



AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY PROGRAMME FOR SOUTHERN AFRICA (APPSA)

GROUNDNUT SEED PRODUCTION SAVES FARMERS AGAINST FALLING PRICES OF “WHITE GOLD” IN PETAUKE

Falling prices of cotton, normally referred to as “white gold” is not good news for small-scale farmers in Eastern province, as the crop has been a source of livelihoods to them for many years. A significant decrease in the number of small-scale farmers currently growing cotton in the province has resulted in an increase in poverty levels. This has exposed small-scale farmers whose livelihood is derived from farming to much more challenging survival mechanisms.

When groundnut seed production was introduced in Minga area in Petauke district, it relieved farmers of the pressure of having to rely on cotton as the only valuable cash crop. Unit Seed Company in partnership with small-scale farmers in Minga area engaged in seed production of groundnut. The farmers were provided with groundnut basic seed by Unit Seed Company and produced certified seed, which the company buys and then sells to prospective markets. However, this initiative was marred by obstacles such as the limited basic seed supply, lack of knowledge in seed production and limited capacity to provide seed quality control services.

The APPSA funded research and development project on “*Strengthening Food Legume Seed Delivery Systems in Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia*” facilitated strengthened partnership of the small-scale farmers in Minga area of Petauke with Unit Seed Company in 2014 in order to address some of these issues. The project in partnership with Unit Seed Company conducted farmer recruitments and provided them with basic seed to plant 68 hectares of seed for two varieties namely, **MGV4** and **MGV5**. The project also provided quality control services and trained an extension agent as a Seed Inspector.

The project also provided seed quality control services through conducting seed inspections in the field during the growing season. The farmers were excited to receive this support and were eager to showcase their fields during field visits as they posed in front of one field (Fig 1). The Group Leader Mr. Leonard Daka, from Felesiano village says “ *I have found production of groundnut certified seed very beneficial and over the*

past few years bought cattle and a plough, built a house, and managed to purchase 22 bags of fertiliser". During the 2014/15 cropping season, farmers already bulked 30 x 50kg bags (1500 kg) of MG4 seed. He says he is proud to be associated with the programme as it assures them of a readily available market for the seed.

Despite the drought experienced during the season, farmers obtained good yields, and were looking forward to good returns from their investment. Before the cropping season was over, the seed was already secured for purchase at K7.00 per kilogramme, – a fairly reasonable and profitable prize that will assist to meet farmers' needs such as the purchase of cattle, iron sheets, building houses, paying school fees and taking care of other family needs. The farmers were happy with the purchase price of groundnuts, compared to the price of maize - K1.50/kg offered by FRA for 2015/16 marketing season. Mr. Daka recalls how most farmers in the past struggled to meet their needs before the programme was introduced. At the time, they were unemployed and could not meet their basic needs such as having sufficient food for their family or school uniforms and other necessities for their children. However, seed production has improved their lives dramatically and they appreciate APPSA's interventions and the benefits they have derived from the programme. The seed project is fostering strong partnerships between small-scale farmers and the emergent seed enterprises through capacity building and empowerment.



Farmers' group leader Mr. Leonard Daka (centre) from Felesiano village, Petauke Eastern Province of Zambia with farmer group members in groundnut seed production field.

The project is creating a model that will deliver seeds through the emerging private sector. This will have long-term sustainable positive effects as opposed to previous initiatives, where farmers were encouraged to be both producers and traders - small-scale farmers were unable to do both. The project is also making available quality and certified seed for groundnuts both within Petauke and other areas through wider distribution networks.

The experience with Minga farmers provides a good platform to learn on what works best for small-scale farmers. From this case study, the project learned that small-scale seed

producers are nurtured by government support, access to basic seed of improved varieties, entrepreneurship, technical skills and capacity, sustaining demand for quality seeds, enterprise ownership and profitability, and links between farmers and the formal seed entrepreneurs. The partnership with the private sector is worth recognizing as one that would work best to empower small-scale farmers. Team building is also very critical to the success of seed production to facilitate viable linkages through contract marketing. Basic seed access still remains a challenge for most rural smallholders and requires adequate measures to ensure accessibility and affordability. Therefore, seed companies will be encouraged and motivated to ensure they grew a portion of basic seed for their use.

For more about the success story please contact Dr Nathan Phiri, the Principal Investigator for the project at the Zambia Seed Certification & Control Institute (nathpzm@yahoo.co.uk; nathanphiri@gmail.com).