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This project is implemented by Welthungerhilfe and APT



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# SIMBA

## NEWS FLASH

Gokwe, April 2015

### Gokwe commercial chili production

It's an exciting time for some 519 Chili farmers in Gokwe district of Zimbabwe. The first harvest of Chilies is very promising and farmers have received their first payment. It all started with SIMBA



Figure 2: Seed bed

(Sustainable Intensification of Market Based Agriculture) project's farming as a family business initiative in Gokwe South District. Small scale farmers from the area were offered a possibility to participate in the production of African Bird's Eye Chili for a private company called Better Agriculture under a contract farming agreement. These chilies are predominantly produced for the South African market of fast food chain "Nando's", which uses them to produce its renowned sauces. Some of the farmers have already made a profit of USD 1000 and expectations are high as the profits could soar to USD 3000

for the whole season. One farmer is already reconstructing a house with his income.



Figure 3: First pods in November 2014



Figure 1: Members of Durura garden watering

The farmers are comprised of individual household farmers and community gardens, depending on the availability of irrigation water. Seed and/or seedlings and inputs were supplied by Better Agriculture. Since Chili was a new crop for most of the farmers here in Gokwe a look and learn tour was organized at the other contract farming sites in Zaka district of Masvingo Province. This helped immensely as new farmers were able to learn technical details and viability of the crop from the existing contract farmers. Trainings were also organized on contract farming for these

***\*Sustainable Intensification of Market Based Agriculture (SIMBA) is a project funded by the European Union and implemented by Welthungerhilfe in partnership with the Agricultural Partnership Trust (APT) in Gokwe South, Midlands province, Zimbabwe. The project runs from 2013 until 2017 and has a budget of 4.4 million EURO***



farmers. APT, Welthungerhilfe’s marketing partner in the project, printed and distributed color photographs of different grades of chilies to help farmers understand the quality issues. Better Agriculture fielded an extension officer in the production area and farmer-to-farmer trainings and exchange visits are an important tool to share experience and learn new approaches.



Figure 4: Early plantation in Mukai Garden

Chili plants are very susceptible to frost and thus nurseries were established in frost free areas in the region of Chief Nemangwe in July 2014; transplanting began in September of the same year. Interestingly, it is the first time that a summer growing program is being tested in Zimbabwe.

As Gokwe South is relatively far from Harare, from where it is exported, the pods are dried before delivery in order to reduce losses and transport cost. Dried chilies are graded into A and B grades where the first are of good enough quality for the export market and the latter are being sold to National Parks as an elephant repellent!

Each individual charge is weighed before transport and the individual grower then paid using a transfer system to cash debit cards called “Textacash” in collaboration with CABS. This is the first time that most users were connected to the formal banking sector and most users of this card were just amazed by the



Figure 5: Extension worker training farmers on drying and grading

magical appearance of money on using this card. For most farmers, especially the more than 400 women from community gardens, it is a prized possession that is astonishing and amusing her at the same time.



Figure 4: Nyeperai Matende, committee chairlady explaining production to new chili farmers from Chisina. Notice lemon grass in foreground as an insect repellent.





Figure 5: A good crop

Expected Chili production this year is more than 10 tons per hectare. With dried chilies weighing one-third of fresh ones and price pegged at USD 2.10/kg (topped up by better agriculture by USD 0.60 in order to enable the farmers to maintain the equipment and in the mid-term pay for an extension officer), farmers have a potential to earn more than USD 6000 per hectare. This is almost three to four times of the revenue earned on maize crop grown on the same area.

Chili intervention is generating a lot of enthusiasm among farmers and communities In Gokwe. Welthungerhilfe is equally upbeat about new interventions and including more farmers under the scope of SIMBA project. After all what could be a better initiative then “Helping people to help themselves.”



Figure 7: Drip irrigation using empty beer bottles



Figure 6: Grading and bulking before transport to Harare