 objectives
- This year's theme "sustaining traditional foods systems for nutrition in this COVID-19" is in line with the theme for the World Food day which is "Our actions, our future: better production, better nutrition, a better environment and a better life" - the common are that we all want a better future where we have food and nutrition security, and sustainable agriculture.
- Our farmers have a bog role to play in realizing these aspirations
- The festival is critical for all, not just the CSOs
- The 4 principles of organic agriculture are health, ecology, fairness and care
- We all need to promote organic agriculture not only for us but for our environment and our future generations.

Mr. Lavert Mulanji, an organic farmer, then presented the outcomes of the previous day's outcomes (the farmers' demands to government).

3.0 TOURING THE SEED AND FOOD DISPLAYS

This year's festival was attended by more than 100 farmers from all parts of the country, 50 of whom displayed seeds and foods that they grow. The Guest of Honor and other invited guests were invited to take a tour of the stands displaying seeds and foods from various parts of the country, displayed in colourful and creative ways by farmers. The guest of honour stated that he was impressed with the diversity of seeds and foods on display, that he did not know that some of these seeds still existed, or that they were still consumed. He was also amazed at the level of knowledge the farmers had on the nutritional and medicinal value of the crops they displayed, on how they use herbs and other plants to preserve the seeds, their level of articulation of agroecological farming practices and their capacity to network and learn from each other. The guest of honour commended the participating CSOs for empowering the communities and reviving traditional foods.

Other stakeholders were also impressed and expressed their desire to be part of the festival every year.



Picture: Festival participants touring the Scope Zambia stand, where pupils from various schools responded to their questions

3.1 Awarding the Display and Cooking Competitions



Picture: CTD T farmers won the prize for

ANNEXES

1. List of participating organisations and media houses

Participating organisations	Media houses
Zambia Alliance for Agroecology and Biodiversity (ZAAB)	Diamond TV
Caritas Zambia	ZANIS
Mizu Ecocare	
Community Technology Development Trust (CTDT)	
ActionAid Zambia	
Zambia Climate Change Network (ZCCN)	
Kasisi Agricultural Training Centre (KATC)	
SCOPE Zambia	
PELUM Zambia	
FIAN International Zambia	
Sustainable Innovations Africa (SIA)	
Rural Women's Assembly (RWA)	
ESAF Zambia	

2. List of main speakers at the event

Name	Organisation
Mr. Murdford Mwandenga	Commissioner - Human Rights Commission
Mr. Muketoi Wamunyima	National Coordinator - PELUM Zambia
Ms. Ketty Nanyangwe	Deputy Mayor – Lusaka City Council
Mr. Eugene Kabilika	Executive Director – Caritas Zambia
Ms. Ruth Chisanga	Acting DC _ Lufwanyama District
Mrs. Walubita Musanda	Seeds Officer - SCCI
Mrs. Dorcas Shonga	Farmer
Mr. Lavety Mulanji	Farmer
Mrs. Fivent Hang'angu	Farmer
Mr. Jesper Zulu	Farmer