

From Dirt to Dividend: A Story of Agroecological Transformation in the Dande Valley

Bandimba Village, Ward 3 — Mount Darwin, Zimbabwe



No smallholder should suffer the indignity of poverty



In the heart of the Dande Valley, beneath the sweltering Mopane woodlands and ancient baobabs, the Seremenga family has tilled the land for decades—against all odds.

For Lucky Seremenga and his wife, Tendepi Chingoma, life in this remote corner of Zimbabwe has always been defined by hardship. The land is harsh, the weather unforgiving, and the scars of the liberation war and landmines are still fresh in memory. Until 2021, the threat of landmines made farming a daily gamble. Even livestock paid the price.

Their son, Shoddy, 23, is part of a new generation daring to dream differently. In 2022 the family joined a village business group called *Vimbainashe* — meaning "God-given hope". In 2024, they co-created a business plan with assistance from the Agricultural Partnerships Trust (APT), resulting in the delivery of a co-funded 2-wheel tractor and planter, ushering in a new era of mechanised minimum tillage. This one machine transformed everything.

Before, ploughing one hectare with oxen took two exhausting weeks. Now, with Shoddy behind the wheel, it takes just two hours. Seeds and fertiliser are planted in a single pass, preserving soil health and moisture. Labour is cut dramatically, freeing up time for poultry and pig farming, and offering real hope of financial security.

At a recent field day, neighbours marvelled at the lush sorghum crop—stronger, healthier, more promising. Farmers were inspired not just by the machine, but by the vision: a future where youth see farming as a career, where innovation thrives even in forgotten places.

The government's free input distribution programme – *Pfumvudza/Intwasa* – requires that farmers use minimum tillage to prepare their small plots. Most commonly this is done with a hoe, a back-breaking exercise. There is good incentive to use the mechanised services and farmers are already queuing to book the tractor for the next season, ready to pay USD35/ha—a step towards sustainability.

The tractor doesn't rest between seasons either: it now hauls goods with the trailer, which was part of the supplied equipment, and holds the potential to pump water, thresh grain and cut chaff.

"I am inspired by the enthusiasm of our local farmers, who are eager to embrace these tillage methods. I believe that together, we can significantly improve the food security situation in Dande." — Lucky Seremenga

This is more than a story about a machine. It's about reclaiming dignity, igniting youth potential, and restoring livelihoods in one of Zimbabwe's most neglected valleys.

APT is planting seeds of resilience—one village, one family, one future at a time.

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