

Food Security Blog

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We'll starve, if we continue marginalising smallholder farmers



Through the Productive Assets Creation Programme (PAC), WFP in Zimbabwe supported 95,000 people in 2016 through the rehabilitation or creation of community assets, such as water harvesting systems. Photo courtesy of WFP.

THE bulk of food in Zimbabwe comes from smallholder farmers who comprise communal, resettled small-scale and small-time commercial producers.

While these agriculturalists are a strategic stakeholder in the food security matrix, they have largely been consigned to the periphery of socio-economic development. The time has come to place smallholder farmers at the centre of the development agenda.

Agriculture can be a potent instrument not only for enhancing national food security but also for tackling poverty and underdevelopment. Family farmers are multi-dimensional in their scope, ranging from

traditional crop growers to ranchers, aquaculturists, foragers and foresters.

They produce most of Zimbabwe's food, providing valuable nutrition while generating important income for at least 70% of the country's population.

Placing smallholder farmers at the centre of national development policy is not a question of charity but a matter of strategic national survival and prosperity.

In this latest edition of the Food Security Series blog, we delve into a salient issue at the heart of sustainable agriculture: Why it is crucial to place smallholder farmers at the centre of the agricultural development agenda.

No access to capital

ZimStat's latest Zimbabwe Smallholder Agricultural Productivity Survey Report is revealing.

Less than 6% of households in the smallholder agricultural sector are able to access agricultural credit loans. The access to credit loans varied from 2.1% for households residing in communal lands to 5.8% for households residing on A1 (smallholder) farms. The proportion of households receiving agricultural credit loans in old resettlement areas was 5.4% compared to 4.4% for households residing in small-scale commercial farms.

"In general, the ownership of tractors, the major productive assets needed for agriculture production, is very low for households in the smallholder agricultural sector. The proportion of households owning tractors ranged from 0.1% in communal lands to 7.7% in small-scale commercial farms," the report notes.

An undying ambition

On recent trips to Manicaland and Mashonaland East provinces, I was pleasantly surprised by the tremendous work of Zimbabwe's highly ambitious farmers.

A growing cohort is seriously taking farming as a business and the results are impressive. Even in the face of immense difficulties — including the climate crisis as currently highlighted by the El Niño phenomenon, lack of access to capital, land tenure strictures and the government's legendary policy inconsistencies — there is hope

yet for the agricultural sector.

One of the sub-sectors which shows great promise is horticulture. In farming circles, there is massive excitement and optimism over the vast untapped potential of horticulture. Horticultural production and exports are among the fastest-growing sub-sectors in the Zimbabwean economy.

Blueberries, macadamia nuts, avocados, chilli, peas, citrus, flowers and tea are generally performing remarkably well.

According to the Horticultural Development Council (HDC), the country is earning an average of US\$120 million annually from horticultural exports. The HDC has now set a target of US\$1 billion in exports by 2030. For this to happen, the horticultural sector would require an estimated US\$1.2 billion in investment.

Blueberries have emerged as one of Zimbabwe's most promising horticultural exports. This berry, hailed worldwide as a superfood, is generating lots of curiosity and enthusiasm among farmers.

This has not gone unnoticed by the global community. The European Union (EU), which constitutes a major market for Zimbabwe's fast-growing horticultural exports, is providing technical support and funding through the European Investment Bank.

EU member states and Switzerland recently pledged to contribute over €207 million (US\$226.2m) to support the Zimbabwean government's strategy for a more productive, resilient and greener agricultural sector.



The EU's ambassador to Zimbabwe Jobst von Kirchmann, says there is growing demand for fresh produce in Europe, which Zimbabwean farmers can meet. A months-long investigation by *The NewsHawks* in this Food Security Series has shown that although there is now a welcome shift by policymakers towards creating capacity through the enhancement of technical extension services and the marketing of produce, the agricultural sector still needs urgent transformation to place the farmer at the centre of socio-economic development.

As long as farmers — particularly smallholders who produce the bulk of Zimbabwe's food — are not placed at the centre, sustainable food security cannot be guaranteed.

Horticulture is not the only sub-sector which requires decisive support. Smallholder farmers in semi-arid agro-ecological zones also need assistance in boosting the production of "superfood" small grains such as sorghum and millet.

Horticulture's immense potential

The deputy minister of Lands, Agriculture, Water, Fisheries and Rural Development, Vangelis Haritatos (pictured), says the government's Horticulture Recovery Plan is now underway.

"Our Horticulture Recovery Plan has taken off. Commercial farmers have taken the lead and we are now trying to ensure that small-scale farmers also join this transformative growth that we are witnessing in the horticultural sector."

Haritatos says clearly defined markets are crucial.

"Through clearly defined markets, we have great potential for further growth. Aggregation is critical in ensuring this. There is enormous room for many players along this value chain especially with the supply of packaging, equipment, logistics, the entire cold chain etc."

In a bid to transform the fortunes of rural areas — where 67% of Zimbabwe's population resides — the government has crafted a Rural Development 8.0 blueprint.

The Rural Development 8.0 model is aimed at eradicating poverty in all its forms, including food and water insecurity, through a matrix of agricultural development, rural industrialisation and rural development.

In the 1980s and into the '90s,

Zimbabwe's horticultural sector was dominated by large-scale commercial farmers. They gained lucrative access to international markets, selling fruits, vegetables and flowers.

"This was lucrative business, but required much skill, lots of investment and very good networks. It was therefore dominated by white, large-scale farmers," says Professor Ian Scoones, who has extensively studied Zimbabwe's agriculture.



But at the turn of the millenium, the fast-track land redistribution programme drastically changed

everything. The large-scale white farmers took a knock. Some previously disadvantaged black farmers ventured into agriculture.

Scoones explains the growth of horticulture.

"This growth has been driven by a number of factors, most notably the increasing availability of (mostly) Chinese-built small-scale pumps. This has allowed individuals to invest in irrigated horticulture for as little as US\$200, buying a small pump and some piping to get going. Many have upgraded since to larger operations, buying solar equipment to power the pumps and increasing the horsepower of the pumps."

A new crop of horticultural entrepreneurs is emerging. They supply produce to a wide range of customers, including: municipal markets; supermarkets; hotels, restaurants and informal food sellers; schools, hospitals, churches; and roadside vendors.

The blueberry revolution



In recent times, a remarkable shift has been witnessed Zimbabwe's agrarian landscape, as ambitious farmers find their stride in the burgeoning blueberry farming industry. Blueberry farming is still a niche business, of course, and it is important to emphasise the point that this type of specialised agriculture is not meant for every farmer under the sun. Not everyone who ventures into blueberries will make money; in fact, there are more heartbreaks than successes in the highly risky world of farming.

However, those who do it right are harvesting the rewards. With an admirable blend of passion and expertise, these daring cultivators are not just reaping the benefits of their toil, but also forging a path towards a lucrative export business.

The experiences of these enthusiastic farmers in Zimbabwe paint a vivid picture of the immense potential that lies within the horticultural sub-sector of blueberry farming. With favourable climatic conditions or modest irrigation facilities and a growing demand for exotic fruits, farmers are recognising the untapped opportunities that blueberries offer.

The journey of these farmers has been marked by meticulous planning, extensive research, and ardent determination to succeed. Drawing from their collective experience and capitalising on the guidance provided by agricultural experts and government initiatives supported by development partners, they have

ingeniously transformed neglected fields into thriving blueberry orchards.

One of the defining features of blueberry farming lies in its ability to fetch premium prices in international markets due to its status as a sought-after superfood. This has translated into a promising export trade for a small but growing cohort of Zimbabwean farmers. The country's strategic geographical location enhances its competitive advantage, as successfully cultivated blueberries can be swiftly transported to lucrative markets in Europe and South Africa.

Moreover, blueberries boast an exceptional shelf life when properly handled and packaged. This quality ensures that the farmers' efforts are not compromised during transit, thus preserving the fruit's freshness and nutritional value. This plays a crucial role in securing long-term business partnerships and establishing a reliable reputation within the export market.

For Zimbabwe, the economic impact of blueberry farming will extend beyond the individual farms, resonating throughout the entire value chain. With each successful harvest, a surge in employment opportunities is witnessed, benefitting both rural and urban communities. Through increased job creation, income distribution is improved, leading to an overall enhancement of living standards for countless Zimbabweans.

While challenges certainly exist, such as the need for

specialised infrastructure and the acquisition of advanced farming techniques, Zimbabwe's determined farmers display an unwavering spirit. They actively engage in knowledge-sharing platforms, attend workshops, and collaborate with experts and agricultural institutions to overcome obstacles.

It has not been smooth sailing, though. Farmers say they need access to affordable credit facilities, training programmes, and improved transportation infrastructure, all of which could fuel the growth of this promising agricultural sub-sector.

Zimbabwean farmers venturing into blueberry farming are embracing a rewarding chapter in the country's ever-evolving agrarian story. Their successes illustrate the boundless potential of this horticultural sub-sector, as the demand for the nutritious and sought-after blueberry soars on a global scale. With tenacity, strategic planning, and the backing of enabling policies, these farmers are cultivating prosperity and establishing Zimbabwe as a leading player in the blueberry export market.

It can be done

Zimbabwe has emerged as the foremost global exporter of blueberries, outpacing all other nations in growth.

A recent study by EastFruit highlights a surge in blueberry farming investments in Zimbabwe, with exports rising by 63% annually or 1 200 tonnes over the last five years. Exports witnessed 85% growth, amounting to more than 5 000 tonnes in 2022. Zimbabwe is now among the world's top-15 blueberry-exporting countries.

EastFruit is an international team of analysts, agricultural journalists and marketers specialising in the fruit and vegetable business.

Many of the new plantations are primarily established by investors from neighbouring South Africa. Analysts say these investors often diver-

sify or relocate production to Zimbabwe due to highly favourable climatic conditions, access to high-quality water for irrigation, and cost-effective labour.

But Zimbabweans need to step up to the plate. Although foreign investment in agriculture is welcome, the local farmers must not be left behind. Joint ventures can be a viable proposition, bringing together local farmers and foreign investors.

The experts at EastFruit are anticipating continued growth in blueberry exports from Zimbabwe in 2023, projecting a further 30-40% increase to reach 6.5-7.0 thousand tonnes.

The bulk of the fruit goes to South Africa, which re-exports some of it. The rest goes to the United Kingdom, EU, Middle East and Russia.

Farmers need support

Smallholder farmers in Matabeleland North, Matabeleland South, Mashonaland East, Mashonaland Central and Manicaland who spoke to *The Newshawks* outlined the challenges they face.

Their lived experiences provide a stark reminder that farmers must be brought to the centre of agricultural development—and not be consigned to the forgotten periphery.

Elias Tavengwa (pictured on next page) has farmed in the Mandalay horticultural belt of Umguza, on the western fringes of Bulawayo, for three years.



A farmer pats a goat on display at the 2023 Zimbabwe Agricultural Show in Bulawayo. Farming is a business and must deliver a decent return on investment.

When *The NewsHawks* visited him, he had completed harvesting potatoes.

A committed farmer, Tavengwa says one of his objectives in life is to ensure that he imparts his agricultural skills to his children.

On the day of our news crew's visit to his smallholding, he was working the land with his son Ayanda (12).

"We have a responsibility as farmers to pass on our knowledge and skills to the next generation of farmers. They are keen on learning. We must help them," said Tavengwa. The young Ayanda is an enthusiastic apprentice, shadowing his father's every move while learning the ropes.

Tavengwa appreciates the importance of good business acumen.

"Farming must make business sense. Yes, as farmers we have a natural passion for tilling the land and are grateful for every opportunity we get daily to work the land, but at the end of the day all the toil must make business sense. We have families to look after, school fees and other bills."

Tavengwa says a 10 kilogramme pocket of potatoes fetches US\$5 at the green produce market in Bulawayo, on average.

"On the recent crop, my family supplied 200 pockets at first, followed by 57 pockets, then 100 pockets.

"Sometimes we sell to supermarkets. At times we sell to the produce market in town."

A major headache for the local horticultural farmers in Umguza is the agony associated with negotiating viable prices for their produce.

"At times we have a bit of room to negotiate, but at times we really have no say. If we reject the prices offered by the markets, our produce can rot and that would lead to big losses."

Tavengwa is convinced that the farmers are generally in a position of disadvantage as they lack bargaining power. They cannot drive a hard bargain. Making informed choices is tough in an environment where the market dynamics favour the green grocers and other agribusiness players at the expense of smallholder farmers whose toil often goes unrewarded.

"Farming is very difficult work, full of risks, so we expect good prices for our produce. Unfortunately, this is not always the case."

It would be unreasonable to expect profit-driven agribusinesses to spearhead the empowerment of marginalised farmers. Farmers stand a better chance if they join associations or form consortiums to amplify their voices and defend their collective interests.

The farmers in the Mandalay area of Umguza say there are no medical facilities in the area, making life difficult. They are calling on the government to provide a clinic.



Most smallholder farmers are women

The remarkable resilience of smallholder farmers is exemplified by hardworking women who constitute most of small-scale producers.

It is not by accident that the majority — 54% — of those responsible for decision making in the smallholder agricultural sector are females.

Land title is tenuous and a major source of risk and frustration in smallholder farming areas. There is no security of tenure.

In communal lands, 64.5% of households are using agricultural plots granted or allocated by local or community leaders. About 27.5% of the households in communal areas reported that the land was owned by households through purchase or family inheritance.

On A1 farms, 53.5% of the households were given the right to use land by the government. In old resettlement areas, 50.8% of the households were given the right to use land by the government. Women are placed at the very bottom of this land tenure hierarchy — and this is problematic.

It is the height of injustice. Women constitute the bulk of small-scale farmers; the logic of social justice dictates that they own that land or at least control it.

In interviews conducted in Matabeleland South province, female communal farmers Joyce Manala and Kesline Ncube (pictured) narrated their experiences. Based in the Silonga area of Gwanda district, they are both married. Manala has four children while Ncube has three.

“Farming is very important to our families. We both managed to raise our children and take them through school because of the money we made from farming,” said Ncube.

They both spoke of the difficulties of getting a fair price for their produce and livestock. The process of rearing cattle from calf to market-ready stock involves painstaking work. Farmers expect a decent return on their investment, but this is not always the case, for various reasons ranging from animal diseases which decimate entire herds to drought which forces farmers sell off their emaciated livestock at giveaway prices.



Farmers Joyce Manala and Kesline Ncube from the Silonga area of Gwanda district.

Enter El Niño

The devastating El Niño phenomenon is already unleashing its fury on countries in southern Africa.

In Zimbabwe these days, farmers are forlornly peering into the cloudless sky as they hold out for a miracle. The early rains, expected in late October, are nowhere to be seen. Temperatures are soaring. If the situation persists, hunger will torment the nation, going into 2024.

Most of the staple maize is grown by smallholder farmers, who traditionally rely on rain-fed agriculture. Their access to irrigation facilities is limited. Despite claims by government officials that Zimbabwe has attained food security, the reality on the ground points to the opposite, with El Niño now heightening the risk of food insecurity.

“El Niño is likely to result in a mixed start to the 2023/24 rainy season in Zimbabwe. Precipitation from December to March, during the height of the rainy season, is likely to be below average, negatively impacting the 2023/24 agricultural season,” the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FewsNet) has announced.

Water scarcity will grossly undermine food production. But if smallholder farmers had been placed at the centre of agricultural development as a matter of policy, the impact of drought would have been markedly less. Instead, small-scale farmers are treated as an afterthought—only to be remembered when El Niño bares its ugly fangs.

Smallholder farmers told *The NewsHawks* they need support in growing small grains, which are drought tolerant and offer better nutrition than over-rated maize. They also need assistance in developing their irrigation capacity, even for modest community gardens which could spell the difference between starvation and survival during the leaner food-scarce months.

New approach needed

Sustainable food security can only be achieved through a multi-pronged strategy which ultimately places farmers at the centre of socio-economic development.

Lands, Agriculture, Water, Fisheries and Rural Development minister Dr Anxious Masuka acknowledged this fact when commenting on the drilling of boreholes in Mt Darwin’s rural communities.

“Food security is a multi-dimensional approach, which is why this ministry has a very broad mandate, from lands, where the production takes place, to water, which is an enabler for climate-proofing agriculture agriculture,” said Masuka.



INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF MILLETS

2023

The small grains proposition

In the quest for sustainable and nutritious food sources, small grains have emerged as the unsung heroes of Africa. Sorghum, rapoko, and millet, often overshadowed by maize, possess exceptional qualities that make them a superior food source for the continent. With their resilience, adaptability, and remarkable nutritional profiles, small grains offer a solution to combat food insecurity, malnutrition and climate crisis.

The NewsHawks toured Matabeleland South province to speak to farmers and agronomists on the opportunities offered by small grains.

Dr Martin Moyo, the director of the International Crops Research Institute for Semi-Arid Tropics (Icrisat) Matobo Research Institute, explained why sorghum, rapoko and millet are being overshadowed by maize.



“There are a number of barriers. These barriers include the policy environment. You notice that over the years, maize has been favoured in terms of policy issues. Even the inputs that were being given to maize farmers were more than what was being given to the millet farmers. Even the purchasing, within the markets, maize used to be favoured. But there’s a shift now within the government. I think the Grain Marketing Board is paying a premium for the millets.”

Moyo said the key to promoting the consumption of sorghum and other types of millet is through value addition.

“If we improve on value addition, then we will see better uptake of small grains.”

Icrisat is now investing in the processing of small grains and has bought equipment locally in Zimbabwe to show farmers and food processors that this is a viable pursuit.

“We are a non-profit entity, we’re a research institution. We need the private sector to take this forward.”

Moyo is convinced that small grains — which he terms “future grains” — will give the country a fighting chance against the climate crisis.

“If we’re talking about climate change, we have to be talking about these drought-tolerant crops and varieties. Climate change is going to force us into growing these crops; if we’re not shifting, then we’re dying.”



Maize on display at the 2023 Zimbabwe Agricultural Show in Bulawayo. Analysts say small grains such as sorghum are a better proposition for sustainable food security, in view of climate adaptability and superior nutritional value.

Policy interventions by the government should focus on developing a vibrant market for small grains.

“What drives a farmer is not just the food security; it’s also the income. So we should be able to be establishing markets. Our agriculture should be market driven. Once farmers are earning an income, they will be able to re-invest.”

Over the years, some sorghum growers have signed contracts with Delta Beverages, which uses the crop in brewing traditional beer. But the commercial value proposition must now expand to promote small grains as a real staple food.

Private sector players in Zimbabwean agriculture have often complained that sorghum and millet are a risky investment because their commercial value proposition is not quite solid. One way of addressing this challenge is for research institutions like Icrisat to develop hybrid crop varieties that could help ramp up the yield.

“We’re working towards the hybridisation of these crops. Icrisat working with partners has already release two sorghum hybrids. And we’re looking at releasing four more sorghum hybrids this year. After 2023, we’re planning to release four pearl millet hybrids,” Moyo said.

Concerted action vital



India-Zim Conference

On 1 August 2023, a stakeholders' workshop was held in Harare as a precursor to the India-Africa International Millet Conference.

Dr Dumisani Kutwayo, the chief director in the ministry of Agriculture's Department of Research and Specialist Services, said the government intends to develop the capacity to produce 30 million tonnes of small grains annually by 2030.

"Small grains must contribute to the strategic grain reserve."

Professor Obert Jiri, now the permanent secretary in the ministry of Agriculture, noted that productivity in the production of small grains remains low owing to climate variability.

Promoting small grains requires a multi-disciplinary approach, he said, adding that the government is liberalising the agricultural market, with the Zimbabwe Merchantile Exchange (ZMX) now active.

Jiri said in elevating the role of small grains in enhancing food security, there is a need "to develop the millets value chain in Zimbabwe".

With the El Niño phenomenon currently wreaking

havoc by causing an erratic rainfall season, the increased production of small grains could enable the country to climate-proof its farming sector.

As the climate crisis worsens, it is important for Zimbabwe to take agro-ecology very seriously, said Jiri.

"In terms of crop suitability, the drier agro-ecological regions 4 and 5 are best suited to the cultivation of small grains rather than maize.

"We challenge the researchers to ensure that seed becomes readily available to farmers who want to grow small grains. Small grains yield has been increasing, but we must keep improving "The area under small grains production in 2022-23 was only 27% of the entire area under cereal production. We need more work to introduce better quality small grains seed. We also need better agric equipment to introduce labour-saving technologies."

Jiri added: "We also need to develop seed varieties that are tolerant of bird damage; we need the promotion of value-added products; we must improve markets for traditional grains; we must encourage the commercialisation of traditional grains. There is need to have a value-chain approach."



Goromonzi organic farmer Everin Madhava explains the importance of avoiding toxic pesticides and synthetic fertilisers.

Organic farming is sustainable agriculture

In the lush landscapes of Zimbabwe, a wave of enthusiasm is sweeping through the ranks of smallholder farmers.

With earth-stained hands and hearts filled with a passion for sustainable agriculture, these rural farmers, predominantly women, have embraced an exciting chapter — organic farming.

Their commitment to producing food untainted by toxic chemicals speaks volumes of their dedication to healthier, more sustainable practices.

One such community that is taking organic farming seriously is in Goromonzi district, Mashonaland East province.

The locals are receiving crucial training on agro-ecology from Fambidzanai Permaculture Centre, a home-grown private voluntary organisation

that has created Zimbabwe's largest independent network of organic farmers.

Their crops are impressive in their diversity, yield and quality — including maize, beans, sorghum, millet, groundnuts, roundnuts, and even medicinal herbs.

The smallholder farmers narrated their experiences to *The NewsHawks*.

The farmers have largely mastered the intricacies of sustainable organic agriculture, but they need technical training on organic certification, upscaling, harvest aggregation and marketing.

More importantly, they need support from the government and the private sector on how to enhance their chances of penetrating the export markets.



Journalist and Bertha Challenge Fellow Brezh Malaba at the Goromonzi organic farming festival.

Kudzanai Mashingaidze (pictured), the executive director of Fambidzanai Permaculture Centre — the largest network of grassroots organic farmers in Zimbabwe — says his organisation has teamed up with the government and other stakeholders to craft the country's first agro-ecology policy.

“The government has given us a mandate to try and develop an agri-ecology policy. Once we have policy direction, it will enhance the adoption of sustainable farming techniques. We're all aware of the challenges we face in terms of climate change; this policy also seeks to address that aspect.”

He argues that the market for organic produce is available — but emphasises that farmers need to be well-co-ordinated if they are to benefit. One major headache encountered by anyone who hopes to promote organic farming is the realisation that the local farmers are largely uncoordinated, making it difficult to consistently supply the huge crop volumes demanded by export markets.

“The market is available, including overseas, but we need to organise ourselves. I've been involved in some value chains of certain crops that were demanded on the international market.



“The challenge that we have is co-ordination and consistency in terms of production. We tend to have farmers that are able to produce once-off, but the market will require produce continuously. So, we need to have co-ordinated markets for certain produce. We need to have linkages with the external markets so that the organic farmers are able to supply these external markets.”

Conclusion

To address and change the marginalisation of smallholder farmers in Zimbabwe, it is important to prioritise their needs and place them at the centre of the agricultural development agenda. This is the only way in which the country can guarantee sustainable food security. There are sure-fire strategies worth exploring:

Access to resources

The country should improve farmers' access to essential resources such as land, seeds, fertilisers and credit. This can be achieved through reforms in the land tenure system to ensure security of tenure in rural areas, establishing cooperative financing systems, and providing subsidies or grants to small-scale farmers.

Technical assistance

Training programmes can enhance farmers' capacity and knowledge on modern agricultural techniques, sustainable farming practices and adaptability to climate crisis. This can be done through the department of Agricultural, Technical and Extension Services (Agritex) which already runs an extensive and capable network of crop and livestock experts. Farmer field schools can also be rolled out in partnerships with non-governmental organisations or agricultural research institutions.

Market linkages

Smallholder farmers' market access should be enhanced through developing efficient market linkages and addressing barriers such as poor infrastructure, limited transportation and lack of market information. This can involve supporting the establishment of farmers' cooperatives as well as facilitating collective bargaining and encouraging contract farming.

Value addition

To avoid paying lip service to value addition and beneficiation, farmers can be encouraged to initiate the processing of produce at the local level. With time, this helps farmers to increase profit-

ability. The government should support the establishment of agro-processing facilities. Training on post-harvest handling will also go a long way in boosting the return on investment. Farmers should be encouraged to use appropriate technologies for value addition.

Policy support and advocacy

In interviews with The NewsHawks in various provinces, smallholder farmers have lamented the fact that they lack a voice.

But as the director of Fambidzanai Permaculture Centre, Kudzanai Mashigaidze, emphasises, farmers should co-ordinate themselves. Nobody is coming to rescue them. That way, they can lobby for policies that protect small-scale farming, promote fair trade practices and provide targeted support for marginalised groups such as women and youth farmers.

Research and development

Mashigaidze has bemoaned the fact that the country's colleges do not seem interested in seriously pursuing the teaching of organic agriculture. Investment in agricultural research and development can address challenges faced by smallholder farmers, such as climate crisis resilience, pest and disease management and the propagation of agro-ecological methods best suited for Zimbabwean conditions. This can be done through collaborations with research institutions, funding research projects and facilitating knowledge exchange platforms.

It is essential to implement these strategies in a holistic and participatory manner, involving the smallholder farmers themselves and engaging relevant stakeholders, such as government agencies, NGOs, private sector actors and development partners. This will foster inclusive and sustainable agricultural development that places smallholder farmers at the centre of socio-economic prosperity.


Credits



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