



**CASE STUDIES: EXPLORING
AN AGROECOLOGICAL
APPROACH TO AGRI-FOOD
SYSTEMS IN ZIMBABWE**



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About this paper

The Southern African Faith Communities' Environment Institute (SAFCEI) commissioned a series of research papers focused on agroecology in South Africa, Tanzania, Zimbabwe and Zambia. This paper provides an overview of the state of the agri-food system in Zimbabwe and the potential provided by an agroecological framework as a response to current challenges of ecosystem degradation, climate change and malnutrition. SAFCEI aims to use this work to further deepen its understanding of the linkages between climate and food justice in Africa and to support the generation of advocacy material and practical recommendations it can offer to its members.

Citation

South African Faith Communities' Environment Institute (SAFCEI). 2023. [Exploring an agroecological approach to agri-food systems in Zimbabwe](#). Cape Town: SAFCEI.

CONTENTS

List of acronyms	i
Executive summary	ii
1. Introduction	1
2. Characteristics and outcomes of Zimbabwe’s agri-food system	2
2.1 Status of base of production	2
2.2 Overview of market dynamics	2
2.3 Outcomes of Zimbabwe’s agri-food system	3
3. Agroecology as a transformative response	4
3.1 What would a sustainable agri-food system look like?	5
3.2 Agroecology in Zimbabwe	8
4. A focus on social movements as an enabler of success	9
5. Case study: Zimbabwean Smallholder Organic Farmers’ Forum	10
5.1 About ZIMSOFF	11
5.2 How ZIMSOFF works	11
5.3 Alignment with key tenets of a successful agroecological social movement	11
6. Case study: Zimbabwe Organic Producers and Processors Trust	12
6.1 About ZOPPA Trust	12
6.2 How ZOPPA Trust works	12
6.3 Alignment with key tenets of a successful agroecological social movement	13
7. Conclusion	14
References	15

ACRONYMS

AFSA	Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization (United Nations)
GoZ	Government of Zimbabwe
HLPE	High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition
PGS	Participatory Guarantee Systems
SAFCEI	Southern African Faith Communities’ Environment Institute
ZIMSOFF	Zimbabwean Smallholder Organic Farmers Forum
ZOPPA	Zimbabwe Organic Producers and Processors

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Zimbabwe has made the necessary conceptual linkage between healthy food systems and higher resilience to climate change. It is focusing on food system transformation as an entry point to building wider societal adaptivity to a changing climate.

There is significant nutritional and food insecurity in the country, exacerbated by a weak economy and recurrent extreme climatic events. While the conceptual shift towards wanting to support a sustainable food system is admirable, there are significant obstacles to this becoming a reality.

Government's framing of food and farming systems is still rooted in the industrial agricultural model; it continues to support this system through subsidised inputs and a focus on the private sector as the way out of the quagmire. It plans to invest significantly in growing the domestic fertiliser industry, for example, while the funds could be better spent in training on compost making and enhancing soil fertility with elements that do no further harm to the planet.

It is only a flexible, contextual and holistic framework such as agroecology that can lead Zimbabwe towards a food system that does not harm people or planet, and that can address critical challenges such as climate change, hunger and rural poverty.

The paper focuses on the role of social movements in scaling agroecology as a transformative lever of change. It uses ZIMSOFF and the ZOPPA Trust – two agroecological movements in Zimbabwe – to understand how best practice plays out on the ground.

Key findings

- The farmer must play a central role in the social movement to enable the voice of farmers to reach decision-making circles. These movements must be built from the bottom up to ensure that they remain inclusive, participatory, democratic and equitable.
- They are political in nature – in that they directly challenge the status quo of the dominant system, and they uphold the notion of seed and food sovereignty.
- They act at multiple levels to influence producers, consumers and government on the need for agroecology and its suitability as a response to challenges faced in the country.
- They are involved in on-the-ground programmes and projects with farmers through training, creation of spaces and platforms for knowledge sharing and co-creation, demonstration sites, support in conceptualising markets and new farm economies.
- They work with others to scale agroecology as a response to the devastation wrought by the industrial agricultural system.



1. INTRODUCTION

Zimbabwe is ahead of other countries in Africa in declaring the need for transformation of its food system and linking this strongly with the need to build resilience and adaptive capacity at the community level.

Resilience building is prioritised in Zimbabwe's National Development Strategy (2021-2025) (Tinarwo, 2021). The strategy notes it will first focus on the food system to find a way out of the current food crisis (Tinarwo, 2021). Focus areas in the food system will be on making the system more efficient; ensuring it delivers safe, nutritious and affordable foods; including smallholder farmers, particularly women and youth, in decision making; strengthening sub-national governance structures to protect natural resources and

and biodiversity; and building resilience (Tinarwo, 2021). The country, however, faces challenges in terms of financing this transition, as well as institutional capacity to work at a holistic level. Interventions tend to happen in silos in the food and climate change governance space in Zimbabwe (SAFCEI, 2021).

The Stockholm Resilience Center (2015 in SAFCEI, 2021:1) describes resilience as "... the capacity of a system, be it an individual, a forest, a city or an economy, to deal with change and continue to develop ... Its thinking embraces learning, diversity and above all the belief that humans and nature are strongly coupled to the point that they should be conceived as one social-ecological system."

Zimbabwe is embracing food system transformation within a resilience building framework because it is experiencing the cumulative shocks of economic collapse, very poor nutrition and health outcomes, and quickly degrading ecosystems. And this is happening in a context of climate change with the impact of Covid-19 also exacerbating already significant challenges.

This paper provides an overview of the current state of Zimbabwe's agri-food system and positions agroecology as a suitable framework for the country. It uses two case studies (ZIMSOF and ZOPPA Trust) to highlight the potential of agroecology expressed through social movements to act as a transformative lever for systemic change. Some of the key characteristics and outcomes of the country's agri-food system are described below.

2. CHARACTERISTICS OF ZIMBABWE'S AGRI-FOOD SECTOR

2.1 Status of base of production

Zimbabwe's rich natural environment is rapidly being degraded. The country's Second Voluntary National Review of progress made against development plans and the Sustainable Development Goals notes that the ecological integrity of the country's wetlands is deteriorating, and forest cover is being lost at a rapid rate (GoZ, 2021).

The Forestry Commission estimates that about 330 000 hectares of forest cover is lost each year. The expansion of agriculture, mining and infrastructure developing is driving ecological degradation (GoZ, 2021) – which makes natural resource use unsustainable (Tinarwo, 2021).

2.2 Overview of market dynamics

As with many African countries, Zimbabwe's formal input supply sector (seeds and fertilisers) is dominated by a small group of corporate companies. And most inputs are imported and then marketed through large corporations

and distributed through an extensive network of private agrodealers. In 2021, about \$236 million was spent on importing fertilisers – up \$38 million from 2019. And of this, 70% is public funding as the government procures for the farm input subsidy programme (Zimbabwe Today, 2020). The government announced plans in 2020 to invest almost \$80 million into a Five-Year Fertiliser Import Substitution programme to grow the local fertiliser industry (Zimbabwe Today, 2020).

There are 45 seed companies registered in Zimbabwe, with 19 of them registered internationally (Access to Seeds, 2018) – the largest are Seed Co. Ltd, Pannar and Pioneer (Syngenta Foundation, 2015). The larger companies have their own laboratories and seed inspectors (Access to Seed, 2018) with 10 of them having their own breeding programmes (Syngenta Foundation, 2015). The price of agricultural inputs has increased radically over the past few years.

A member of the Zimbabwean Farmers Union noted that the price of a 10kg bag of maize seed had increased by Zimbabwean \$11 000 in one year (Newsdzezimbabwe, 2021).

Agroecology encourages reduced dependence on external inputs through harnessing the synergies of active on-farm elements to recycle biomass and animal manure into compost. It also encourages the scaling up of farmer-managed seed systems.

2.3 Agri-food system outcomes

Hunger and malnutrition

In 2021, Zimbabwe was one of the world's top six countries experiencing a food crisis, according to the Food Security Information Network (Tinarwo, 2021). And as the proportion of the population living in poverty grows, so does an inability to buy food. A 2017 government report notes that poverty is a key driver of food and nutrition insecurity and, at that point, that 70.5% of the population were poor with more than 25% extremely poor (Government of Zimbabwe [GoZ], 2022).

According to the World Bank, it is those living in the rural areas that make up 90% of the country's extremely poor (Borgen Project, 2022). The Covid-19 pandemic has "pushed 1.3 million Zimbabweans into extreme impoverishment" (Borgen Project, 2022:1). It is not just the inability to buy food that is the problem, there is a lack of food diversity.

This lack is driven by the obsessive focus on maize production as an indicator of food security. More than 80% of households plant maize, supported by free or subsidised maize seed and fertiliser through the farm input subsidy programme (GoZ, 2022). Maize has far less nutrients than other local crops such as millet and sorghum. The way that it is produced when using industrial inputs also negates the opportunities for intercropping and multi-cropping, which would provide for diversity of diet.

Nutrient deficiencies are prevalent in the country – one in four children is stunted, more than 80% of children under the age of two years do not consume the minimum acceptable diet (Borgen Project, 2022) with only 2.1% of children under five years eating a minimum acceptable diet (GoZ, 2022).

Less resilience to climate change

Zimbabwe was among the world's 10 countries most affected by climate change in 2019, according to the 2021 Global Climate Risk Index (Newsday, 2022). The country is likely to experience an increase in average temperature of 1-3°C and average rainfall is decreasing (SAFCEI, 2021).

The impacts of more frequent and extreme droughts are negatively affecting yield productivity for farmers practising rain-fed production; and are even affecting the generation of hydroelectric power at Kariba Dam (SAFCEI, 2021).



3. AGROECOLOGY AS A TRANSFORMATIVE RESPONSE

The 2019 EAT-Lancet Commission noted that "food is the single strongest lever to optimise human health and environmental sustainability on Earth" (in Sulcas, 2022:1). Importantly though, it is how food is conceived (as a public good or as a commodity) that will determine whether transforming the food system is also able to transform the current economic model that is driving environmental degradation.

There are varied understandings of agroecology but at its heart it is a holistic, contextual and sustainable approach to agricultural management that also aims to bring about social equity. There are 10 elements of the agroecological approach, decided on through a global multi-stakeholder

consultation process undertaken by the FAO in 2014. These are diversity, co-creation of knowledge, synergies, efficiency, recycling, resilience, human and social values, culture and food traditions, responsible governance, and circular and solidarity economy (Wezel et al., 2020).

The 10 elements can be divided into contextual features (human and social values, culture and food traditions), characteristics of and practices within agroecological systems (diversity, synergies, efficiency, resilience, recycling, co-creation and sharing of knowledge), and enabling features (responsible governance, circular and solidarity economy) (FAO, 2018).

Because agroecology goes further than production practices to work at political and socioeconomic levels, it is considered a transformative approach.

As a set of practices, agroecology uses natural processes to create beneficial biological interactions and synergies that enhance farming productivity while minimising damage to the environment (Wezel et al., 2020). As a social movement, agroecology provides a solution to malnutrition by delivering a greater diversity of foods with higher nutritional content and it works to make the agri-food system more equitable, inclusive and fair for both producers and consumers (Wezel et al., 2020). It also combats the effects of climate change by lowering greenhouse gas emissions (mitigation) and building more resilient farming systems (adaptation).

There an emphasis on putting the “aspirations and needs of those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems” (FAO, n.d.:1). This means focusing on dignity, inclusion, equity and justice through building autonomy of farmers and communities, promoting the right to food and ensuring access to genetic resources (FAO, n.d.). There is a particular emphasis on creating opportunities for women and youth, ensuring that they are included in both the economic opportunities available in farming and in decision making (FAO, n.d.).

The elements, their associated practices and beneficial outcomes are described on the following pages.

3.1 What would a sustainable agri-food system look like?

The elements of agroecology provide a contextual, flexible framework for the agri-food system encompassing social, ecological and economic elements. In particular, the system needs to (SAFCEI, 2021):

- Encourage and support the use of local and improved crop varieties and livestock breeds to **enhance genetic diversity**. This must be done in collaboration with farmers to ensure it meets their needs.
- **Eliminate agrochemicals in production systems**, along with other technologies that pose a risk to human and environmental health.
- Focus on **more efficient use of resources** to make the most of what we have and ensure that resources are available to future generations, as well as reducing farmers’ dependence on inputs.
- Embrace practices that **conserve and enhance biodiversity, sequester carbon** and **ensure the availability of potable water**.
- **Acknowledge agricultural heritage systems** that foster social cohesion and actively recognising and applying Farmers' Rights.
- **Reduce the carbon footprint of production, distribution and consumption**, which will also reduce soil and water pollution.
- Actively **strengthen adaptive capacity** in communities to external shocks, including climate change.
- **Promote democratic governance** of natural resources to generate an equitable and inclusive system.

Elements of agroecology, practices and beneficial outcomes

Element	Associated practices	Beneficial outcomes
1. Diversification <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintaining and enhancing genetic diversity of species and ecosystems Supporting diversification of income streams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intercropping and crop rotation Crop and livestock farming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Builds adaptive capacity to external shocks, including climate, market and pests and diseases Supports diversified income streams through sales of multiple products enabling greater financial independence Generates greater volumes of micro- and macronutrients, contributing towards nutritional security Farming livestock provides meat, an additional source of income and manure for composting Supports ecosystem services such as pollination, air purification and soil health
2. Co-creation of knowledge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhancing co-creation and horizontal sharing of knowledge, especially through farmer-to-farmer exchange 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoting the inclusion of agroecology in educational curricula at all levels Developing capacity for systems thinking to cope with an increasingly complex world Participatory, farmer-led research Needs-based academic research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More holistic understanding of agri-food systems Farmers and their needs elevated rather than marginalised
3. Synergies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Putting in place systems that enhance synergies (positive ecological interactions) Enhancing complementarities in agro-ecosystems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using natural features (hedges, ponds, flowers, etc.) to perform functions such as windbreaks, pest deterrents, pollinator attractors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduces input and infrastructural costs
4. Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nutrient recycling by planting leguminous crops to fix nitrogen and other crops and flowers with nutrient-fixing or depositing characteristics. Water recycling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Saves costs Saves on resource use, particularly external resources
5. Recycling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using local, renewable resources Making closed loop cycles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using animal manure with biomass and green manure to make compost instead of buying in fertilisers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cuts down on use of external resources, and thus costs Helps to support closed loop systems
6. Resilience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designing the farm to protect from extreme events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using permaculture design principles incorporating hedges, trees and natural windbreaks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helps to weather external shocks and enable continued production

Element	Associated practices	Beneficial outcomes
7. Human and social values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social values and diets: food systems based on the culture, identity, tradition, social and gender equity of local communities that provide healthy, diversified, seasonally and culturally appropriate diets • Fairness – support dignified and robust livelihoods for all actors engaged in food systems, especially small-scale food producers – fair trade, fair employment and fair treatment of intellectual property rights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enables shorter supply chains built on trust and transparency
8. Culture and food traditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing local and indigenous crops • Celebrating the culture in agri-‘culture’ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enables food sovereignty and reclamation of autonomy
9. Responsible governance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen institutional arrangements to improve recognition and support of family farmers, smallholders and peasant producers as sustainable managers of natural and genetic resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Democratic decision-making processes • Membership of a PGS or other networks that elevate the voices of farmers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive, democratic governance mechanisms • Support for local and regional food systems • Contextual and varied governance systems that are fit for purpose
10. Circular and solidarity economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage social organisation and greater participation in decision-making by food producers and consumers to support decentralised governance and local adaptive management of agricultural and food systems • Enable proximity and confidence between producers and consumers through fair, short distribution networks and re-embedding food systems into local economies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shorter and cleaner value chains • Diversified markets • Higher incomes for producers

Source: FAO 2018; Wezel et al. 2020

The High Level Panel of Experts (HLPE) on Food and Nutrition advise that there are cross-cutting elements necessary for large-scale transformation of the food system. These are inclusive and participatory forms of innovation governance, information and knowledge co-production and sharing among communities and networks, and responsible innovation that steers innovation towards social issues (HLPE, 2019).



3.2 Agroecology in Zimbabwe

Agroecology is not formally recognised as a framework for farming and food systems in national policy (Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa [AFSA], 2021). The government department of agricultural extension even actively discourages some agroecological practices such as intercropping in favour of the industrial agricultural model that used monocultures (AFSA, 2021). There are some shifts though towards acknowledging those who farm more sustainably, notably through a pricing system that sets the price of traditional grains on par with maize as they are recognised as being more climate resilient (AFSA, 2021).

In addition, Fambidzanayi Centre of Permaculture offers an accredited Diploma in Agroecology course and the study of agroecology and of indigenous

food crops is now part of the curriculum of agricultural colleges, which speaks to a level of acceptance by government of the concept (AFSA, 2021).

There are many organisations working both at the policy level and on the ground to support the scaling of agroecology in the country. These include the Zimbabwean Organic Producers and Processors Association (ZOPPA) Trust and the Zimbabwean Smallholder Organic Farmers' Forum (ZIMSOFF). World Vision provides training and BioVision promotes the development, application and dissemination of agroecological practices (AFSA, 2021). There are many others.

4. SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AS ENABLERS OF A TRANSITION

The Nyeleni Declaration of 2015 was a collective call to action of social movements, individuals and government to support agroecology (in its true form) as a framework for food and farming systems. The Declaration notes that “Agroecology is the answer to how to transform and repair our material reality in a food system and rural world that has been devastated by industrial food production and its so-called Green and Blue Revolutions” (Food Sovereignty, 2015).

Social movements have a critical role to play in advocating for agroecology as a framework for farming and food systems, as well as in preventing agroecology being co-opted by commercial interests and those with a narrow view of its potential. Social movements contribute to the scaling of agroecology in that:

- They **educate a range of stakeholders** (from farmers to consumers and policymakers) on the need for and benefits of agroecology, and they advocate for support from government to do this.
 - They **ensure that people and planet remain central** to food and farming systems, holding firm to the notion of rights and access to the commons (Anderson et al., 2015).
 - They **build the necessary networks** to take agroecology to scale – national networks joining regional and global ones, as an example.
- The Nyéléni Declaration notes that agroecology is key to the construction of food sovereignty and those supporting it must ‘challenge and transform structures of power in society’ (Anderson et al., 2015). This requires the development of a critical understanding of current structures and how to change them. La Via Campesina notes that agroecological social movements are more successful when they educate or support learning in soft skills – communication, presentation, etc. (Anderson et al., 2015). They also emphasise the importance of leaders of the movement being farmers themselves (Anderson et al., 2015).
- The case studies that follow are used to illustrate how agroecological social movements play a transformative role in enabling the scaling of agroecology.



5. CASE STUDY: ZIMSOFF

5.1 About ZIMSOFF

ZIMSOFF is a forum for smallholder organic farmers on a mission to “influence policies and public awareness towards agroecology and smallholder farmers’ rights struggles for farmer-managed seed systems” (FAO, n.d.a:1).

The organisation was founded in 2022 during the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg, South Africa (Via Campesina, 2013).

Its programmatic areas are organic agriculture, natural resource management, climate justice, advocacy, value addition and seed bulking of open pollinated varieties (Thousand Currents, 2022).

The organisation is also part of broader networks, namely the East and Southern Africa Small-scale Farmers’ Forum and La Via Campesina (FAO, n.d.a). It is a founding partner of the Zimbabwe Seed Sovereignty Programme along with six other organisations working on attaining seed sovereignty (FAO, n.d.a). It also a member of the regional Seed and Knowledge Initiative and an active member of the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA).

ZIMSOFF is repeatedly recognised for the calibre of its work. In 2016, ZIMSOFF chairperson was recognised by the United Nations’ FAO as the Special Ambassador for the Year of Pulses in the African region (FAO, n.d.a).

In 2017, ZIMSOFF was awarded the United States Food Sovereignty Prize for its role in supporting seed and food sovereignty in the country (FAO, n.d.a). In 2019, ZIMSOFF was awarded the Spring Prize for its work as the “voice of peasants struggling for social justice in Zimbabwe” and for its activities on the ground, including training, demonstration and festivals (Spring Prize, 2019:1). The Spring Prize committee notes that ZIMSOFF is “developing living examples on managing living soils, seed and water in order to provide evidence for its advocacy work” (Spring Prize, 2019:1).

5.2 How ZIMSOFF works

ZIMSOFF works in Zimbabwe’s rural areas through regional clusters of local farmer organisations – households are organised into a group or ‘club’, these clubs come together to form a smallholder farmer organisation, and then a number of these form a cluster. ZIMSOFF works with four clusters of comprising more than 15 000 members.

5.3 Alignment with key tenets of an agroecological social movement

ZIMSOFF’s work aligns closely with the elements desired within an agroecological social movement. The following elements in particular serve to place the organisation as a lever for change in Zimbabwe.

- There is a **focus on gender inclusivity** with women taking on leadership positions and entering decision making spaces. Most clusters are led by women (FAO, n.d.a).

- The **farmer remains at the centre**. All leadership and training positions are held by farmers (Via Campesina, 2013). Members of ZIMSOFF organise farmer-to-farmer exchange visits, group meetings and workshops, along with seed festivals and other events (Via Campesina, 2013). These meetings are an important way to share and gain knowledge (Via Campesina, 2013).
- Work undertaken spans from production (through farmer-led trainings, demonstration sites and peer-to-peer knowledge exchange) through to political education and policy advocacy work. ZIMSOFF walks the talk... The Shashe Agroecology Village is living testament to how agroecology can deliver against all of Zimbabwe’s primary challenges.
- The organisation holds **training on broader systemic elements** of the agri-food system – from understanding seed regulations and marketing laws to the complexities of the harmonisation of seed laws taking place in Africa.

ZIMSOFF as a partner of the Zimbabwe Seed Sovereignty Programme also helps to organise the annual national seed fair. This takes place within the larger Good Food and Seed Festival and brings together smallholders from across the country to learn about, swap and trade farmer seeds (PELUM Zimbabwe, 2019). These kinds of events help to cement the understanding that how and what we farm is directly linked to our health, and that of the planet.



6. CASE STUDY: ZOPPA

6.1 About ZOPPA Trust

The ZOPPA Trust is a national movement founded in 2008 focused on developing the organic sector in Zimbabwe. Its membership comprises organic farmers, promoters and processors. ZOPPA aims to grow the sector by coordinating member activities and sharing information on markets and certification options (ZOPPA, 2022).

It has an impressive record of achievements since inception, including developing Zimbabwe's organic standards (2009), registering Zim Organic and Zim Natural labels to be used for quality assurance (2010), developing an organic assurance system (2011), having its organic standard accredited by the International

Federation of Organic Agricultural Movements (IFOAM)–Organics International (2014) and developing an organic sector strategy (2017).

6.2 How ZOPPA Trust works

The Trust is a formally registered non-governmental organisation that focuses on sharing knowledge on organic production through trainings, factsheets, videos and podcasts; linking organic stakeholders to market through PGS certification schemes; and working with stakeholders, including policymakers, to create an enabling environment.

6.3 Alignment with key tenets of an agroecological social movement

ZOPPA works at different scales to ZIMSOFF. Although it engages with smallholder farmers through trainings and PGS formations (see below), more energy goes into creating the enabling ecosystems such as a conducive policy environment and a recognised market for agroecologically produced foods.

Their significant contributions are outlined below:

- **Creation of PGS groups.** ZOPPA has supported the formation of 114 PGS groups empowering more than 3 000 farmers to gain access to a market for agroecological produce. PGS is more than a production assurance system – its democratic, transparent and inclusive structure is a transformative mechanism for smallholder farmers. PGS includes consumers and retailers thus growing awareness of the need for and benefits of agroecological farming; it creates collective bargaining power; and it serves as a cohesive hub for co-creation and sharing of knowledge. ZOPPA has developed a local PGS framework for Zimbabwe.
- **Provision of certification standards and labels:** Agroecological farmers using organic practices and principles can sell into the local organic market as they can provide assurance to consumers that their production is sustainable. Having access to labels, allows farmers to differentiate their products from those who claim to be

organic, but are often not. By 2015, labelled organic produce was available in leading retailers in the country such as Pick n Pay and Spar (ZOPPA, 2022).

- **Development of a sector strategy:** The process to draft an organic strategy for Zimbabwe was extensive and inclusive with organic stakeholders contributing input over a six-month process. The then Ministry of Agriculture Mechanisation and Irrigation Development launched the strategy in 2017. The inclusion of organic into the governmental sphere is the first step in having agroecology viewed as a suitable framework for food and farming systems in the country.

ZOPPA is a member of IFOAM-Organics International, the Africa Organic Network and IFOAM Southern Africa and works in partnership with others to scale agroecological networks in the region.



7. CONCLUSION

Both case study organisations focus on promoting agroecology – albeit in different ways, at different scales and to different ends. What is clear is that agroecology on the farm is not sufficient to drive large-scale system change. Both organisations tackle the blockages imposed by inadequate policy and government support for agroecology as a sustainable farming framework. Both work to create self-organising collectives that are both spaces of empowerment and knowledge sharing.

ZOPPA does not fit the criteria of an agroecological social movement in its entirety, as it is not farmer-led, and it does not focus predominantly at the farm or farm community level.

It does, however, work to create the enabling environment that farmers will benefit from as they progress to having surplus to take to market. And it makes a significant contribution through training on formation of PGS groups – as these self-organised collectives are empowering agents in themselves.

ZIMSOFF's work is strongly aligned to agroecological principles of building circular and solidarity economies, using environmentally friendly production practices, building social and cultural values and co-creating and sharing knowledge.

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