

# ISAN

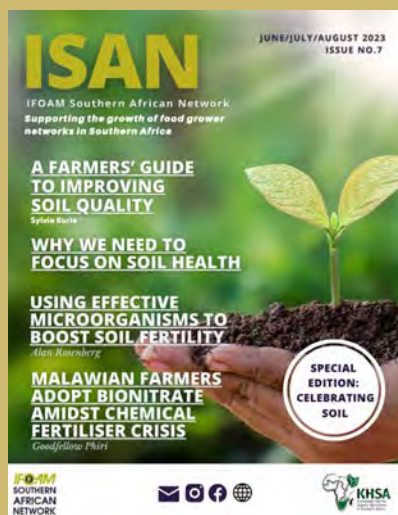
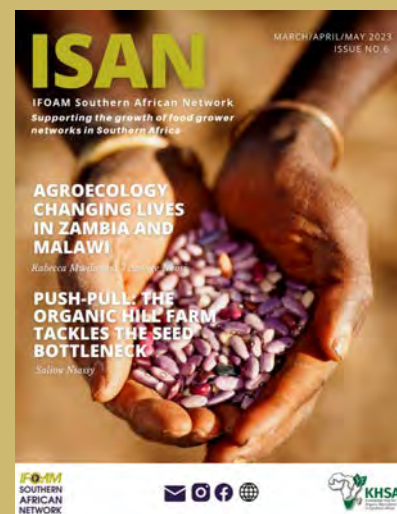
IFOAM Southern African Network  
*Supporting the growth of food grower  
networks in Southern Africa*

ISSUE 8  
SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER  
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SPECIAL  
EDITION:  
ORGANICS  
FOR  
HEALTH  
OF PEOPLE  
& PLANET



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# ABOUT ISAN

## INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF ORGANIC MOVEMENTS (IFOAM) SOUTHERN AFRICAN NETWORK

ISAN is a regional network of organisations and individuals actively supporting the development of a sustainable, ecological organic agricultural sector in southern Africa. Its values align with IFOAM–Organics International's (IFOAM\_OA) principles of Health, Fairness, Ecology and Care.

ISAN was formed during the second Africa Organic Conference held in Zambia in 2012 to represent Southern Africa Development Community countries: Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Kingdom of Eswatini, Zambia and Zimbabwe. To date, the following countries are active in ISAN: Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Madagascar, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

ISAN aims to develop and coordinate programmes and networks of common interest at the regional level working through National Organic Agriculture Movements (NOAMs), the Intercontinental Network of Organic Farmers' Organisations (INOFO) and the Network of Organic Agriculture Researchers in Africa (NOARA), all of which have chapters in the region.

For more information, contact: [chair@isan.ifoam.bio](mailto:chair@isan.ifoam.bio)

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### SOUR FIG

The juice from the leaves is used as an antiseptic and when mixed with water, it can be gargled to treat sore throats and mouth infections. People mix it with water and drink it. It is also made into a lotion to use on bruises, scrape, cuts, grazes and sunburn. A long time ago, the juice from the leaves was used to treat tuberculosis when mixed with honey, olive oil and water.

Source: Roberts & Roberts (2017) Indigenous Healing Plants. Pretoria: Briza Publications.





16 August



**Br Paul Desmarais, SJ**  
**(1945-2023; in Zambia 1971-2022)**

**16 August 2023**

He was 78 years old and in his 60<sup>th</sup> year in the Society of Jesus,  
51 of those were in Zambia.

*Ort.*.....09 Mar 1945  
*Loc. Nat.*.....Windsor, ON, Canada  
*Ingr.*.....18 Mar 1964  
*Loc. Ingr.*.....Guelph, ON, Canada

*Tertiaship.*.. Guelph, ON, Canada  
*Grad.*..... FF *Dies.*..... 02 Feb 1986  
*Loc. Grad.*.... Kasisi, Lusaka, Zambia  
*Trans.*..... CDA → ZAM on 14 Jul 1998

*Defunc.*..... 16 Aug 2023  
*Loc. Defunc.* Pickering, ON, Canada  
*Prov:*..... SAP

Paul Desmarais was born on 9 March 1945 in Windsor, Canada of a farming family. He went to Tilbury District High School from 1958-1963. Immediately afterwards, in 1964, he entered the novitiate in Guelph and, during his juniorate, took a BSc in Agriculture at Guelph University (1967-1971).

On arrival in Zambia in 1971, the Provincial asked him to help the local farmers around Kasisi. He planned a two year residence course for ten families and spent the first few years clearing the land and putting up the necessary houses, with financial support from Misereor. He ploughed a lonely furrow in those early years with little support from his companions, but his courageous tenacity, bordering on stubbornness, saw him through. The foundations for the Kasisi Agriculture Training Center were well laid.

He was greatly helped by those who joined him. Br Pat McElduff (1975-1978) was an experienced farmer and builder. Later Fr Donal McKenna (1982-1990) spent some years setting up a workshop in appropriate technology which produced various items needed by a small farmer – a foot operated water pump, a wooden scotch cart, solar cooker etc.

Finally, Fr Roland Lesseps (1990-2009) spent long years there with his great skill and knowledge in agroforestry. With Paul he helped launch KATC into the new area of organic farming.

In 1983 the Alumni Association of his *alma mater*, Guelph University, decorated him as the outstanding past student for that year. In 1985 the biogas project was launched with reports in the national papers.

In the early 1990's the KATC launched into organic farming, showing how to develop a sustainable farm replacing fertilizers and insecticides with nature's own products. International funding was available to help the farmers of the Chongwe area, not only to survive, but also to prosper in developing a natural way to produce the commodities that are now available in the shops like honey, moringa, flowers etc. as well as the staple crops of maize, soya beans, etc. Much work was done in choosing and developing better species of the crops used. At the memorial service for Paul at Kasisi, 18 August 2023, several leaders of Government, Agricultural officials, and farming organizations, highlighted the impact that KATC has had on the farmers of the Chongwe area, whose products continue to feed the surrounding urban population.

Br Paul was a pleasant person with a great sense of humor which belied his deep faith and unwavering commitment to serve the poor and the marginalized. His love for the poor and the earth made him a passionate advocate for ecological justice. As he often said: "Social justice has to include justice for the environment." His decades of organic farming led him to a greater ecological insight into the goodness of God. He saw in organic farming, not only a great respect for the gift of nature, but above all a way to help the ordinary small farmer to work for a better life.

He continued to be the Director of KATC up to 2020 when he took a back seat and saw the center continue to prosper and become increasingly more self-supporting. In 2022 he returned to Canada for treatment for a suspected brain tumor. He continued in good spirits despite increasing diminishment and finally he returned to his beloved Creator on 16 August 2023.

**To read more about Br Paul's life and contribution to the organic sector, click [here](#).**

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# EDITOR'S NOTE

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**By Fortunate Nyakanda, ISAN chair**

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the 8th edition of ISAN Magazine, which is a special edition that explores the connections between organics and the health of people and of the planet. We look at the organic principles of Ecology and Health that specify that human and ecological health are one and are indivisible. When the planet is unhealthy so are we. We join Zambia this month in celebrating Br Paul Desmarais SJ who spent his life contributing to the development of organic agriculture in Southern Africa. May his soul rest in eternal peace.

In this edition, we look at the increased demand for traditional foods, such as millet with its known health benefits. Millet is also a resilient crop able to adapt to changing climatic conditions. Bees and the honey they produce are highlighted through three articles that showcase the role they play in nature as pollinators, the contribution they make to livelihoods and how to preserve bees in our fields and in our home gardens. We provide some tips on making hot and cold infusions from herbs and other plants to repair dis-ease that comes from a state of imbalance. The benefits of medicinal plants like aloe vera, ginger, turmeric, mint, etc. are well known. What is less known is how to prepare them as medicinal teas. From beyond our borders, we bring you an article on how public procurement of organic foods in Denmark has contributed to improved health outcomes, and lower public health bills.

Our heartfelt thanks go to our contributors for sharing their experience and wisdom. We invite you to share your feedback on this edition and encourage you to adopt organics in your daily life to secure your own health, the health of your loved ones and the health of the planet.

Yours in organics  
Fortunate

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# PRINCIPLES OF HEALTH AND ECOLOGY

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**Organic agriculture is based on four key principles: Health, Care, Ecology and Fairness. This edition focuses on food as medicine (for people and the planet) and so we unpack the principles of health and ecology here.**

- **Principle of Health:** Organic agriculture should sustain and enhance the health of soil, plant, animal, human and planet as one and indivisible. This principle points out that the health of individuals and communities cannot be separated from the health of ecosystems. Health is the wholeness and integrity of living systems; it is not simply the absence of illness. Immunity, resilience and regeneration are key characteristics of health. In particular, organic agriculture is intended to produce high quality, nutritious food that contributes to preventive health care and wellbeing. In view of this, it should avoid the use of fertilisers, pesticides, animal drugs and food additives that have adverse health effects.
- **Principle of Ecology:** Organic agriculture should be based on living ecological systems and cycles, work with them, emulate them and help sustain them. Those who produce, process, trade or consume organic products should protect and benefit the common environment including landscapes, climate, habitats, biodiversity, air and water. Organic farming, pastoral and wild harvest systems should fit the cycles and ecological balances in nature. These cycles are universal, but their operation is site-specific. Organic management must be adapted to local conditions, ecology, culture and scale. Inputs should be reduced by reuse, recycling and efficient management of materials and energy to maintain and improve environmental quality and conserve resources. Organic agriculture should attain ecological balance through the design of farming systems, establishment of habitats and maintenance of genetic and agricultural diversity.

## AIR POTATO

Air potatoes are grown for food in Malawi, Zimbabwe, Nigeria and many other African countries. They are regarded as energy foods to help one recover from exhaustion. The air potato is rich in vitamin C, potassium and magnesium. They can also be used in a poultice to treat arthritic pain. They are easy to propagate and grow in the right conditions.

Source: Roberts & Roberts (2017) Indigenous Healing Plants. Pretoria: Briza Publications.



# LINK BETWEEN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND ORGANIC PRINCIPLES OF HEALTH AND ECOLOGY

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The organic principle of Health states that organic agriculture should sustain and enhance the health of soil, plant, animal, human and planet as one and indivisible and the organic principle of ecology states that organic agriculture should be based on living ecological systems and cycles, work with them, emulate them and help sustain them. See more about the principles [here](#).

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a collection of 17 goals and 169 targets that all United Nations member states have agreed to try to achieve by the year 2030. It is a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet for now and into the future. The SDGs cover a wide range of topics, such as poverty, hunger, health, education, gender equality, climate change, peace, and justice. The SDGs are interconnected and interdependent, meaning that achieving one goal can help achieve others, and vice versa.

The link between SDGs and the organic principles of Health and Ecology is that both aim to promote the wellbeing of people and the planet by respecting the natural systems and cycles that sustain life. They both recognise the importance of maintaining healthy ecosystems and biodiversity for the benefit of current and future generations. Below are just some examples of how the SDGs and the organic principles of Health and Ecology are linked though there are many other connections and synergies between them that can be explored further.





# LINK BETWEEN SDGS AND ORGANIC PRINCIPLES



## SDG 3 Good Health and Wellbeing | Principle of Health

### ***Prevent needless suffering from preventable diseases and premature death***

Principle of Health and SDG3 both aim to prevent diseases and promote physical and mental wellbeing for all at all ages. Organic agriculture can contribute to this goal by reducing the exposure to harmful chemicals, such as pesticides and fertilizers, that can affect human health and the environment.



## SDG 5 Gender Equality | Principle of Health & Ecology

### ***Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls***

Both principles recognize the importance of maintaining healthy ecosystems and biodiversity for the benefit of current and future generations which has a direct link to the terrestrial productive capacity. The two principles also aim to promote the well-being of women and girls, as well as the environment, by respecting the natural systems and cycles that sustain life. This impacts positively on women as custodians of family health and food and nutritional security. A healthy ecosystem provides for clean water and access to fuel (wood) which reduces burden on women leaving them with more time for other engagements.



## SDG 13 Climate Change | Principle of Ecology

### ***Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts***

This goal is related to the Principle of Ecology, as both of them aim to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change on natural and human systems. Organic agriculture can contribute to this goal by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, enhancing carbon sequestration in soils, increasing resilience to extreme weather events, and supporting adaptation strategies for farmers and communities.

## SDG 15 Life on Land | Principle of Health & Ecology

### ***Managing forests sustainably, halting and reversing land and natural habitat degradation, successfully combating desertification and stopping biodiversity loss***

This goal is related to both the Principle of Health and the Principle of Ecology, as both of them aim to protect, restore, and promote the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems and biodiversity. Organic agriculture can contribute to this goal by creating more habitats for wildlife, reducing the use of pesticides and fertilizers that can harm or kill non-target organisms, increasing the diversity of crops and livestock through rotations and mixed farming systems, and promoting soil health and fertility by adding organic matter and avoiding soil erosion.



# SPECIES AND ECOSYSTEM SURVIVAL

## SPECIES & ECOSYSTEM SURVIVAL

Every species plays a crucial role in the health and survival of its ecosystem. From food production to oxygen generation, pollination to seed dispersal, pest control, disease reduction, and waste recycling, each plant, animal and fungi is part of an intricate web of interconnected life.

Species roles are illustrated here using miombo woodland as an example - a forest type found across much of southern Africa.



**1** Plants absorb carbon dioxide from the air and release oxygen that animals need to survive. Plants store carbon in their leaves, trunk and roots as well as the soil around them. This reduces the amount of carbon dioxide entering the atmosphere and therefore helps reduce global warming. Plants help maintain water supplies by storing and releasing moisture, reducing floods and droughts.

**2** Plants use energy from the sun to convert carbon dioxide and water into glucose. This is the basis of food for almost all species in the world. Herbivores like elephants and antelopes eat plants and they can become food for carnivores like lions and wild dogs.

**3** Flowering plants need to be pollinated to reproduce. Different species of insects, birds and mammals pollinate different plants. For example, bats and moths pollinate baobab trees and many miombo species are pollinated by bees.

**4** Many plants rely on animals to disperse their seeds, enabling new plants to grow. For example, elephants, primates and birds eat fruit then deposit the seeds - fertilised by their dung, far from the parent plant.

**5** Nature recycles everything, with many different species contributing to nutrient transfer. For example, dung beetles collect and bury faeces, cycling nutrients back into the soil. Millipedes feed on dead and decaying organic matter and transfer nutrients through their droppings.

**8** Every species - including humans - contributes to ecosystem balance. Disturbing this balance can cause many negative consequences. For example, if natural habitat is reduced by humans, hungry animals like baboons and elephants may resort to raiding people's farms, leading to community hunger. Destroying habitat also increases the risk of disease transfer to humans.

**7** There is a constant cycle of life and death, with many species helping dispose of dead matter. Keeping the environment clean and healthy. For example, vultures dispose of carcasses, helping prevent the spread of diseases like anthrax and rabies.

**6** A healthy ecosystem has a balance of predators that keep pest populations under control. For example, eagles such as leopards and genets eat rodents, keeping their populations low. Many reptiles and amphibians reduce the number of unpleasant insects such as mosquitoes and flies.

# SPECIES AND ECOSYSTEM SURVIVAL

Synergies within the ecosystems are the positive interactions between different components of the ecosystems, such as species, habitats, processes, and functions, that enhance the provision and quality of ecosystem services. Ecosystem services are the benefits that humans obtain from nature, such as food, water, climate regulation, recreation, and cultural values.

The balance of the synergies within the ecosystems is important for maintaining the health and resilience of the ecosystems and their services. When synergies are balanced, the ecosystems can support multiple services without compromising or degrading any of them. For example, in agroforestry systems, trees can provide shade, soil fertility, carbon sequestration, and habitat for biodiversity, while crops can provide food, income, and fodder. These services are mutually beneficial and reinforce each other.

However, when synergies are unbalanced or disrupted, the ecosystems may face trade-offs or conflicts between different services or components. Trade-offs occur when the provision of one service increases at the expense of another service or ecosystem function. For example, intensive agriculture may increase food production but reduce water quality, soil health, and biodiversity. These trade-offs can have negative impacts on the ecosystems and their services in the long term.

Therefore, it is essential to manage the ecosystems in a way that optimizes the synergies and minimizes the trade-offs between different services and components. This requires a holistic and integrated approach that considers the multiple dimensions and scales of the ecosystems and their services. It also requires the participation and collaboration of different stakeholders, such as farmers, policy makers, researchers, and civil society.

The health relationships among the species within the ecosystems are also important for creating and maintaining synergies. Healthy relationships are based on mutualism, commensalism, or facilitation, where one species benefit from or helps another species without harming it. For example, pollinators such as bees and butterflies help plants to reproduce and produce fruits and seeds. These relationships enhance the diversity and productivity of the ecosystems and their services.

However, unhealthy relationships among the species within the ecosystems can disrupt or reduce synergies. Unhealthy relationships are based on parasitism, predation, or competition, where one species harm or exploits another species for its own benefit. For example, invasive species such as weeds and pests can outcompete or damage native species and reduce their abundance and diversity. These relationships can threaten the stability and functioning of the ecosystems and their services.

Therefore, it is important to protect and restore the healthy relationships among the species within the ecosystems and to prevent or control the unhealthy relationships. This requires a careful monitoring and assessment of the status and trends of the species and their interactions within the ecosystems. It also requires a sustainable management of the natural resources and a on the previous page, find an explanation of a typical Southern Africa ecosystem.



# HEALTH BENEFITS OF ORGANIC FOOD SYSTEMS



Adapted from 'Benefits of Organic food - Are they healthier and nutritious?'

**Organic food systems are a type of agriculture that uses natural methods and inputs, such as crop rotation, compost, biological pest control, and organic fertilizers, to produce food and other products. Organic food systems aim to minimize the use of synthetic chemicals, such as pesticides and fertilizers, that can harm the environment and human health.**

It preserves or even enriches biodiversity at the field level, at the farm level and in the ecosystem as per its regulatory demands that seeks to establish a sustainable management system for agriculture with respect to nature's systems and cycles, and sustain and enhance the health of soil, water, plants and animals and the balance between them, and to contribute to a high level of biological diversity.

The relationships between organic food systems and biodiversity are generally positive, as organic food systems tend to enhance the diversity and abundance of living organisms in agricultural landscapes.

**Biodiversity is the variety of life on Earth, including all the different species of plants, animals, fungi, and microorganisms, as well as their genetic diversity and the interactions among them. Biodiversity is essential for the functioning of ecosystems, which provide us with many benefits and services, such as food, water, climate regulation, pollination, soil formation, and recreation.**





Credit: Josh Adams

### **Organic farming benefits for biodiversity**

- Creates more habitats for wildlife, such as hedgerows, field margins, ponds, and meadows. Organic farms have between 46 and 72% more semi-natural habitats than conventional farms.
- Reduces the use of pesticides and fertilisers that can harm or kill non-target organisms, such as pollinators, predators, soil microbes, and plants. Organic farms host 30% more species and 50% more individuals than non-organic farms.
- Increases the diversity of crops and livestock through rotations and mixed farming systems. Organic farms have more diverse crop rotations and use more legumes than conventional farms.
- Promotes soil health and fertility by adding organic matter and avoiding soil erosion. Organic farms have higher soil organic carbon, microbial biomass, earthworms, and beetles than conventional farms.

#### **Benefits for human health**

- Organic foods are nutrient rich. Studies have revealed that organic foods are more nutrient-dense and offer a wider range of health benefits. Some flavonoids, particularly those with antioxidant characteristics, have seen a notable uptick in concentrations in recent years.



**Organic food systems and biodiversity have a mutually beneficial relationship that contributes to sustainable agriculture and environmental conservation**



Credit: Josh Adams

- If you're seeking for a detox, there's no need to look any further! The solution to all of your issues is organic, wholesome food! Foods grown without the use of insecticide, are higher in antioxidants. People who eat healthily are more likely to have a healthy lifestyle.
- Omega-3 fatty acids: For example, the substantial use of grass for cattle's nutrition results in higher quantities of omega-3 fatty acids, which are significantly more heart-healthy than other types of fats. Organic meats, dairy, and eggs contain higher levels of omega-3 fatty acids.
- Organic produce tastes better since it's grown without the use of pesticides, herbicides, or fertilizers. Food cultivated without pesticides or preservatives will taste better. Organically grown foods tend to be more flavorful since they are grown on soil that is well-fed and well-balanced. In comparison to commercially manufactured meals that have been chemically treated, organic foods have more minerals, vitamins, and other critical ingredients in them. Food grown close to where it will be consumed is fresher and better tasting than food that has been processed, imported, and transported.
- Metal toxicity: Cadmium, a naturally occurring metal toxin, is absorbed by plants and is hazardous to humans. Organic grains exhibited significantly lower cadmium levels than conventionally grown grains.
- Organically processed food is more nutritious than conventionally processed food, which is why it's better for you. Processed foods, on the other hand, can lead to unhealthy eating habits, eventually leading to digestive problems. Organic food is a better option for your diet because you can eat a lot of it, which is healthier than processed foods.
- Organically grown crops contain fewer pesticides than their conventionally grown counterparts. However, some pesticides that are permitted for organic farming or airborne pesticides from conventional farms may contaminate organic food. As a result of the safety guidelines for maximum residual levels set on traditional foods, it is difficult to determine their health impacts. However, organic foods are exposed to synthetic pesticides, which makes them a safer option.
- Organic foods are free of GMOs meaning that you are not ingesting potentially dangerous items.



# WORLD OF ORGANICS: STATISTICS AND TRENDS

Africa has the highest land under wild harvest 12 756 434 hectares (ha) being 43 % of the world's total land under wild harvests.

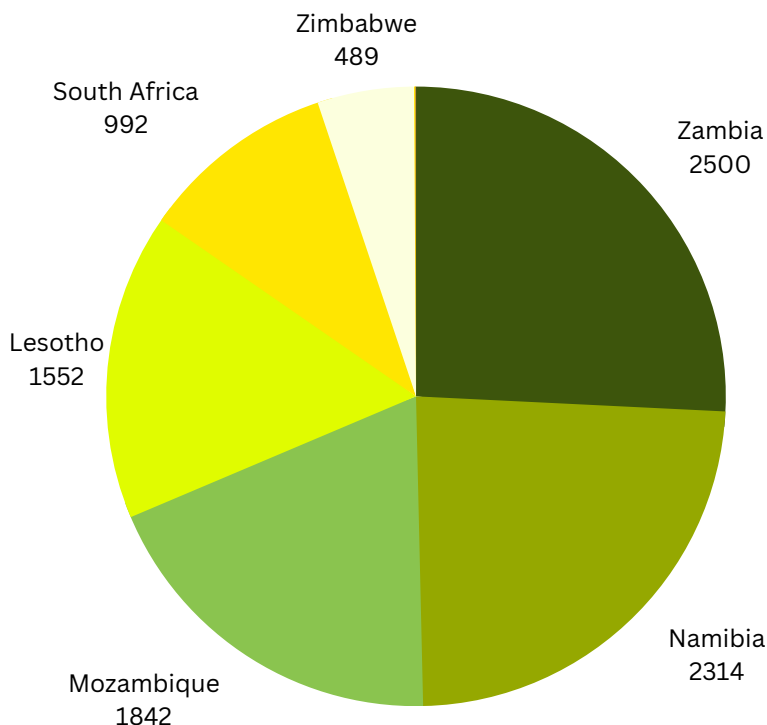
Zambia and Namibia fall in the top 3 countries in the world with most land under wild harvest and other non-agriculture uses.

## Wild collection and other non-agricultural areas

2021: 29.7 million ha  
(1994: 4.1 million ha)

Finland: 6.9 million ha  
Zambia: 2.5 million ha  
Namibia: 2.3 million ha

## Southern African Land Use Statistics: Wild collection including honey 2021 (hectares/1000s)



## Number of beehives recorded in 2021

Country	Number of beehives
Zambia	368274
Morocco	1242
Tunisia	579

Source: World of Organic Agriculture 2023

# RESUSCITATING ZIMBABWE'S TRADITIONAL CROPS



Credit: PELUM Zimbabwe and Tall Grass Media

By Caroline Jacquet

**The United Nations declared 2023 the International Year of the Millets. Millets, in their diversity, are affordable sources of nutrients for healthy diets that can be cultivated in adverse climates and arid regions with minimal external inputs.**

The Zimbabwean diet was historically highly diverse and nutritious. Millets were grown in Zimbabwe for centuries until they lost their lustre when European food crops (and farming techniques) were introduced. Surplus millet produced after 1910 became unpopular and unmarketable as maize now dominated. This change in diets over the past 5 or 6 generations has taken a toll on the health and nutrition of Zimbabweans.

At the same time, crops like maize are agroecologically ill-suited for most regions of the country. Smallholder farmers struggle to produce them, and as rainfall patterns

and distribution become an increasingly limiting effect of climate change, yields continue to decline, and crop failures become more and more common. A shift to drought-resistant, locally adapted crops (such as small grains and local legumes) helps smallholders diversify their production and ensure a more reliable, nutritious food supply for their families and the country. The Zimbabwe Traditional and Organic Food Forum, a network of organisations whose aim is to increase the cultivation and consumption of nutritious traditional and organic foods, started the Good Food and Seed Festivals in response to these twin problems: a shortage of healthy foods made from local ingredients available to Zimbabwean consumers and limited markets for the traditional crops and plants that grow best for local producers.





Credit: PELUM Zimbabwe and Tall Grass Media

During the seed fair day, farmers from around Zimbabwe exchange seeds and knowledge on these seeds. The festival day has stalls selling a wide range of local produce, products and seeds including traditional grains, legumes and herbs, teas, cosmetics, appropriate technology, and small livestock, and locally adapted seed varieties.

There is also a food court offering diverse cuisines and dishes all made with Zimbabwean ingredients; cooking demonstrations and chefs' battles; activities for kids learning about traditional foods, nutrition, climate and agriculture, and traditional dance, music, stories, games and crafts; and live music.

The 2023 Good Food and Seed Festival is focusing on millets and chose svoboda as its special millet crop. Svoboda is a very interesting small grain.

This forgotten millet was revived in Masvingo province. Svoboda is the local name for barnyard millet or *Echinochloa esculenta* in Bikita; there is a high probability that this grain is found in other parts of Zimbabwe under different names. Masvingo province is a dry area. The region experiences low rainfall which is not evenly distributed; it suffers long periods of dry spells and hot summers. Climate change is devastating crop production.



**The Good Food and Seed Festivals are the only events in Zimbabwe that bring smallholders together with consumers to interact, receive direct market feedback, and learn and exchange information, all in celebration of healthy, sustainably produced local food.**





Credit: PELUM Zimbabwe and Tall Grass Media

While discussing the grains farmers used to grow in the area, svoboda was mentioned for the first time. Mai Mukondo, a farmer from Bikita, had inherited a few seeds stored in a clay pot from her grandmother. During a seed show, the now late Mai Mukondo demonstrated the seed to farmers who showed great interest in it. From the handful of seeds left in her storeroom, svoboda was multiplied and the crop is now widely grown in Masvingo. The small white, round grains have a nutty flavour and a slightly chewy texture. Svoboda grains are usually parboiled, dehulled and cooked and consumed like rice. The grain can also be roasted and ground into flour. Svoboda is also used to make traditional beer. Only millet grains can be used to perform rituals and appease ancestors.

Join Chef Taf as this year again he's visiting all corners of the country, learning about svoboda and other millets. Watch it on [YouTube](#). And if like many farmers you'd like to start growing nearly forgotten crop varieties again, visit one of the district festivals organised across Zimbabwe, or the Harare Good Food and Seed Festival on 29-30 Sep 2023! For more information on Zimbabwe's traditional crops and indigenous plants, check out our [website](#) and [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#) channel.

Let's change diets, increase acreages under traditional food, and give hope to our smallholder farmers!

**“Svoboda is cost-effective. you don't need a lot of money to grow it. It is easier to harvest and grind than other millets. Birds, pests, and diseases rarely attack it both in the field and in the storeroom. If you harvest the crop if there is moisture it will continue to shoot and it takes 3 months to ripen. One can harvest three to four times from one plant. I have been able to grow enough for my family and I have also shared seed with other farmers. It is our mandate to bring back what our elders used to grow and eat. Small grains perform well during drought and have many health advantages; svoboda is high in iron.”**

- Farmer testimony

# LET FOOD BE YOUR MEDICINE, AND MEDICINE YOUR FOOD



Credit: Josh Adams

**By Karen Parkin**

**Herbalists work with the healing power of nature, the life principle that all organisms possess, if left alone they will heal. They approach healing that links body, mind and spirit. An imbalance in any of these three leads to dis-ease. The medicinal remedy is tailored to the pattern of imbalance to restore harmony.**

Herbs are dynamic living organisms. They balance everything and this is the balance we are after. The quantities of substances that herbs contain vary throughout the day and seasons according to the stage of metabolism they are in at the time. Gather herbs for remedies to reflect the unique balance they are in when plucked at various times of the day and seasons. The dynamic balance in herbs has no unacceptable side effects as they contain counter-substances.

## **What are simples?**

Simples are remedies in which ingredients are kept as simple as possible. Complex and large mixtures have complex reactions and can be unpredictable. Master herbalists still use simples as remedies to treat all kinds of diseases successfully. Start with growing and getting to know a few herbs, become familiar with their nature and qualities through observation, research and experimentation.

## **Acquiring and storing herbs**

An herb will only be effective in the recommended dosage if it contains the full complement of active ingredients. The potency is affected by a number of factors: species, place and the climatic conditions it is grown in, time of harvest, drying and preserving methods, duration and conditions of storage and the herb form.





Credit: Josh Adams



## Preparing hot & cold medicinal teas

- Fresh herbs are first ripped and bruised between the hands or in a mortar and pestle to break up the tissue structure and release the active principles.
- Where possible; use distilled or spring water rather than tap water.

### Making a cold infusion

- Plants with leaves or flowers that have volatile oils, like Buchu, require cold infusion so as to not destroy the oils with heat.
- The herb is steeped in cold water overnight or through the day in a covered vessel. Make enough to last for 1 to 3 days. Keep it in the fridge.

- Strain off the required amount as needed.

### Making a hot infusion

- Use this method when extracting active principles from soft materials like flowers, leaves and finely chopped roots.
- Steep the herbs in a tightly covered container with water that has just been brought to a rolling boil. The herbs are steeped for 10-20 minutes before it is used.
- A “sun tea” is made by exposing the herbs in water to the sun in a tightly sealed glass bottle or jar for a few hours.

**The best containers for preparing herbs are glass, earthenware or unchipped enamel pots. If unavailable, then stainless steel. Never use aluminium.**





Credit: Josh Adams

### Proportion and dosage

- The rule of thumb is to use 30g (approximately 30ml) of the dried herb to 500ml of water.
- When using more than one herb in a formula it becomes complicated. To start with use the minimum amount of different herbs in a formula so; 30g of each herb to 500ml of water is acceptable.
- When using fresh herbs, the amount of herbs used is double, at least, as the weight consists mostly of water.
- Some water is absorbed by the herbs during preparation, particularly dry materials. Take this into account when working out how much to prepare for a certain dosage.
- The standard dosage is to take half to one cup tea 3 to 4 times a day.
- When treating acute ailments; frequent small doses are more effective than a few large doses, particularly in the first 3 days of treatment. Two tablespoons (30ml) to a quarter cup can be taken every half hour.
- Dosage for children, frail and elderly people needs to be less, usually half the standard dose.
- Discontinue use after symptoms disappear!

### Things to bear in mind

- There are generally followed rules when picking herbs for medicinal use, they should be collected when medicinal components are highest. Leaves are picked just before the plant goes into flower. These and other above ground parts are picked after morning dew has evaporated and before the hot sun starts evaporating essential oils. Flowers are picked just before reaching full bloom, any later they lose medicinal value. Berries and fruit are picked when fully ripe and about to fall off the plant naturally. Above ground parts (combination of stems and leaves) are picked the same as one would pick leaves. Bark and twigs of shrubs and trees are collected in spring when the sap rises and the leaves first appear. Roots and rhizomes are collected in autumn when the sap returns to the ground, when leaves start changing colour and the berries and seeds are mature. In some cases they are collected in early spring before the sap rises. Avoid harvesting any herb in the hottest part of the day, they slow down their metabolic processes dramatically and are resting at this time of day.

# SCHOOLS, HOSPITALS & MILITARY BARRACKS AS DRIVERS FOR ORGANIC MEALS AND MORE ORGANIC FARMERS: THE CASE OF DENMARK



**By Paul Holmbeck**

**The conversion to organic food in Danish public kitchens covers all types of public institutions, from hospitals and schools to senior homes, city halls, ministry canteens and military barracks.**

**Research indicates that successful transition to organic, healthier and climate friendly meals can be achieved through a combination of policy, capacity building in organic NGOs, value chain collaboration and active engagement of kitchen staff.**

A key turning point came in 2012 when the Danish government launched a new organic public procurement strategy. The goal was to create better public meals, reduce climate emissions and increase the organic farming area, with its proven benefits for biodiversity, environment, farm incomes and avoiding pesticides in food and drinking water.

Critical to success was the combination of 4 public policy initiatives (procurement goals, financing, labeling and NGO capacity building) and 3 organic sector initiatives (supply chain collaboration, organic schools for food service and education for kitchen workers). This created collective motivation and critical mass in green transformation in public kitchens, including a rapid uptake for the national Organic Cuisine Labels, for 30, 60 and 90 percent organic. Today, more than 34 00 kitchens have organic labels.



## Strong Business Case for Organic Public Procurement Model

Most striking for many officials and kitchen leaders, is that the conversion to 60% and even 90% organic has been achieved within the same operating budgets. The organic price premium was covered by reducing waste, buying seasonal foods, and converting to a more plant-rich diet, with less meat. While the conversion itself required a public investment in the short term (for planning and education), the result of this holistic approach to sustainable conversion, is a diet and kitchen practices that give healthier, more climate friendly and organic meals with no increase in operating budgets.

Organic public procurement has also contributed to a five-fold increase in organic sales in the public and private food service sector over a ten-year period. This market signal has been a contributing factor to the 70% increase in organic farm area in this same period (2011-2019). Less waste, fewer climate emissions and healthier food. Studies show that under organic conversion, kitchens reduced waste in food production by 88% and by 26-50% in serving and plate waste. This has both climate and economic benefits. Organic sales in public and private food service (reflect COVID close down).



Source: Denmark's Statistics

Public organic meals are also increasingly aligned with the Danish health and climate guidelines. The University of Copenhagen has estimated that even a partial alignment of Danish meals with the guidelines can give a savings on health costs of 1,6 bn euros annually, primarily due to reduced risk of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and cancer.

**Research shows that conversion to healthier, organic and climate-friendly meals has created new pride, prestige and dedication to sustainability among kitchen staff. Workers show new competencies, fewer sick days and a 54% increase in job satisfaction.**

## Key policy tools

### Create clear national & municipal goals

The national government goal (2011) of 60% organic in all public kitchens served as a strong motivation for government leaders at all levels, and for both kitchen leadership and the food service industry. Copenhagen is now at 90% organic.

### Incentivise city conversion

Funding for conversion planning and education in the kitchens was highly motivating. Within 3 years, 30% of counties were completing conversion projects.

### Create a national label for organic cuisine

A key ingredient, for both documentation and motivation is the danish Organic Cuisine labels in gold, silver and bronze, representing 90, 60 and 30% organic. The Danish model has inspired similar labels in Germany, France and Norway.

### Support for capacity building in sector

Capacity building in the organic sector allowed Organic Denmark to mobilise the organic value chain and collaborate intensively with the food service industry, trade unions representing kitchen workers and other stakeholders. It also allowed The Copenhagen House of Food and others to drive conversion and education.

## NGO & Supply chain mobilisation

### Build broad stakeholder involvement & mobilisation

To promote the new organic goals and funding, the Veterinary and Food Administration teamed up with Organic Denmark, to organise a campaign and a nationwide tour targeting local and regional government, trade union leaders and kitchen managers.

The meetings demonstrated best practice in organic kitchens, debunked myths, and showed how organic price premiums could be covered within budget. Matchmaking sessions brought officials together with “organic transition advisors.”

### Motivate the food service industry

Organic Denmark created “Organic Schools” to educate frontline salespeople on “the why” of organics, bringing them out onto organic farms to see the benefits for animals, nature, and environment. They became strong catalysts for organic sales.

### Take kitchen staff seriously

Train and motivate food professionals as motors for change. The organic shift involved significant changes in meal plans and preparation, including deep reductions in waste, less meat and less pre-prepared or frozen food. This required new skills and a real buy-in from kitchen staff and managers. NGOs and the ministry make a point of celebrating kitchen staff, holding festive celebrations awarding organic labels in gold, silver and bronze.

**Together, policy makers, organic sector organisations, market actors and kitchen staff can drive transition to healthier, climate friendly organic meals!**

This article is based on the IFOAM – Organics Europe case study prepared as input to the EU Organic Action Plan by Paul Holmbeck. Read the case study [here](#).





# BEES: THE LITTLE CREATURES THAT KEEP US ALIVE



By Isaac Mafuel

**She emerges from the hive, a tiny speck of black and yellow in the morning sun. She is a worker bee, one of thousands in her colony, and her job is to collect nectar and pollen from the flowers.**

She flies over the farm, scanning the landscape for signs of colour and scent. She spots a patch of maize, their tassels waving in the breeze. She zooms in, landing on one of the male flowers. She probes the anthers with her tongue, sipping the sweet nectar and gathering the yellow pollen on her hairy legs.

She moves on to another flower, and another, until her pollen baskets are full. She takes off, leaving behind a trail of pollen that will fertilize the female flowers and produce kernels. She heads back to the hive, but on her way she notices a cluster of purple flowers on a sorghum

plant. She can't resist the temptation, and she dives in for a quick snack. She fills her honey stomach with more nectar, adding to the load she will deliver to her sisters. She resumes her flight, buzzing with satisfaction. She has done her part in pollinating the crops and providing food for her colony. She is a bee, and she is a pollinator.

Humans depend on bees for their food and livelihoods. Bees pollinate about one-third of the crops that humans eat, such as fruits, vegetables, nuts, coffee and many others. Without bees, humans would face a drastic decline in food production and quality, leading to higher prices, food insecurity and malnutrition. Bees also pollinate wild plants that support other wildlife, such as birds and insects. Without bees, humans would lose much of the biodiversity and beauty of nature.



But most humans are not grateful for the services that bees provide. They are destroying the bees' habitats with deforestation, urbanization and monoculture. And they are poisoning the bees with chemical pesticides that are designed to kill pests, but also harm beneficial insects.

Still, all is not lost, yet. There is a better way to farm and live in harmony with nature. It is called organic farming and agroecology. Organic farming and agroecology are approaches that aim to enhance the ecological and social functions of agriculture, such as food security, biodiversity, climate resilience and social justice.

Organic farming and agroecology avoid the use of

synthetic pesticides, herbicides and fertilisers that can harm bees and other pollinators. Organic farming and agroecology improve the natural resources, such as soil, water and biodiversity, that provide bees with a healthy and diverse habitat.

Some benefits are increased crop yields and quality that bees provide through their pollination services. Organic farming and agroecology are not only good for bees, but also for humans and the planet. They can create a more sustainable and harmonious food system that respects the rights and needs of all living beings.

They can foster a mutually beneficial relationship between bees and farmers, where both can thrive.

**Organic farming and agroecology conserve the native bee populations that are more efficient and resilient than honey bees at pollinating some crops.**



To contrast, let us follow another bee on yet another trip. He lies on the ground, his wings twitching weakly. He is a honey bee, one of the millions that have fallen victim to the chemical pesticides that farmers spray on their crops. He was flying over a field of sunflowers, looking for nectar and pollen, when he encountered a cloud of poison. He felt a sharp pain in his abdomen, and then his vision blurred. He lost his sense of direction, and he could not find his way back to the hive. He crashed into the soil, where he will soon die. He is not alone.

All around him, his brothers and sisters are suffering the same fate. They are the casualties of a war that humans are waging against nature.

Time is running out. If humans do not change their ways soon, they will face a future without bees. A future without colour, without diversity, without sweetness. A future without life. The choice is ours. We can either save the bees or lose them forever.

## DID YOU KNOW?

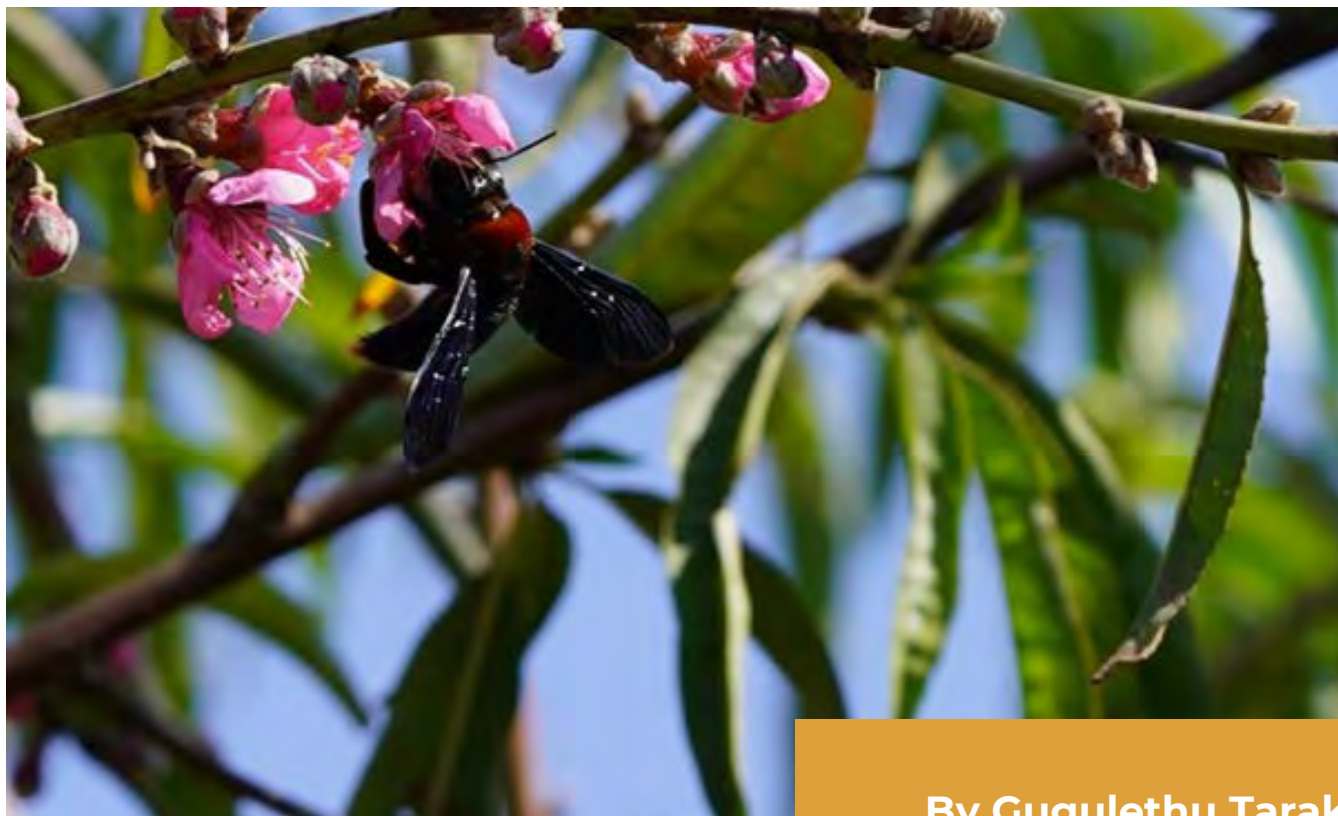
Wild harvesting of honey takes place on more than 2.5 million hectares worldwide, with much of that taking place in Zambia, Namibia and the United Republic of Tanzania.

Zambia has the second biggest collection of certified organic beehives - estimated at 368 274 in 2021 (there were about 3 million certified organic beehives globally in 2021). The market for organic honey is expected to keep growing exponentially.

Source: FiBL & IFOAM Organics International. 2021. The world of organic agriculture. [Online](#).



# MAKE BEE-FRIENDLY FARMS & HOMES



Credit: Gugulethu Tarakini

By Gugulethu Tarakini

**There are more than 20 000 known species of bees in the world and the majority are solitary. Bees possess diverse feeding behaviors, lifestyle and nesting requirements. This makes it impossible to come up with a one-size-fits all method for their conservation.**

There are bee species that feed on a few types of plants and there are those that feed on a wider variety of plants. The more specialised that species are, the greater danger they face as they have limited food choices. Feeding choices in bees is influenced by a variety of factors among them being the design of their mouths. For example, some have long tongues and other have short ones. This already determines the type of flowers that they can feed from as some are hollow, narrow and tubular requiring specialised tongues to access the nectar or pollen. This plant-bee mutual relationship underscores the importance of conserving all species.

23

Loss of bees means lack of pollination for trees, yet the loss of trees means lack of food for the bees. For us humans, a decline in bee species and populations will severely impact on livelihoods by decreasing crop production and destabilising natural ecosystems that provide timber and non-timber forest products such as fibers, medicines and wild fruits.

Our major sources of starch like maize and rice may not be dependent on insect pollination but many other supplementary vegetables, fruits and nuts eaten daily are dependent on bees for pollination. Despite the important role played by bees in the ecosystem, they are currently threatened by changes in land use, climate change, chemical pollution, and pests and diseases, among other threats. Some species have already become extinct in some areas, hence an urgent call for their conservation.





Credit: Gugulethu Tarakini



## What we can do to save bees on farm

- **Leave weeds around your fields**

It is advisable in farms to allow weeds to grow surrounding your fields as these provide diverse food for your bees. This is especially important in farms that practice monoculture farming and offer only one food source for the bees. Weeds diversify food sources hence improving bee nutrition. Diverse food sources also ensure a diverse supply of food for diverse bee species therefore enhancing bee diversity, which relates to improved pollination services for your crops.

- **Plant cover crops**

Planting of cover crops during off planting seasons may also help to provide

food for bees during off cultivation seasons. Crop diversification on farms also diversifies food provision for bees.

- **Use organic pest control methods**

It is also advisable to use non-harmful pest control methods to avoid killing bees with pesticides. Farmers need to familiarise themselves with physical, biological and mechanical pest management methods that are not harmful to non-target species like bees. It is also advisable that in cases where a farmer cannot get organic pesticides, they may still opt for pesticides that are recorded as harmless to bees.

**Agroforestry practices are especially encouraged as the integration of trees in farms provides both food and nesting sites for tree nesting bees.**



- **Protection of nesting sites**

Bee conservation also requires protecting nesting sites, which includes trees, dead branches and soil. Crop cultivation that has minimal disturbance to the soil is more favourable. Examples include zero tillage. Some species nest in the ground and minimal soil disturbance will ensure survival of their offspring underground.

### **Bee conservation at home**

Due to changes in land use systems, bees have to travel longer distances to look for food, but we can minimise this challenge by providing food for bees in our home spaces.

- **Create pollinator gardens**

One can plant diverse native plants and form what can be called a pollinator garden. These small patches of flowers can be important food resources for the bees. We can also choose to mow our lawns less as we allow the bees to benefit from the weeds.

- **Stop using chemicals in your garden**

We can also only use organic pesticides in our vegetable gardens or other non-harmful pest control methods to avoid poisoning bees.

- **Provide water**

Another important resource for bees is water and we can provide small bowls in our open yards for bees to drink from. We need to put stones inside these bowls, however, to enable bees to get landing surfaces as they drink the water, so that they do not drown.

**Watch the  
9-minute video  
of Gugulethu's  
journey to study  
bee species in  
Zimbabwe by  
clicking the  
play button.**





# BEES ARE GOOD FOR THE PLANET & FOR LIVELIHOODS



Credit: Heinrich van der Merwe

By Heinrich van der Merwe

**In March of 2018, I met Adriano Mangrassa walking around in the streets of Gurue selling honey in used plastic mineral water bottles. Being an avid beekeeper myself, I stopped him and asked him how and where he was producing the honey...**

Adriano explained that he had traditional log hives in a small, wooded area near his home and that he had a lot of difficulty keeping the swarms in the hives after harvesting and sometimes had to wait two years to harvest from the same hive.

I asked him if he would like to make money from producing honey with good technical assistance and modern beehives and he agreed so we transferred some of his log hives into Kenyan Top Bar hives.

I will never forget the expression on his face when in August of the same year when we harvested 23kg of honey in comb from his new hives and he received the first payment without having to go and walk the streets to sell the honey.

That is what gave rise to Agri-Mel a company dedicated to providing an alternative source of income to rural beekeepers while at the same time promoting forest conservation and landscape restoration. Adriano now has 12 hives and produces on average 150kg of honey every year generating around 20 000 meticaïs or ZAR5 000 of extra income for his family.

Agri-Mel currently has a team of 10 full-time field technicians supporting 380 small rural beekeepers in Alto Molocue, Gile, Gurue and Maganja da Costa districts of Zambezia province in Mozambique.



Credit: Heinrich van der Merwe



**Each  
beekeeper has  
a QR code that  
is displayed on  
their honey.  
Customers can  
scan the code  
and see a video  
of the  
beekeeper who  
made their  
honey.**

We have worked as implementing partners for beekeeping and forest conservation projects with organizations like FAO and WWF. We are partnered with a French NGO called Nitidae promoting beekeeping and coffee grown in an agroforestry system as a means of restoring the forests on Mont Namuli in Curue and we have created a specific brand of honey for this project called Mel do Namuli, the coffee we produce will be branded as Café do Namuli.

Agri-Mel are pioneers in traceability of honey and we currently have a system whereby each harvest from each beekeeper is given a

lot number and processed individually. We are currently strengthening this system by the implementation of a digital monitoring system developed in partnership with a Mozambican tech company called empoderar Moczambique. This system will provide a better means of controlling hive and swarm development as well as providing improved data for monitoring of our impact in the lives of the beekeepers.

Our honey was recently awarded a certificate of excellence at the Apimondia Africa summit held in Durban in March of 2023.

**For more info:**  
[www.agri-mel.org](http://www.agri-mel.org)  
[hvm@agri-mel.org](mailto:hvm@agri-mel.org)



# Farmers' Tips

**Farmers play an important role in maintaining the health of the land and all life that it sustains. Plants can be medicine for the soil and for people.**

## **Embrace diversity**

Planting a diversity of crops has many benefits. Having many types of plants in your fields helps to ensure more consistent supply of food, feed for animals, fuel and sources of minerals for your soils - and thus your crops. It enables you to have more to sell at market, and in cases of damage or loss to one crop, there are other crops available for eating and for selling. It also helps to keep pests and disease away from your crops by providing alternative crops for pests to feed on (beneficial pest management) or can ward pests off your crops.

## **Actively embrace diversity**

High levels of biodiversity are the foundation of all life. This includes diversity of and within species. Healthy levels of biodiversity help maintain healthy ecosystems - and it is these that provide us with clean air and water and supply us with food, medicines and fibres.

Actively work to protect and even create habitats for beneficial insects, birds and other wildlife in and around your farm.

## **Keeping soils alive**

The foundation of organic farming lies in maintaining healthy and fertile soil. Use natural methods like composting, green manure, and cover cropping to improve soil structure, nutrient content, and microbial diversity.

Always avoid the use of pesticides as they harm invertebrates like earthworms that increase soil nutrients, improve drainage and create more stable soil as they feed on organic matter and burrow underground.

Having a biodiversity of life in the soil is scientifically proven to provide health benefits for human health. The more life in the soil, the less disease-causing organisms can thrive.

**Organic farming is a holistic approach that requires patience, observation, and adaptability. Implementing organic principles will not only benefit the health and ecology of your farm but also contribute to a more sustainable and healthy food system overall.**



# KNOWLEDGE HUB SOUTHERN AFRICA (KHSA)



**The Knowledge Hub for Organic Agriculture in Southern Africa (KHSA) is part of the Knowledge Centre for Organic Agriculture in Africa (KCOA), a collaborative country-led partnership funded by the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH and non-governmental organisations across Africa.**

The KCOA aims to scale up adoption of agroecological and organic farming practices through five knowledge hubs in Africa. The South African-based Sustainability Institute supports project implementation in southern Africa. Activities are focused in Zambia, led by Participatory Ecological Land Use Management (PELUM) Zambia; in Namibia led by the Namibia Nature Foundation (NNF) in collaboration with the Namibian Organic Association (NOA); in South Africa led by the South African Organic Sector Organisation (SAOSO) and in Malawi, led by Kusamala and Soils, Food and Healthy Communities. The other hubs are implemented by GIZ and country implementing partners in North, West and Eastern and Central Africa.

## **What's happening in Zambia?**

**PELUM ZAMBIA** focuses on the sector-wide approach in Zambia working with policymakers, media, small-scale farmer organisations and lead farmers to raise awareness of the need for a transition towards agroecology and organic approaches to farming.

Preparations for the annual commemoration of the Zambian traditional seed and food festival 2023 are underway. The festival themed “Celebrating traditional seed and food for healthy, safe and nutritious food for people, the planet and economy” will be held on 13 to 14 October 2023. PELUM, partnering with a 15-member consortium of civil society organisations to promote sustainable food production and indigenous seeds, is planning the annual event. Smallholder farmers, the private sector, other civil society organisations, the government as well as the general public are expected to take part of this important festival. A key event is the farmer dialogue that allows farmers to interact with policymakers and technocrats from the Department of Agriculture, an opportunity presented to share their challenges, and expectations and also get clarity on issues in agriculture. The exhibition of a variety of local seeds and foods forms the climax of the festival coupled with farmer-to-farmer exchange of local seed varieties and knowledge. The festival was first held in 2018 and aims to exhibit indigenous seeds and food to promote public utilization of the products. It is a platform for knowledge, experience, and seed sharing for smallholder farmers. The festival also promotes public awareness on traditional foods and indigenous seeds for nutrition and food security.

The annual Agroecology, Social Accountability and Climate Change Media (ASACC) Awards is planned for end-2023 and the PELUM team with other civil society partners has been working to attract more entrants to these innovative awards that showcase good practice in writing about agroecology as a suitable response to the challenges faced, like climate change.



**Kasisi Agriculture Training Centre (KATC)** deploys the *KHSA Multiplier Program (MSP)* in Zambia. Its MSP focuses on three government-run farming institutes and farmer training centres in the Eastern Province. These institutions and centres are places where technocrats and farmers obtain technical information and mentorship. They also employ general workers who oversee farmer field schools and demonstration plots. KATC is working with 40 multipliers from these institutions and centres through in-depth training, particularly on sustainable organic agriculture, natural pest and disease management and facilitation skills – to assist multipliers in more effectively transmitting knowledge to others.

KATC is in the second phase of its MSP. The second group of MSP participants attended training at the KATC centre in Lusaka from 27 August to 8 September. This follows on from a mentorship visit conducted by KATC with lead farmers gathered at the Farmer Training Centres. MSP participants were evaluated on their support by the lead farmers and fellow multipliers. The aim was to identify any gaps between those multipliers who underwent training at KATC in June and those who had not yet been trained.



**Group photo of multipliers in the ongoing training visiting Mr Kabunda, a KATC-trained farmer**

### **What's happening in Malawi?**

**Kusamala Institute of Agriculture and Ecology (KIAE)** deployed the sector-wide approach and consistently engaged with and worked with media (journalists and editors) as a strategic stakeholder able to reach many other stakeholders in the country.

Kusamala's work for KHSA has come to a close. In the past year, they have hosted a successful stakeholder workshop that mapped challenges and opportunities in the organic and agroecology sectors in the country. This formed the basis of their selection of media as a strategic stakeholder able to reach a broad and diverse group of other key stakeholders in Malawi.



To this end, they conducted a needs assessment with journalists in 2022 and designed and implemented training sessions for both journalists and editors in 2023. Feedback from media regarding the training was that it was much needed and appreciated. KIAE has designed a set of innovative knowledge products that are responsive to journalists' needs. These include a Permaculture Hotspot map that provides an overview of demonstration gardens in the country (story sites for media), a Chichewa Users' Guide to Permaculture, the innovative Food and Farming Systems Jargon Dictionary, and several infographics showing linkages between agroecology and the Sustainable Development Goals and on supportive and non-supportive policies for sustainable agriculture in the country.

KIAE held a closing ceremony in Lilongwe on 29 August 2023 with invited stakeholders who received printed copies of the KPs; those unable to attend could join virtually through Zoom.



**Kusamala closing event in Lilongwe with key stakeholders who were provided with printed copies of the KPs developed during the project**



**Soils, Food and Healthy Communities (SFHC)** designed a MSP that builds on its Farmer Research Team (FRT) work. The FRT is a volunteer group of farmers that conduct research and share knowledge on behalf of and with the community. The MSP, working with 30 participants (15 women and 15 men), will focus on improving the capacity of FRT members.

The SFHC team has completed several training sessions as well as post-production of a video series focused on botanical remedies and on food budgeting. The videos have been validated by technical experts, lead farmers, FRT members and follower farmers. The videos were shot in Tumbuko and feature FRT champions. They will be dubbed into Chichewa with English captions. The videos will be activated with FRT members at the end of September.



**FRT members discussing their feedback following the first screening of the videos**



**Sneak peak at #ChooseOrganic campaign materials**

### **What's happening in South Africa?**

**The South African Organic Sector Organisation (SAOSO) and Participatory Guarantee System South Africa (PGS SA)** are conducting an MSP titled the Pollinator Programme, which works with 20 multipliers across South Africa to establish and support PGS groups. The pollinators are trained in production methods, PGS governance, farm visit assessments and more.

The PGS webinar series co-hosted by PGS SA and Ghana PGS over the past few months attracted more than 663 people over the six online sessions. Topics were the fundamentals of PGS, PGS as a catalyst to shape the growth of a national organic sector, making PGS groups sustainable, certification of agro-processed produce, organising for market, and synergies between PGS and other developmental programmes. GIZ kindly offered the services of translators to ensure that Francophone countries could join this exciting exchange. Oluwami Benedict, one of the facilitators of the series, noted that: "This is the beginning of a deeper engagement among PGS groups globally to make sure that we become part of the decisions made for the sector". Speakers included Patricia Flores from IFOAM Organics International, Teboho Sepiriti from PGS Lesotho, Julie Matovu from Fresh Veggies PGs in Uganda, Jiyoung Moon from Hansalam PGS in South Korea and Silvia Rota from Slow Food International Italy. PGS SA and Ghana PGS express their deep appreciation to all participants and speakers, whose collective contributions breathed life into this transformative initiative. Recordings and presentations of the webinar series can be found [here](#).

The impact of PGS SA's successful market development webinar series (developed for and attended by PGS Pollinators and members of PGS groups) is starting to show. The 1000 Hills PGS and Ogwini South Farm PGSs hosted a successful market in eThekweni Municipality in KwaZulu-Natal province on 26 May 2023. Nineteen farmers provided produce for the market. Mveli Skhungu from Ogwini PGS noted that: "We had a great first day at Eshongweni Market, the reception was overwhelming."



***Traders at Eshongweni Market, KwaZulu-Natal***

Excitement is building as SAOSO, PGS SA and partner organisations prepare to launch the highly anticipated #ChooseOrganic campaign this September. The campaign, which builds on a Soil Association campaign, aims to raise awareness and support for embracing an 'organic' lifestyle. Everyone is invited to share the campaign and support the movement towards sustainability, wellbeing and a greener planet. Follow the campaign on [Facebook](#) and Instagram.

SAOSO/PGS SA's MSP came to a close on 15 August 2023 in an online celebration of and reflection about what had been achieved over the past two years. The Pollinators have been immersed in both theoretical and practical training sessions, complemented by real-world application in setting up and managing PGS groups. This innovative programme has set the bar for training in this focus area.

### **What's happening in Namibia?**

The **Namibian Organic Association** focuses on the sector-wide approach in Namibia engaging with academia and research institutions, media, the commercial beef sector and increasingly policymakers. The **Namibian Nature Foundation** conducts its MSP with 30 multipliers, 24 are lead farmers and 6 are managerial staff at training organisations in the Zambezi region. The MSP has adopted a community based agricultural extension model to cost effectively increase the amount and quality of the OA/AE extension available to small-scale farmers. It aims to successfully promote the adoption of agroecological and organic practices and more effective multiplier support to the farmers they work with. It includes mentorship, personal capacity building and production training, among other topics.



NOA/NNF's MSP worked with 30 multipliers from October 2022 to August 2023 in an in-depth support programme. The programme aimed to build a better understanding of organic agricultural practices, including sessions on making and using compost and mulch, how nature works (water, energy and nutrient cycling), forest farming and permaculture design, seed saving and storage, and pest and disease management. The programme also focused on personal skills related to setting life goals, managing money and time and record keeping. A secondary aim of the programme was to enable MSP participants to find freelance opportunities in which they could share their skills and generate a small livelihood. NNF provided short-term, community-based extension opportunities for eight of the participants. Participants had the following to say about the MSP.

*"The MSP really changed me because now I know how to farm with nature."  
- Bonventure Lizazi*



***MSP participants at the last training session September 2023***

The Namibian University of Science and Technology and NOA will be co-hosting five public guest lectures with a focus on organic agriculture and agroecology. The intention is to raise awareness, showcase organic agriculture and agroecological initiatives, farmers and agripreneurs in Namibia and the region, spark discussion amongst key stakeholders and provide inspiration to agricultural students in Namibia. Key speakers include Dr Feliz Prinz zu Loewenstein, Kanangwa Newlove, Mareike Voigts, Manjo Stighling and others from the organic agriculture world. While the series is aimed primarily at the commercial agricultural sector, the principles and topics are applicable to small-scale/subsistence farming as well. This series provides an opportunity to shift the perception of organic agricultural practices and to position it as a system within which climate change resilience and food sovereignty can be addressed. The lectures will be open to the public and livestreamed online. More details to follow.

# SUGGESTED LITERATURE AND UPCOMING EVENTS

## Literature

- Nature loss is eating away our food supply and diversity. Biodiversity towards sustainable Food systems: Four arguments.
- Impact of farming on biodiversity.
- Care about biodiversity? Push for food systems transformation
- Top 3 African superfoods to boost gut health
- Potentially important food plants of Zimbabwe

## Upcoming events

- **Global Action Day: # I GrowYourFood**

Livestream: IFOAM Organics International and Intercontinental Network of Organic Farmers' Organisations "Nourishing the world in times of crises- Farming and food production for the future". 14 September 2023 13:00 CEST

Watch the event here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7klj2VNBBHU>







**[FIND OUT MORE ABOUT ISAN HERE](#)**