



E-SLIP

LIVESTOCK INFORMATION CORNER



2024 EDITION



In this Issue

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- Forage Sustains Milk Volumes During Climate Shocks
- Rangeland Revival : Bringing to life 7000 hectares in Chongwe



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FOREWORD:

It is with great pleasure that I announce the extension of the Enhanced Smallholder Livestock Investment Programme (E-SLIP), generously supported by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the Republic of Zambia. This Programme has been instrumental in transforming the lives of smallholder livestock farmers, and we are thrilled to continue this critical work.

Since its inception, E-SLIP has made significant strides in improving the productivity, incomes, and resilience of smallholder livestock farmers. By providing training, livestock packages, and interventions in the control of East Coast fever (ECF) and contagious bovine pleuropneumonia (CBPP), we have empowered farmers to take control of their livelihoods and build better futures for themselves and their families.

The extension of E-SLIP is a testament of the Programme's success and the commitment of our cooperating partners, including IFAD. We are grateful for their trust, guidance and further support, which will enable us to reach even more farmers and communities in need.

As we embark on this new phase of E-SLIP, we remain dedicated to our core objectives which are: to improve the livelihoods of smallholder livestock farmers, to enhance their resilience to climate change, and to promote sustainable agricultural practices. Furthermore, we will now extend our mandate to enhancing our beneficiaries' access to markets through matching grant facilities.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to IFAD for their continued support and partnership. I also wish to thank our lead implementing agency, the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock, other government agencies, cooperating partners and our farmers themselves, who have all worked tirelessly to make E-SLIP a success.

Together, we will continue to work towards a brighter future for smallholder livestock farmers, and improving the livelihoods of rural communities.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gregory M. Mululuma'.

Dr. Gregory M. Mululuma
Programme Coordinator
Enhanced Smallholder Livestock Investment Programme (E-SLIP)

THE DRY HORIZON:

Why Drought Mitigation Matters More Than Ever

As the world grapples with increasingly severe effects of climate change, it's time to prioritize proactive solutions. Zambia suffered a prolonged drought during the 2023/2024 farming season that affected the food and nutrition security of many smallholder farming households.

84 out of the country's 116 districts were severely affected by the drought, compelling the government to declare the calamity a national disaster.

Drought mitigation has since become a lead priority and the country has been working to prevent or minimize future impacts of such adverse environmental shocks.

The Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock through the Enhanced Smallholder Livestock Investment Programme (E-SLIP) has also therefore been compelled to scale-up its efforts towards enhancing farmers' resilience to drought and climate change.

The Programme has been promoting drought-resilient forage seed aimed at securing household nutrition as well as supplement livestock nutrition during the dry seasons of the year.

In this newsletter, we showcase the stories, expertise, and initiatives that are helping E-SLIP beneficiaries build more resilient households.

Drought mitigation is no longer a nicety, but a necessity. Let us work together to prioritize proactive solutions, support climate-resilient agriculture, and build more sustainable water management systems.

Call to Action: Share your thoughts on drought mitigation with us on social media using the hashtag **#DroughtMitigationMatters**.



Natasha Mhango

Knowledge Management and
Communication Manager

Enhanced Smallholder Livestock
Investment Programme (E-SLIP)

EMPOWERED FARMERS, RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

By Natasha Mhango

Gwembe district is a valley, which means its inhabitants are subject to high temperatures and unpredictable rainfall patterns. These conditions are challenging for any farmer. Furthermore, the prolonged drought of the 2023/2024 farming seasons affected the area thereby worsening the already harsh conditions.

In the heart of a region plagued by extreme heat and aridity, a group of small livestock farmers who received a livestock package from E-SLIP, have demonstrated extraordinary resilience and ingenuity, turning adversity into opportunity. Their story is a testament to the power of community, adaptability, and sustainable practices in the face of environmental challenges.

In 2023, farmers of Hauma area of Gwembe were empowered with a livestock package of 40 goats, which they shared equally among eight beneficiaries.



Maria Hasalama - a pass on beneficiary, poses with Hitrun Hauma - an initial beneficiary

"We received 5 goats each and were expected to pass on 5 once the offspring was born. We have successfully managed to pass on these goats despite the challenges that the prolonged drought posed on us," Mr. Hitrun Hauma said.

Hitrun was born and raised in Gwembe where goats are the preferred choice of livestock for farmers. Though he has lifelong experience with rearing goats, he and many farmers have struggled with challenges that livestock are bound to encounter in dry arid areas.

Once such challenge was heart water disease – a tick borne disease that affected some farmers in the community. Instead of giving up, the goat beneficiaries chose to adapt.

"Some beneficiaries lost goats to heart water disease but each beneficiary was responsible for replacing the goat that they lost and that's how come we have been able to pass on to new beneficiaries as per guidelines by E-SLIP," he explained.

Goats are known for their adaptability and resilience, especially in dry arid regions where survival is a daily challenge. These hardy animals have evolved unique physiological and behavioral traits that enable them to thrive where other livestock might struggle.

One of the key factors contributing to the resilience of goats in arid regions like Gwembe is their dietary flexibility. Goats are natural browsers, they prefer to eat leaves, twigs, and shrubs than just grass. This browsing behavior allows them to consume a wide variety of plant species, many goats drought-resistant and can survive in harsh conditions. Their (goat) ability to digest tough, fibrous plant material also means they can extract nutrients from vegetation that other animals might find indigestible.

Beneficiary farmers in Hauma maximized on these qualities and this resilience of goats is having significant implications for human communities in Gwembe. They provide a reliable source of milk and meat contributing to food security and economic stability.

One of the requisites for beneficiaries of the livestock packages under E-SLIP is to pass on the livestock packages to new beneficiaries. This transition is crucial for the sustainability of rural livestock farming communities as well as ensure the continuity of E-SLIP interventions in livestock stocking and restocking.



Four pass on beneficiaries received 5 goats each



Jester Chongo - a beneficiary of the pass on

Jester Choongo was one of the beneficiaries of the pass on. At 58, her life has been a series of battles against nature most especially in Gwembe where the sun beats down relentlessly. The 2023/2024 drought pushed her to the brink and being a beneficiary of the pass on, felt like a lifeline.

“Passing on this livestock is necessary

because we’re not just helping ourselves but we’re building a future for our youths,” Ms. Jester said.

Passing on animals despite a harsh drought is a noteworthy event as it gives farmers in Hauma hope that they can reshape the livestock productivity in their area.

E-SLIP’s Restocking and Stocking Specialist, Mweni Mwape explained that the pass on was an indicator on sustainability of the intervention and therefore longer term impact on the community.

“In light of the 2023/2024 drought we saw crop failure in Gwembe district and as an insurance fall back in terms of resources, households have been depending on livestock as a source of income to buy their maize and mealie meal for their food security,” Mr. Mweni observed.

He added that E-SLIP has placed 200 goats in the entire Gwembe district with over 50 households having benefited from the pass on scheme.

This passing on of goats in Gwembe is more than about receiving livestock but about resilience exhibited by the beneficiaries amidst harsh weather changes. It is assurance that farmers in the area will continue to thrive despite their challenges, one shared success story at a time.

HOPPING INTO SUCCESS: Belita’s Journey In Rabbit Production

By GLORIA SIWISHA

Risk-taking, involves stepping outside one’s comfort zone, challenging the status quo, and seizing opportunities that others may shy away from, even when the outcome is not certain.

That’s exactly what 60-year-old Belita Phiri of Chipata district did in 2002, when she quit her civil service job, to take-up small-scale farming.

Like most farmers, she limited her production to crops like maize, soya bean and groundnuts -using organic manure - before she later included the rearing of improved village chickens which she accessed through a pass-on initiative by the Government of Zambia.

Although knowing fully well that risk-taking could either make or break her new venture, Belita still took the chance believing that it would allow her to explore untapped potential and position her business uniquely, so as to get a competitive edge in the market.

“I don’t do this work alone. My husband always helps, as well as our two friends [workers], since our children are all grown up and living independent lives,” she said,“ but I love it and pursue it whole heartedly knowing that it is only through farming that we can achieve socio-economic emancipation.”

Today, Belita is a model farmer in both crops farming and chicken rearing.

Just recently, she also diversified into rabbit production, thanks to the Enhanced Smallholder Livestock Investment Programme (E-SLIP), whose goal is to sustainably improve the production and productivity, and the incomes of rural households.



Belita Phiri, assesses her apple plants that she's nurturing with rabbit manure

The rabbits she received were part of the Rural Poor Stimulus Facility (RPSF) which was financed by the International Fund for International Development (IFAD). The Facility was launched in April 2020 and offered rural households relief against the COVID-19 pandemic.

Belita was among the many beneficiaries who received rabbits which were the relief packages distributed to selected farmers in Zambia.

Her rabbit production journey began, with a training that was conducted by staff under Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock.

"I learned about the E-SLIP rabbit pass-on programme through our extension officer; expressed interest to participate in it, and was subsequently recruited. As per programme requirement, I underwent training before I could be entrusted with the rabbits," she said, "the training focused mainly on general rabbit management processes, breeding, feeding, disease control, and housing and cage construction."

Belita received nine rabbits on condition that she passes-on the same number of off-spring to another set of beneficiaries in the district.

"Because of the speed at which rabbits re-produce, their population multiplied to over 80 within a short period of time, to the extent that I managed to pass-on almost 30 rabbits to 12 other women within the community - way above the E-SLIP recommended threshold," she said, "I still pass-on at least two rabbits to every person who shows interest to join this business because sharing brings more blessings."

Belita further explained that since diversifying into rabbit production, the livelihood and nutrition of her household, had improved significantly.

She has since expanded her livestock business to include other animal species in order to broaden her income base.

"If well managed, rabbit production is a profitable business which guarantees quick returns on investments as they reproduce faster - compared to other livestock - and are also not picky when it comes to feeding," she said, "through rabbit farming, I have also managed to buy pigs, goats, and turkeys that I sell to earn extra income. During the 2023/2024 farming season, I sold some of the pigs and used the proceeds to buy fertiliser which enabled me produce more than 60 by 50 Kilogramme bags of maize."

These aren't the only benefits that Belita boasts of. She also uses the rabbit droppings as manure for her steadily growing orchard of oranges and apples, thereby asserting herself as one of the few smallholders of this era to have fully understood what it means to embrace integrated farming.

"Currently, I have more than 10 apple trees that I am nurturing with rabbit manure and they are progressing really well. I also use rabbit urine to control pests in my mangoes, oranges and apple trees," she said.

However, Belita's rabbit business has not been without challenges.

According to her, the severe drought that the country experienced during the 2023/ 2024 farming season, drastically impacted production levels.



Belita Phiri, uses rabbit manure and urine to nourish and control pests respectively

"The notable challenges I experienced were the shortages of feed and water for livestock use. The rabbits were also not reproducing as fast as they do. But, with every challenge comes an opportunity for farmers to explore ways of sustaining production and for me, it was time to engage extension staff regularly on alternative ways to feed rabbits. I also surfed the internet where I learned that mango and pawpaw leaves were also good nutrition for rabbits," she said.

As such, Belita resolved to venture into the production of livestock feed like Rhodes grass and legumes such as velvet beans and cowpeas to sustain feeding.

"I had planted a small portion of Rhodes grass last season and want to expand this year, and also include legumes. It's also my desire to harvest some of the rain water that flows free from the mountains so that there's sufficient to feed my animals during lean periods," she said.

Belita is versatile. She has also embraced the production of herbs such as oregano, rosemary and Moringa as alternative sources of income during off- rain season.

Her long-term desire is to develop a strong network of rabbit producers in her community - to increase supply - so that she embraces value-addition of rabbits on a large scale.

"E-SLIP's rabbit pass-on programme has really profited me that's why I am currently restocking as there are 18 households waiting to each receive a rabbit from me. Together, I want us to create that consistent supply of rabbits so that we engage in value addition," she said, "During the last agricultural and commercial show in Lusaka, one smoked rabbit, fetched me about K200, compared to a K50 that I would get from the sale of a live rabbit."

Ms Phiri surely stands out as a testament to the power of knowledge, resilience and hard work.

She truly is a perfect example of an individual who seized the opportunity that Government provided through initiatives such as E-SLIP, to not only sustainably improve livestock production and productivity, but to also correctly manage it, in order to maximise profits.

FROM SEED TO SUCCESS:

Evaness Kapambwe's Forage Journey



Evaness Kapambwe at a training for forage farmers

By Natasha Mhango

In the heart of Kapiri Mposhi district Central province, where vibrant fields stretch toward the horizon, Evaness Kapambwe emerged as a beacon of innovation in sustainable agriculture. This successful forage farmer and seed grower has harnessed the potential of sunhemp, a versatile crop known for its soil-enhancing properties, to transform her farming operations into a thriving enterprise.

Last season alone, she reported remarkable earnings of K178, 000.00 a testament to her dedication and expertise in the field. With her newfound success, Evaness has not only built a dream house but has also set an inspiring example for others in the farming community, showcasing how strategic crop selection and sustainable practices can lead to both economic prosperity and environmental stewardship.

Evaness has been a registered seed grower for over 10 years. Through the Seed Control and Certification Institute (SCCI) she was introduced to E-SLIP where she selected to be among the Programme's 55 seed growers located across the country.

"I became a seed grower for E-SLIP 4 years ago. In my first year, I purchased a hammer mill from my sales. In the second year I bought a mini bus and from my third year which was 2023/2024 farming seasons, I managed to start the construction of my own 4-bedroomed house," Evaness disclosed.

In the recent farming season, she cultivated 1 hectare of cowpea forage seed and 4 hectares of sunhemp.

"From my field of sunhemp and I got 78 x 50kgs bags which generated K178, 000.00," Evaness disclosed. She added that her main customers were commercial farmers from Mkushi.

She said if it were not for her sales in sunhemp, she would not have realized anything due to the prolonged drought of 2023/2024.

"I grew 3 hectares of maize and only harvested 5 bags, then beans I cultivated 2 hectares but the entire crop failed," Evaness explained.

Evaness' story is one that demonstrates what making a farming household resilience against changing weather patterns looks like. Central province was among the provinces that were worst hit by the prolonged drought of 2023/2024.

Evaness and her household of 14 dependants were compelled to ensure their food nutrition security. Her household is comprised of 4 of her own

children and 4 of her orphaned nieces and nephews among others.

"I have 4 children of my own. All of them together with my husband and myself go to the fields during farming season. Farming is a business and I want the mind-set of my family to believe in that," Evaness said.

By strategically incorporating this drought-resistant crop into her farming practices, she not only ensured a profitable yield despite adversity but is contributing to the sustainability of her land. Her story serves as an inspiring example of how embracing resilient agricultural techniques can transform obstacles into opportunities, all while promoting ecological balance within her farming ecosystem.



Evaness with fellow forage farmers from other Provinces

REPLENSHING LIVELIHOODS

through Stocking & Restocking



By Josiah Mpofu

Tiyanjane Sakala received 20 chickens from E-SLIP

I wonder how my survival could have been this year 2024, had it not been for the interventions by the E-SLIP [Enhanced Smallholder Livestock Investment Programme]. The dry spells ravaged all my crops including groundnuts, maize and soya beans leaving me without nothing to harvest,” Tiyanjane Sakala lamented.

Tiyanjane is one of the many beneficiaries of E-SLIP’s Stocking and Restocking exercise through which rural farmers were received loans in form of various livestock packages.

The 54-year old was among the farmers in Shimunenge village of Kapete area in Chongwe, who received a livestock package of 20 chickens in 2021.

She noted that she was given the chickens after undergoing some livestock management trainings in 2019 through which she was educated on the best practices of chicken rearing including feeding, administering of medicine and provision of shelter.

She explained that from the 20 she received, she was able to multiply them to 60 from and per guidelines, she passed on 20 chickens to a next beneficiary.

“Before the interventions by E-SLIP, I used to depend on growing crops such as maize, soya beans and groundnuts which if in certain seasons does not do well, forced me to beg for maize which I would take to the hammer mill for processing into mealie meal,” Tiyanjane recalled.

She said the chicken rearing however has improved the food and income security of her home despite the dry spells that were experienced in the 2023/2024 farming season. She disclosed that since most of her maize crop failed, she was able to sell some of her chickens and buy maize through the Food Reserve Agency (FRA) community sales program.

She added that through her poultry she also managed to buy some goats and has diversified her small livestock farming endeavours. She has also been able to invest in the expansion of her vegetable gardening venture with a boost from her readily available chicken manure.

Sharing Tiyanjane Sakala’s success is Mary Zulu.

Through E-SLIP’s Restocking and Stocking exercise, Mary received a livestock of 5 goats, a male and 4 females which she multiplied to 32 after passing on the 5 offspring to a next beneficiary.

Mary said the goat empowerment has enabled her to pay for her child’s college.

She explained that the prolonged drought of 2023/2024 farming season did not favour her cultivation of maize and groundnuts.

Mary said despite the crop failure she has not find any challenges to feed her family as she was able to sell some of her goats and buy food; adding that she was also able to pay the required amount in purchase farming inputs under the Farmer Input Support Programme (FISP).

“Before E-SLIP’s intervention, I used to face a lot of challenges to feed my children and take them to school because I didn’t have an alternative source of income in situations of crop failure as goats are able to sustain me because they are able to withstand harsh weather conditions,” Mary explained.

Meanwhile, Chongwe District Commissioner, Dr. Evans Lupiya, described the E-SLIP interventions as a success as it has helped beneficiaries in the District to escape the drought induced hunger.

Dr Lupiya said the interventions have enhanced resilience among farmers and transformed their perception in looking at chicken and goat production as a lucrative venture.

He appealed farmers to ensure that the pass on programme continues even after the end of the E-SLIP life cycle for the good of the District economic wise.

Providing alternative livelihoods for rural communities is key in improving the economic and social development as espoused in the 8th National Development Plan.

FROM FARM TO FORTUNE:

Cultivating Drought Resilient Agriculture through Entrepreneurship Training

By Natasha Mhango

The training of farmers in entrepreneurship skills holds significant importance as it equips them with essential knowledge and tools necessary for enhancing their agricultural practices and overall business acumen. By fostering an entrepreneurial mind-set, farmers can better understand market dynamics, identify opportunities for innovation, and develop strategies to increase their productivity and profitability.

Entrepreneurship trainings not only empower rural farmers to make informed decisions regarding resource allocation and risk management but also

encourages them to explore alternative income streams, thereby diversifying their agricultural ventures and improving their financial stability.

For this reason, E-SLIP in partnership with the Zambia Development Agency (ZDA) facilitated a training of 18 E-SLIP beneficiaries on Lead Farmer Approach and Entrepreneurship. The 18 farmers were drawn from all the 10 provinces of Zambia and aimed to enhance the resilience of their households against unpredictable weather conditions, including droughts, which can significantly impact agricultural productivity.

The farmers showed that they are adept in entrepreneurship and likely to engage in value-added activities, such as processing and marketing their products, which can significantly enhance their income potential.

Mwananyambe Mwananyambe is the chairperson of Maka Multipurpose Cooperative in Sesheke. This 42-member cooperative received a livestock package of 100 goats from E-SLIP in 2018 and recently had a fourth pass on of these packages to a new cooperative within the community.

For years, the Maka Cooperative has strived to commercialize their goat production and this compelled Mwananyambe and one other cooperative member to respond to the invitation to attend the training.



Mwananyambe Mwananyambe made a presentation for a business proposal

"After we passed on 4 times, we received those 100 goats back to us and our plan now is to venture into goat processing, packaging of meat and also marketing. As of now, we have close to 130 goats as a cooperative," Mwananyambe said.

The cultivation of entrepreneurship skills among farmers such as those of Maka Cooperative is crucial for fostering sustainable agricultural development, promoting rural economic growth, and ensuring food security in their communities.

Trevor Musangu from Chililabombwe Copperbelt province who was the youngest participant at the training explained that the training was valuable for his cooperative of youths who had turned to livestock farming as an economic activity to support themselves.

Through E-SLIP, they received a livestock package of chickens, which has helped diversify their income sources. Furthermore, they received an incubator from E-SLIP, which has helped them add value to their poultry products.

"Our group is promoting organic farming so we thought that if we venture into forage seed production we may try and grow it organically and the residues that may remain we can even start making organic stock feed. So that is how we responded to this workshop because it is an added advantage to our group's plans," Trevor said.



Trevor Musangu was the youngest participant at the training

He belongs to a youth cooperative called Poverty Eradicators whose goal is to eradicate poverty through maximum use of natural resources. The youths formed the group in 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic made it harder for them to find formal employment.

The training covered essential aspects of entrepreneurship, from business planning and financial management to topics on environmental awareness.

This training aimed to empower farmers with a greater understanding of risk management strategies taking into account the impact that the prolonged drought had on most rural farmers during the farming season.

This knowledge was crucial in developing a resilience mind-set, geared towards sustainability and proactive planning, so that farmers could not only safeguard their households but also contribute to the overall resilience of their communities in the face of climate change.

A LIFELINE FOR LIVESTOCK-FORAGE

support transforms Kabwe farmer's life amid drought



A field of sun hemp

Helen Witt

In the rolling broken hills of Zambia, 60-year-old farmer based in Kabwe, Mervis Dabulamanzi has been working tirelessly to build a thriving livestock enterprise.

With a small herd of cattle, flock of chickens, and a tribe of goats, Mervis has been struggling to provide her animals with nutritious forage.

That was until she received support from Enhanced Smallholder Livestock Investment Program (E-SLIP) to grow high-quality forage and fodder for her animals and chickens.

"The support came at just the right time, I was struggling to find reliable sources of nutritious feed for my animals, and it was affecting their health and productivity," Mervis recalls.

HIGHLIGHTS



A mother and her daughter in Chongwe walking home after a morning in the family field



Listening to farmers is how we gather our lessons learned



Pasture and forage production can improve resilience to climate change



Beatrice Mwambwa is a beneficiary of a second pass on that has held by Maka Coooperative in Sesheke



Farmers in Chalimbana are beneficiaries of E-SLIP's annual ECF immunizations



Hauma Coooperative in Gwembe district successfully passed on goats



Nathan Mweetwa Maliki received a heifer from E-SLIP in 2019 and his herd has steadily increased



The chickens received through E-SLIP has enabled a group of women in Chipangali venture into tailoring

OF THE YEAR



An incubator donated to some poultry farmers in Gwembe continues to improve their income generation



E-SLIP partnered with the Zambia Development Agency in training farmers in entrepreneurship



Sikauunzwe Cooeprative established a poultry business after their cattle was slaughtered due to CBPP



A training of 18 forage farmers in entrepreneurishp skills was held in Chilanga district



The watering point in Chongwe is one of E-SLIP's responses to improving access to water



Students and farmers alike visited the E-SLIP exhibiton at the Batoka Seed Fair



Livestock are relied on for draught power



Rangeland Committee are vital in promoting environmentally sustainable farming

With the support, Mervis was able to plant lush crop of Rhodes grass a high –protein forage ideal for cattle.

She narrated that in the year 2018, E-SLIP invited her to Palabana for a training on pasture production, which covered how to harvest and store forage to ensure its quality and longevity.

“In the year 2018, E-SLIP took me and the other livestock farmers to Palabana to train us on how best we can produce forage, how to harvest and store it well so that it lives longer,” she explained.

In addition to folder seed support, Mervis also received training on how to grow folder crops to supplement her chicken’s diet.

“The folder crop have been a huge success,” Mervis said. “My Chickens are loving the fresh vegetables and their egg production has increased significantly.”

The support from E-SLIP has educated her on how to ensure that her animals survived during the dry seasons of the year thereby improving their health and productivity.

Mervis recalled that before the support, her financial muscle was weak. Now, however, she said that she has managed to drill a borehole at her farm, which is helping with irrigation.

She said that she has become an exposed farmer through with E-SLIP who have taken her to different places to learn what other farmers are doing.

“Because I have been able to increase my income from the sale of forage and eggs from chickens as well as the sale of my goats, I am able to support my family, I am able to pay school fees for the children and I have continued to invest in my farm,” Mervis added.

She is grateful for the support rendered by E-SLIP adding that it has helped her achieve her dreams.

“I’m so thankful for the support I received from E-SLIP, this provision has given me the tools and knowledge I needed to build a successful and sustainable livestock enterprise,” Mervis thanked.

Mervis has since appealed to the project funder to continue helping small-scale livestock farmers with the knowledge and support such as forage seed among others.

Mervis’s story is a testament to the power of targeted support in helping farmers building resilient and thriving agricultural enterprises.

She has emerged victorious from the crucial times of drought that lead central province to losing 50% of the maize crop destroyed in a scorching sun.

The 2023/2024 drought lead to the death of some cattle, goats and chickens and reduced market prices for such livestock as farmers were desperate to earn money.

As such support such as education through trainings and tangible packages such as is magnanimous, as it has helped improved the quality and productivity of livestock reared in rural areas.

Mervis has plans to grow even bigger. She wants to install a water tank at her farm to conserve water a much valuable resource for sustainable agriculture.



A cultivated field of cow pea

FORAGE

sustains milk volumes during climate shocks

By Helen Witt

Dairy animals play a pivotal role in Zambia's agricultural sector, economy and food security thus prompting key government's stakeholders such the International Agricultural Fund for Development (IFAD) to offer vital support to Zambia.

The above-mentioned partner has worked tirelessly with the Government of Zambia to implement key programmes to boost the livestock sector through their co-financed Enhanced Smallholder Livestock Investment Programme (E-SLIP).

The Programme's to promote sustainably improved livestock production and productivity so as to improve rural household incomes.

In Kabwe district, E-SLIP has supported smallholder farmers through livestock production and productivity packages in a bid to improve the incomes of rural poor households.

74-year-old, Philip Mooya of Kabwe's Mukobeko area in Central province, was supported with forage seed to grow for his animals and for income generation.

Philip rears dairy cattle, beef cattle, goats and chickens at his 7.5 hectares piece of land; where he was struggling to keep his animals well nourished.

With limited access to nutritious feed, the milk production of his cattle was dwindling, threatening his livelihood.

Through his involvement with E-SLIP he has a testimony of how his household livelihood has been transformed.

Philip added that the forage seed that he was supported with, were specifically designed for dairy animals and have proved to be a game changer in his farming enterprise.

He narrated that he was given pasture legumes such as velvet beans and cowpeas,



One of Philip's farm managers at work

he was also given Rhodes grass which he grew and market was provided by E-SLIP making it easy to sale the produce.

Mooya says the seeds given were easy to plant and maintain even in drought conditions such as the one experienced last farming season.

With the adverse effects of drought experienced last farming season, Central Province principle livestock development officer Elina Hall said some animals were likely to die out of hunger, heat stress and fatigue due to walking of long distances in search for pasture and drinking water.

Ms. Hall also revealed that in the case of dairy animals, a likeliness of reduced milk volumes was anticipated due to lack of enough pasture to feed on during dry season.

In the case of Mooya, he never felt the adverse effects of drought when it came to his animals especially the dairy ones.

His animals had enough feed during the dry times, this enabled his animals milk volumes to be sustained amid this crucial time in every farmers life.

"My animals had enough feed during the dry times, this enabled my dairy animals milk volumes to be sustained amid this crucial time in every farmers life," Explained Mooya.

My animals have been giving me 90 to 100 liters of milk per day since January this year until now, all thanks to E-SLIP as without them my animals would have died out of hunger and the milk volumes would have reduced drastically.

Mooya takes his milk to Parmalat every morning for sale and he makes good money that is helping him pay for his grand children in good private schools.

He added that he has managed to sink a borehole and bought a big generator which he has installed at his farm.

Mooya

BENEFICIARY FARMERS

BUILD RESILIENCE AMID DROUGHT

By Happy Mulolani

Water is life"! This phrase might sound cliché but its reality is manifesting itself among households in Kaabo village in Chikankata district in Southern province.

Kaabo village is a rural outpost which lies 22 kilometres from the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock Chikantata district office.

Majority of the households thrive on livestock rearing – mostly goats, chickens and cattle. They have also integrated maize, sun flower, groundnuts and cow peas.

A smallholder farmer Moses Milambo, is an inhabitant and owns a four hectares farm. Aged 42, Milambo is married to Mischah Cheelo and together they have six children.

He acquired the farm in 2008 under customary law after realising the importance of owning land. Despite acquiring the farm in 2008, he only made a decision to take up farming in 2010 after leaving formal employment.

"I realised working for other people had a life span. I needed to secure my family's future in farming. Inspired by some farmers in Kaabo, whom I closely interacted with; most of them had very good visions in their value chains and were successful, livestock in particular seemed to be a lucrative value chain," Moses said.

Overtime, he noticed how some farmers who had reared livestock such as cattle and goats had managed to purchase vehicles, television sets and, built modern iron-roofed houses, among others. These impacts at the household level enticed Moses to also jump on the bandwagon and venture into farming.



Joe Machila (2nd R) at his homestead with Chikelete Ndumba (2nd L)

When he began livestock farming, he started with one cow which he has now managed to multiply to nine cattle.

"I have nine beef cattle which I also get milk from for household consumption. The milk helps in increasing the household's nutrition security levels," Moses said.

His wife, Cheelo narrated how they belonged to the Mumuni cooperative society and also participated in goat pass-on exercise, a required practice under the Stocking and Restocking exercise facilitated by the Enhanced Smallholder Livestock Investment Programme (E-SLIP).

Cheelo explained that she benefited one goat – an exotic breed – and has since multiplied her flock to 15 goats. But, with the prevailing drought situation this year, she was compelled to sell six goats to raise funds to pay for their children's school fees and other household competing needs.

"This year's drought has really affected my value chains; We have had to look at alternative sources of income to sustain ourselves," she said.

Cheelo stated that in their area smaller goats are sold at K350 while the bigger ones fetch K450.

The couple have had to build resilience amid the exacerbating drought situation by looking at alternatives.

They embarked on selling charcoal which they sell at 25kilogramme at K60. Although an unsustainable practise, it enabled them to meet their household financial obligations.



Astridah with 2 of her dependents

Another beneficiary farmer, Astridah Miyoba rears goats and cattle. She received one goat through the pass on and presently has 15 goats.

Astridah stated that the goat pass on has become an appreciated initiative, as goats are more resilient to climatic shocks, have favorable market value and provide nutrition.

"There is no defaulting whether goats are sick or die, farmers have taken responsibility to pass on when it's their turn to pass on," she vehemently stated.

Astridah however lamented the lack of nearby water points for animals to drink. Sadly, drinking points are very far away and this calls for urgent intervention from authorities to assist with boreholes. Admittedly, water availability is critical for farmers to thrive in their value chains.

"It will be good if we can have water nearby points for our various farming needs," she said.

Mazabuka Livestock Production and Extension Officer, Chikelete Ndumba, pointed out the need for a deliberate effort to ensure households were provided with closer water points to easily provide fresh drinking water.

Chikelete explained that the District office had set up a demonstration plot to enable farmers learn how to grow fodder meant to feed farmers' cattle. However, the non-availability of nearby water sources has hampered this activity.

"Lack of water has been a major barrier to increased production among households; this area requires installing boreholes to avert the water crisis," he said.

Chikelete also encouraged farmers to continue channelling efforts towards goat production as they are not difficult animals to rear and were also resistant to diseases.

"The beauty about rearing goats is that they're not selective and do not require a large area to graze," Chikelete emphasized.

Clearly, amid the current drought situation, which has hit many households in the area, it is encouraging to see farmers like Moses and Cheelo building on support received through E-SLIP to sustain their daily needs while also expanding their livestock value chains.

RANGELAND REVIVAL:

Bringing Life to 7000 Hectares in Chongwe



Rangeland Committee Chairperson, Pearson Lubemba, pointing out the boundaries of the rangeland

By Josiah Mpofu

Rangelands play an important role in supporting livestock production, biodiversity and environment. In rural areas, the sustainability of rangelands depends on proactive management to ensure these vital ecosystems continue to thrive and meet the needs of both nature and human society.

Zambia's rangelands have continued to degrade due to over grazing, bush burning and deforestation resulting into reduced forage and pasture for livestock as well as crop obtainability.

To help address rangeland issues, government through the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock has been implementing the Enhanced Smallholder Livestock Investment Programme (E-SLIP) has been working to carry out some rangeland regeneration activities across the country since 2018.

The Programme has been over sowing various plants species in selected rangelands in each of provinces.

This intervention has been executed through Rangeland Community Communities which are comprised of farmers who have been trained in rangeland management skills by E-SLIP and are locally known as Rangeland Community Facilitators

These Facilitators continue to train other people in their respective communities to enhance awareness and promote some level of environmental awareness.

In Lusaka Province about 7000.449 hectares in Chongwe district have been demarcated for rangeland management activities.

Chongwe district Rangeland Committee Chairperson, Pearson Lubemba, explained that the Programme's aim was to ensure proper land management practices and sustainable agricultural practices which were essential in regenerating and preserving the land in Chongwe.

Mr Lubemba said various land regeneration plants such as velvet beans and Rhodes grass among others have been planted in the rangeland management zone.

He noted that the Rangeland Committee had engaged headmen in the District to ensure that they joined in sensitizing their subjects on the harmful impact of deforestation which was a common practice in the area.

In working together, the local traditional leadership, the Rangeland Committee has committed efforts towards strengthening by-laws that are tailored to environmental conservation.

“The partnership between the rangeland committee and the traditional leaders have led to the development of by laws that will deter individuals from cutting down of trees indiscriminately for charcoal production and agricultural activities. The move is aimed at restoring degraded rangelands through reseedling native plants, controlling invasive species, and implementing soil conservation measures,” said Mr Lubemba.

Mr Lubemba added that with support from E-SLIP, the Committee continuously sensitizing residents in Chongwe on the need to contribute towards the long-term health and productivity of rangelands.

Through E-SLIP facilitated trainings, farmers in Chongwe have been exposed to techniques in forage and pasture utilization and conservation.

More farmers in the District have mastered the art of making hay which has resulted into them improving animal nutrition all year round.

Agness Zulu of Kapete Agricultural Camp in Chongwe district, is among farmers that benefited from the hay making trainings.

Ms Zulu acknowledge that before she acquired knowledge on hay making, she used to lose her animals to starvation especially during dry season when grazing lands were depleted.

She added that many livestock farmers in her district faced challenges of maintaining their animal's nutrition during the dry season. However, as most people in the area bought into the idea of rangeland management, a significant number of farmers were now able to utilize and preserve nutritious feed for their livestock.

Ms Zulu explained that she learnt how to make hay by mixing: grass, salt, Velvet beans and molasses to enable livestock receive added nutrition.

The efforts of rangeland management are complimented by selected forage and pasture producers who have been supported by E-SLIP to be producing forage and pasture seed.

Faless Gwantula, is one such producer.

Faless noted that the empowerment of forage and pasture that E-SLIP supported her with, has sparked her interest in pasture production as a business and not only for domestic consumption for her dairy cattle.



Agness Zulu showing off her hay baling skills

She said engaging in pasture production has helped to feed her cattle despite the drought which was experienced in the 2023/2024 farming season.

Faless said the improved pasture has enabled her dairy cattle to produce 9-10 liters of milk per day compared in the past when it was producing only 5 liters.

The 69-year-old added that the number of dairy cattle she owns has grown from 1 to 3; and she dreams of having a herd of 50 one day.

“In this year’s farming season 2024/2025, I plan to plant more than 2 hectares of pasture for my cattle and for sale, especially that more livestock in the country is grappling with forage and pasture shortages,” Faless said.

PECKING ORDER:

How Chikakanta Poultry beneficiaries survived the drought

By Happy Mulolani

"I wish to continue with chicken rearing as it has provided me with a source of livelihood amid the drought situation," Betty Simatete, one of the ardent smallholder farmers stated.

Betty is one of the beneficiary farmers of the livestock pass-on exercise among E-SLIP beneficiaries in her village. Having received a livestock package of chickens last year in November, she managed to multiply her poultry to 15 chickens.

However, amid the 2023/2024 drought induced by El-Nino which has had tremendous effects on farmers' production capacities, Betty was forced to sell some of the chickens to meet the household needs.

"The benefit of rearing chickens is the ability to raise funds to meet basic needs of the household; I have been able to sell chickens at profitable prices and pay for school fees for my children,"

Betty explained.



Betty with some of the latest additions to her flock

In Zambia, chickens generally have a readily available market making them a viable income generating activity for small livestock farmers.

"I've been able to sell chickens at Kafue town at K100 each, while locally in the village, the chickens fetch K80," Betty disclosed.

However, she complained that as a free-range poultry farmer, she suffers the challenges of predators particularly wild animals which occasionally hunt the chickens. Betty explained that this was a common threat not only to her but other livestock farmers in the community.

She added that another major problem was the New Castle disease which often affects the growth of the chickens and leads to mortality.

Betty appealed for continuous vaccination programmes and also for veterinary and livestock staff to offer more regular visits just to ensure the farmers are coping with any disease threats.

At 38 years old, Betty is energetic and practises integrated farming on a two hectare farm in Kaabo village in Chikankata district.

She is married to Fred Kalinda and they have eight children. The children also participate in farming activities on the farm, thereby enhancing the household approach.

"Our boys build the shelter for livestock and give them water. While, their father offers leadership by overseeing cattle herding and goat rearing," Betty said.

As is the traditional norm Betty oversees the small livestock which are the chickens as she balances farming with the household chores.

To advantage herself, she is a member of Mumuni cooperative with a membership of 38. This is premised on the realisation that organisations offering support to rural communities, tend to support farmers organised into groups more than individuals, as there is accountability and transparency. These

group dynamics make it easy to track their performance and also thrive due to collective efforts in various value chains.

Belonging to the Mumuni cooperative enables her to access numerous benefits of any programme interventions offered in the village. For instance, the Farmer Input Support Programme (FISP) offers fertiliser and maize seed and farmers in the village can access inputs to supplement their food security. More importantly, the household approach premised on the division of labour helps this family thrive and confront the effects of drought.

Another E-SLIP beneficiary farmer, Joe Machila has a three hectare farm. He rears chickens and cattle.

"I received one chicken during the pass on last year and managed to multiply to 15 chickens; this is a good programme which should be sustained to empower more households," Joe said.

From Betty's and Joe's experiences, poultry has provided immediate relief to farmers when faced with dire needs. It is an affordable venture that can protect rural households from climatic shocks and unpredictable weather.

Mumuni cooperative chairman Penrod Chibamba explained that the prolonged drought of the previous farming season has broadened farmers' horizons to devise alternative sources of income.

"Some farmers have benefited under the cash-for-work programme, an initiative of the government. They are paid K600 after 10 days of work. The Programme has enabled them to raise some funds to meet their household needs," Penrod stated.

From the beneficiary farmers' sentiments, the pass on exercise is a significant channel towards protecting the incomes and food nutrition security of rural farmers most especially amidst the effects of climate change.

More and more rural farmers are channelling their efforts towards rearing various livestock as a reliable fall back when other income generating activities fail.

GREEN AMIDST THE DRY: GRACE PHIRI'S INSPIRING STORY

By GLORIA SIWISHA

AFTER the dissolution of her marriage some 10 years ago, Grace Phiri of Chinjala Resettlement area in Chipata district in Eastern province, knew that she needed to pick herself up and start life anew, and smallholder farming just seemed to be the best consolation.

"I used to cultivate maize, sunflower, groundnuts and soybean, and keep goats, pigs, cattle and chickens - all for household consumption," she said.

In 2018, after almost four years of being in active peasant farming, Grace was recruited as a beneficiary of the Enhanced Smallholder Livestock Investment Programme (E-SLIP)'s sustainable forage seed production and utilisation programme, which aims to address the need for farmers to sufficiently feed their livestock in a competitively cheaper manner to maximise profits.

This enlistment, also came with a chance to be trained in the fundamentals of forage seed production and utilisation at Palabana in Chongwe, which focused mainly on grass species and legumes like sun-hemp, cowpea and velvet beans.

Grace said beneficiaries were also supported with start-up seed packs and market linkages for the harvested crop.

"During the 2018/2019 farming season - the first year of production - I cultivated velvet beans and sun-hemp on one and half acre and one acre fields respectively. But, the results were not so impressive as you know the beginning of everything is always challenging," she said, "Nevertheless, I managed to harvest five by 50 Kg bags of sun-hemp seed, and



Grace at her happy place

7 by 50 Kg bags of velvet bean seed, partly which I sold back to E-SLIP, and the rest remained for my animals."

Realising the importance and economic value of the forage production initiative, Grace did not give up despite achieving a not so good yield at first attempt.

Instead, she resolved to prepare better for the following season.

"I did extremely well in the 2019/2020 season. Not only did I increase the area of production for velvet beans to one hectare, but I also applied conservation farming techniques of ripping and harvested 45 by 50 Kg bags of velvet beans. I

also harvested 10 bags of sun-hemp and 15 bags of cowpea, all of which fetched me over K78, 000,” she said.

With this significant income realised from the sale of forage seed, Grace improved the socio-economic status of her household to the extent that she also managed to invest the excess amount into the construction of two housing flats.

This positive trajectory was also enough motivation for her to continue with the programme in subsequent years.

“I don’t sell everything; I always keep enough also for the nutrition of my animals. My most preferred feed formula, is the roasting of velvet beans, and taking it to grinding meal before I can feed my animals. With this feed formula, my animals remain healthy and fetch good prices on the market,” she said.

Grace has remained resolute in forage production even with the unstable rainfall pattern the country has been experiencing lately.

She said she had also spent a considerable amount of time educating other farmers in her community about the importance of good animal nutrition and how they could earn income from forage production.

“At first it was a bit difficult to have to find local market for forage seed on my own because I was used to E-SLIP buying the harvested crop and at very good prices. But, the situation has improved as more and more people realise the importance of good animal nutrition,” she said, “The prices offered locally, however, are still very low compared to what we used to get from E-SLIP but what strengthens us is the fact that E-SLIP regularly engages farmers and links us to potential buyers outside the province; and that way, we get value for our investments.”

Grace’s story is one of persistence, resilience and hard work, in spite of potential threats like climate change and the unpredictable local market.

She has also demonstrated the ability to sustain the knowledge and skills learned in the sustainable forage seed production and utilisation programme beyond the life of the project.

“I have chosen to carry on with cowpea and sun-hemp because it is easy to find local market for these crops. And there’s also that assured market linkage to other buyers by E-SLIP,” she said, “Therefore, I will not stop cultivating forage because the programme has not only improved my income, but has also awakened me to the importance of good nutrition for livestock. At the moment, all programme beneficiaries in the country are in the process of operationalising a cooperative of forage seed producers.”

With farmers such as Grace one can argue confidently say that E-SLIP has contributed towards the sustainable improvement of rural households’ incomes and the production and productivity of the livestock sub-sector, through its livestock nutrition programme.



Chicken rearing is one of Grace's income earners



Forage farming has untapped potential for income generation



Well nourished livestock attract competitive prices on the market



Robert Sibayumba of Shimwendeweka Cooperative in Ndola received 2 improved village chickens through a pass on





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