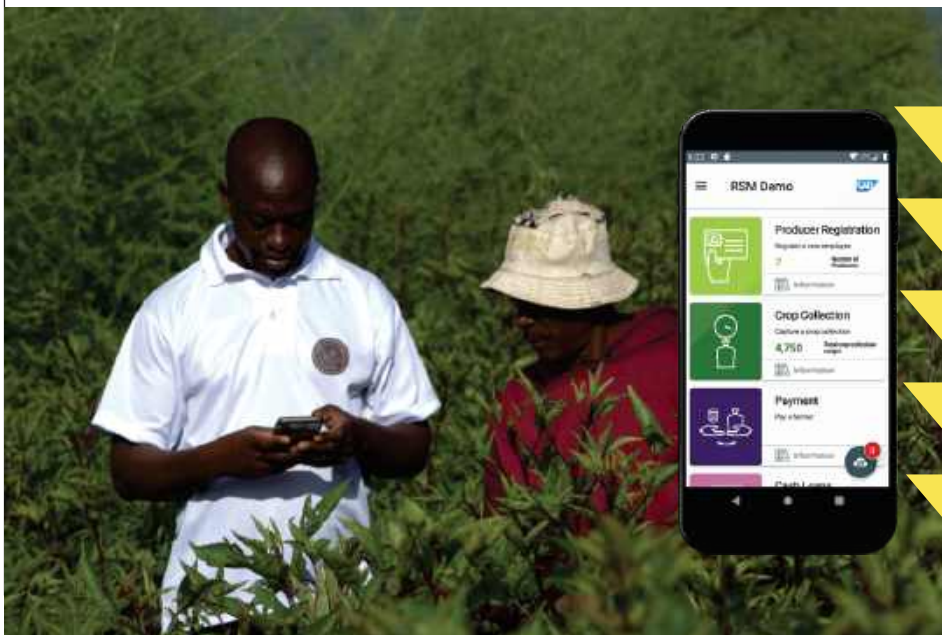




## DIGITAL INCLUSION OF SMALL SCALE FARMERS



## CONTENTS

New Rosella Farmers Optimistic

OFA Welcomes First Biochar Audit

Women Embrace Organic Farming and Wild Collection

Traceability App Exemplifies Digital Innovation

New Venture Delights Project Coordinator



# New Rosella Farmers Optimistic



*Betty Butai stands in front of her Rosella plot.*

Farmers in Mudzi and Pfungwe who started Rosella farming are delighted that the organic herb has the potential to increase their income in streams.

The farmers who over the years have been doing wild collection and are contracted with Organic Africa Holdings underwent several pieces of training that are being conducted by a private voluntary organisation, Organic Farming Academy(OFA).

Speaking on the sidelines of a biochar training by OFA in March, the farmers are delighted that the hardy plant which has several healthy benefits and can be able to adapt to dry conditions can be able to sustain livelihoods.

“We only started growing Rosella last year as an experiment, Organic Africa just gave us a few inputs but this crop has shown that it can fare well in these dry climatic conditions that we experience here.

“Many here have started making inquiries on how they can be part of this initiative,” said Gift Maramuro from Karanga in Uzumba Maramba Pfungwe.

A woman farmer, Betty Butai from Nyakaringa Village, Dewe could not hide her joy that she was part of the pilot Rosella farming initiative and encouraged other women farmers to join in.

“I am glad that Rosella farming has proven to be a worthy venture as you can see the crop is looking healthy. If more inputs can be availed this will go a long way in improving our livelihoods as we are going to have more income from Rosella.

“I also encourage fellow women to get into organic farming and wild collection so that they cannot be dependent on their husbands,” said Ms Butai who is a cluster leader of 34 women wild-collectors.

She hailed the training that they received from Organic Farming Academy as 'life-changing'.

“The training on organic farming and wild collection from brother Tatenda and Sister Doreen,(OFA training consultants )have been very useful and considerably improved our livelihoods,” she added.

Another woman farmer, Tsitsi Macheya from Mukona village in Mudzi, also revealed that Rosella farming is less labour-intensive.

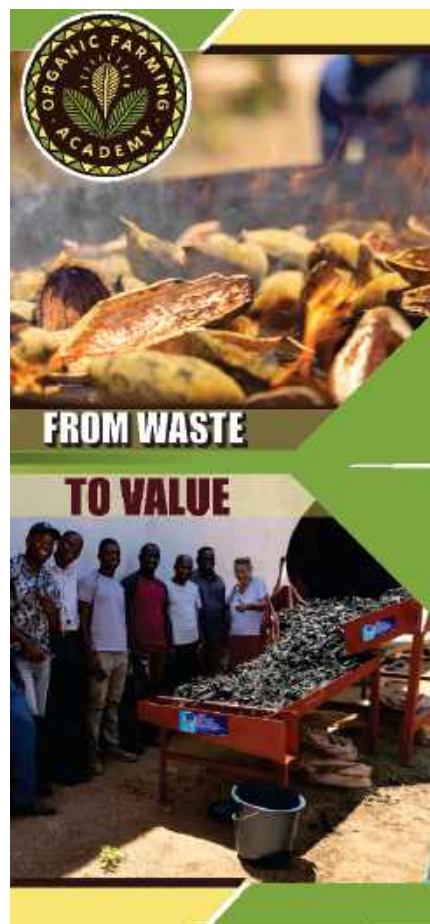
“What I like is that with rosella farming it does not require much labour like other conventional crops,” Macheya said.

The executive extension for Bayoba, a subsidiary of Organic Africa Holdings, Islum Marimazhira, confirmed that there was enthusiasm by many of the wild collectors to start Rosella farming.

“I only got around 80kgs of Rosella seed which I distributed to the few farmers and the experiment has indeed shown that the crop can do well here. I am now overwhelmed with the number of people here who want to venture into this organic farming hence the following season we want to do it full-scale, ” Marimazhira said.

Organic Farming Academy started operating in 2022 and it trains organic farmers and wild-collectors for organic certification. It is working in 23 districts across the country's 10 provinces. To date, it has trained over 9,000 small-holder farmers and wild-collectors.

# Biochar Project To Tackle Climate Change



**.....thousands of smallscale farmers in Zimbabwe to benefit**

The artisanal biochar project in Rushinga and Mudzi is a carbon removal project and had its first audit in February.

Carbon removal is defined as a process of removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and storing it as a way to tackle climate change.

The project is a collaboration between Organic Farming Academy and a carbon removal start-up company, CarbonConnect based in Hamburg, Germany.

It is required that every carbon removal project has to undergo certification hence the visit by the auditor Edith Kembabazi from the certification company, Ceres GmbH in February.

Present during the inspection included the OFA team, founders of Carbon Connect, Tim Kunzel and Nando Knodel, and their local representative, Tafadzwa Nyamande from Zimbanjex.

There are a few recommendations on standards that were made by the auditor that need to be corrected.

According to Nyamande, the audit was humbling considering the project started a few months ago.

“It was more exciting and challenging that we had our very first audit just three months after project launch. We had done a lot of things right in our two locations but also there are some areas of improvement that we need to look at,” he said.

He added that the 'biochar is being produced according to the Global Artisan methodology from Carbon Standard International'.

The CarbonConnect co-founder, Nando Knodel, highlighted the importance of biochar as a carbon removal project and revealed that smallholder farmers around the production sites will be the biggest beneficiaries of this project.

“So through this partnership with OFA, we have set up biochar production sites in Rushinga and Mudzi but we also plan to roll out more of these. Currently, we are using baobab shells to make the biochar. The biochar can sequester carbon for many years.

“It is charged with nutrients before applying it to the soil. OFA then trains the smallscale farmers on how to apply it in the soil,” said Nando. He adds,

“The biochar can lead to soil improvement by increasing the water-holding capacity of the soil. The biochar will be donated free of charge to farmers around the production sites,” he added.

According to OFA training consultant Tatenda Manyadza, the organisation has already started training small-scale farmers on how to mix biochar with compost and apply it to the soil.

“So we have already started rolling out training to farmers on how to make compost and mix it with biochar. The farmers can also mix it with liquid fertilizer. Then we also demonstrate to them how it should be applied to the soil. This can be done in different methods either spreading it on the fields or ploughing it into the soil,” said Manyadza.

The organisation has so far held the training in Rushinga, Uzumba Maramba Pfungwe (UMP), and Mudzi.

The carbon removal project is coming at a time when Zimbabwe has crafted a carbon law which however is a statutory instrument and there are concerted efforts by carbon credit players like the Zimbabwe Carbon Association to ensure there will be legislation that speaks to the best international practices on carbon credits.

Zimbabwe has not been spared from the effects of climate change. In 2019, the country was hit by Cyclone Idai and currently, it is reeling from the effects of the El Nino-induced droughts which are being caused by the changing weather patterns. It is in this regard, that biochar can be exploited as a mitigation measure against climate change.



# Women Embrace Organic Farming and Wild Collection



Women have been the most forthcoming in embracing organic farming and wild collection, according to Organic Farming Academy, senior training consultant, Doreen Ngwenyama.

In an interview recently, Ngwenyama who boasts of over 15 years of agricultural training experience, says it is encouraging that women are constituting the highest number of trainees in organic farming and wild collection training.

“Women are often excluded in economic activities but the interest that we have witnessed from women in doing organic farming and wild collection has been huge.

“It is encouraging that many of these women in rural areas are getting some income from the proceeds of these (organic farming and wild collection ) and be able to fend for themselves rather than depend on their spouses which often leads to abuse,” she said.

This was also echoed by Betty Butau, a cluster leader of wild collectors from Mudzi who encouraged other women to also venture into this climate-resilient farming.

“Here we do wild collection but I am lucky that I got selected to be a pilot Rosella farming. The Rosella has proven to adapt to the dry conditions that are prevalent in this area. To imagine that with the less rains we received last year, this crop is looking healthy,” explained Butau who leads a group of 34 women wild collectors.

However, Doreen Ngwenyama, OFA training consultant, is concerned with the lack of interest in organic farming and wild collection among youths.

“Our young people have not been forthcoming in being part

of the organic movement. As trainers we are devising plans on how to arouse interest among the youths so they can be part of these sustainable livelihoods activities,” Ngwenyama said.

Statistics from the OFA training show that women constitute over 65 percent of trainees in organic farming and wild collection.

**FACT:**  
Did you know that?  
Women comprise at least  
**75%**  
of the small-scale  
farmers in Zimbabwe.

# Traceability App Exemplifies Digital Innovation

The traceability application being rolled out by Organic Farming Academy is proving to be a cutting-edge digital innovation for recording, monitoring, and tracking every stage of the food production cycle.

The application, Rural Sourcing, was designed by a German software company, SAP, and is helping in enhancing food safety.

In an interview, OFA's Traceability Data Analyst and System Administrator, Talent Jokonya, explained some of the features of the application.

“The Traceability App comes as a mobile app developed by SAP, install-able on android devices, comes with a web-based reporting, analytics, and administration panel, and has the capability of performing the following: undertaking farmer registration in case of contract farming and field mapping of small scale farmers and commercial farmers.”

"It can track loading, offloading, and packaging throughout the food supply chain so in a nutshell it can track food production from farm to fork," Jokonya said.

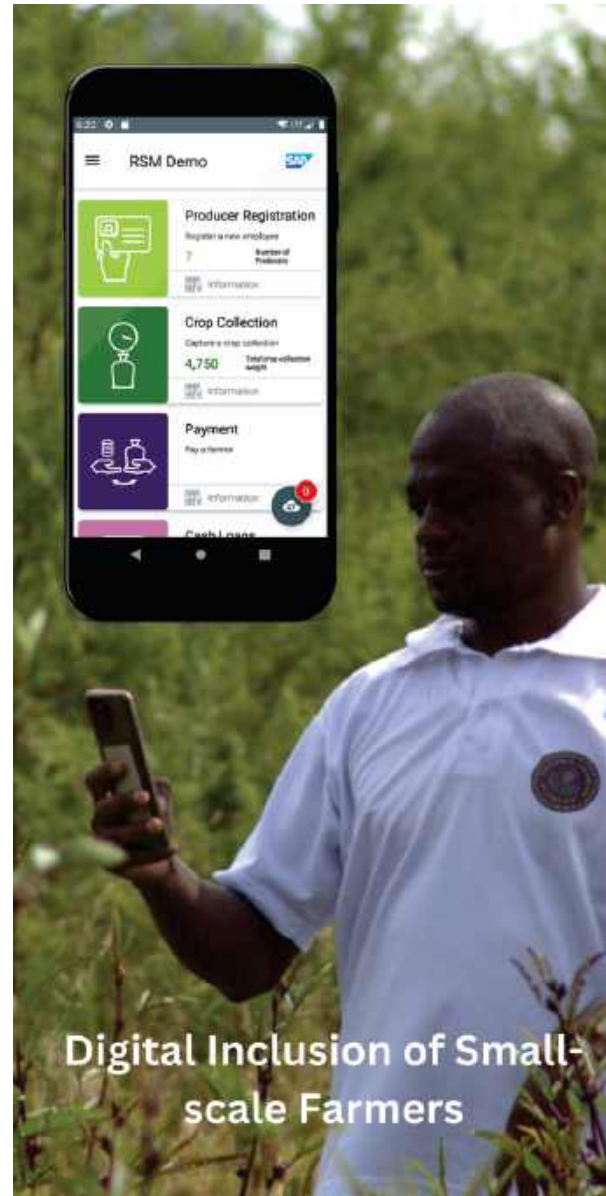
The organisation has been training small-scale organic farmers and wild collectors contracted with Organic Africa Holdings across the country on how to use the traceability application.

On the sidelines of an internal inspectors' training in Mbire, an organic farmer, Kafemba Chisenga, expressed delight at how the application has been handy in their work.

“The traceability has made our work as internal inspectors easy. Previously when inspecting we used to carry huge files of papers filling in information that is needed for organic certification. However, the digital application is a game changer now because collation is now easy and we don't risk losing the information like in the past,” he said.

Different organic certification labels have a set of standards that farmers are required to follow and the traceability application is aiding in compliance with some of these standards.

Interestingly, Organic Farming Academy is running a biochar project in Rushinga and Mudzi. It is a carbon-removal initiative that is being done in collaboration with a German-based start-up company, Carbon Connect. The carbon credits project requires certification which is being done by Carbon Standards International. In this regard, there are efforts to tailor-make the traceability application be used to monitor some of the standards.



Digital Inclusion of Small-scale Farmers





## New Venture Delights Project Coordinator



The organisation now has a new Project Coordinator who is delighted with her assumed role.

The affable Fiona Tinarwo boasts over 12 years of experience in the NGO sector working in the environment and women's rights advocacy space.

Before joining Organic Farming Academy, she worked as the Programme Manager with Women's Action Group (WAG). She says joining OFA presents her with an opportunity to champion environment and climate justice issues while at the same time transforming the lives of rural communities.

“I have always been passionate about environment, community development, and making an impact in people's lives and most of my work of late has been around advocating for women's rights. I am excited that I am joining this organisation where I am able to combine all my passions and most importantly interact with women rural farmers and help re-write their stories”.

“I am fully geared to play my part in promoting and advocating for these pertinent issues,” she said.

Fiona is also an avid writer who has contributed to a number of local publications on gender, environment, and women's rights issues.

She boasts of a Master's degree in Environmental Policy and Planning degree with the University of Zimbabwe.



german  
cooperation

DEUTSCHE ZUSAMMENARBEIT

In the context of



**Partners in  
Transformation**  
Business & Development  
Network

Implemented by



**AFOS** Foundation For Entrepreneurial  
Development Cooperation