



# **Sustainable Agriculture and Mainah Organisation's Vision for Zimbabwe and the SADC Region**

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# Introduction.

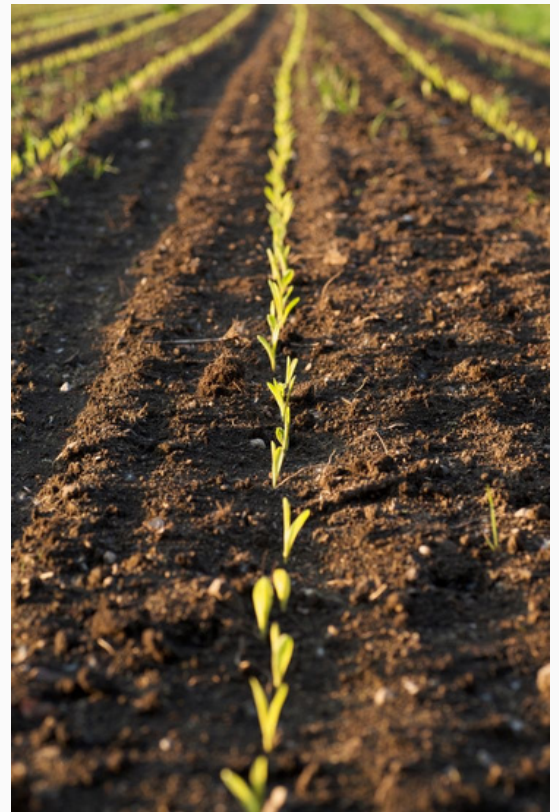
Mainah Organisation is deeply committed to fostering sustainable agriculture practices that protect the environment, enhance food security, and uplift communities in Zimbabwe and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region. Agriculture is a cornerstone of life for millions of people in Southern Africa, and yet the sector faces tremendous challenges from climate change, land degradation, and unsustainable farming methods. By promoting sustainable agriculture, we aim to build resilient agricultural systems that support livelihoods, ensure food security, and safeguard the health of ecosystems.

# The Agriculture Landscape in Zimbabwe and Southern Africa

Agriculture is the backbone of many economies in Southern Africa, particularly in Zimbabwe, where it provides employment for over 60% of the population and contributes significantly to national GDP. Smallholder farmers dominate the agricultural sector, with the majority of them practicing subsistence farming. Despite its critical role, agriculture in Zimbabwe and the broader SADC region is under severe pressure.

The effects of climate change—erratic rainfall, prolonged droughts, and more frequent extreme weather events—are severely impacting agricultural productivity. Zimbabwe, which once had the capacity to be the “breadbasket” of Southern Africa, has experienced decreasing agricultural yields, leading to food insecurity for millions of people. Additionally, the widespread use of unsustainable farming practices, such as overgrazing, deforestation, and improper soil management, has resulted in soil degradation and reduced biodiversity, further compromising the productivity of the land.

These challenges make it clear that conventional agricultural practices are no longer sufficient to meet the growing demand for food in a changing climate. A transformation towards sustainable agricultural practices is not only necessary for ensuring food security but is also critical for building resilience to climate change, restoring ecosystems, and improving rural livelihoods.



# Mainah Organisation's Sustainable Agriculture Strategy

At Mainah Organisation, our sustainable agriculture strategy is built on the principles of ecological balance, social equity, and economic viability. We believe that a thriving agricultural sector is one that not only provides food but also preserves the natural environment, supports local economies, and uplifts communities, especially smallholder farmers, women, and youth. Below is an in-depth exploration of the work we intend to do to promote sustainable agriculture in Zimbabwe and across the SADC region.

## 1. Promoting Climate-Smart Agriculture for Resilience

Climate change poses one of the greatest threats to agriculture in Zimbabwe and the wider Southern African region. Erratic rainfall patterns, increasing temperatures, and extreme weather events such as droughts and floods have made it more difficult for farmers to rely on traditional farming practices. Climate-smart agriculture (CSA) is therefore a core focus of our work, as it helps farmers adapt to the changing climate while increasing productivity and income. Mainah Organisation promotes climate-smart agricultural practices that enhance resilience to climate change while reducing greenhouse gas emissions. These practices include:

- **Conservation agriculture:** A set of farming practices that minimize soil disturbance, promote crop rotation, and maintain soil cover, which helps improve soil fertility, water retention, and resilience to drought
- **Agroforestry:** Integrating trees and shrubs into farming systems to enhance biodiversity, improve soil health, and provide additional sources of income through fruit and timber production.
- **Drought-resistant crops:** Encouraging the cultivation of crops that are more resilient to dry conditions, such as millet, sorghum, and cowpeas, which are better suited to Zimbabwe's semi-arid regions.
- **Water harvesting and irrigation systems:** Promoting the use of rainwater harvesting, drip irrigation, and other efficient water management techniques to ensure that crops receive sufficient water, even during dry spells.

By promoting these climate-smart practices, Mainah Organisation aims to help farmers increase their agricultural productivity while building resilience to climate shocks. Our goal is to support smallholder farmers in Matabeleland and other vulnerable regions, equipping them with the knowledge and tools they need to thrive in the face of climate change.

## 2. Enhancing Food Security through Sustainable Farming

Food security is a pressing issue in Zimbabwe, where millions of people face chronic hunger and malnutrition. At Mainah Organisation, we believe that sustainable agriculture is key to achieving food security for all. By promoting farming methods that improve soil health, increase crop yields, and reduce environmental degradation, we can help communities secure reliable access to nutritious food while protecting the land for future generations. One of the ways we are addressing food security is through organic farming. Organic farming avoids the use of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides, instead focusing on natural inputs and processes to enhance soil fertility and pest control. This not only results in healthier, more nutrient-dense crops but also protects the environment by reducing chemical runoff and promoting biodiversity. In addition to organic farming, we are supporting the diversification of crops as a strategy for enhancing food security. Many smallholder farmers rely on a narrow range of staple crops, such as maize, which makes them vulnerable to pests, disease, and poor weather conditions. By promoting the cultivation of a wider variety of crops—such as legumes, vegetables, and fruits—Mainah Organisation is helping farmers improve their nutrition and income while reducing the risk of crop failure. Moreover, we work with farmers to improve their post-harvest management techniques, including storage, processing, and marketing. These efforts are critical in reducing food losses, improving food availability throughout the year, and enhancing the profitability of smallholder farming.

## 3. Supporting Women and Youth in Agriculture

In Zimbabwe and across Southern Africa, women and youth are central to agricultural production, yet they often face significant barriers to success. Women are responsible for much of the labor on farms, yet they frequently lack access to land, financial resources, and decision-making power. Similarly, rural youth often struggle to find meaningful employment opportunities in agriculture, leading to rural-urban migration and the loss of agricultural knowledge. Mainah Organisation is committed to promoting gender equality and youth empowerment in the agricultural sector. We recognize that women and youth must be at the center of the sustainable agriculture transformation if it is to be successful. To support women in agriculture, we offer training programs and capacity-building initiatives that help women develop skills in sustainable farming practices, entrepreneurship, and leadership. We also work to increase women's access to resources, including land, credit, and agricultural inputs, enabling them to scale up their farming operations and improve their livelihoods.

For youth, we are developing programs that make agriculture more attractive and rewarding as a career option. Through agricultural entrepreneurship training, mentorship programs, and support for agribusiness startups, we aim to inspire young people to embrace farming as a viable livelihood. We believe that by empowering youth with the skills, resources, and opportunities they need to succeed in agriculture, we can create a new generation of farmers who are passionate about sustainability and innovation.

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## 4. Restoring Land and Ecosystems through Regenerative Agriculture

Land degradation is a significant challenge in Zimbabwe and the SADC region. Unsustainable farming practices, deforestation, and overgrazing have contributed to soil erosion, loss of soil fertility, and desertification in many areas. This has reduced the productive capacity of the land, making it harder for farmers to grow enough food to support their families.

At Mainah Organisation, we promote regenerative agriculture as a solution to land degradation. Regenerative agriculture goes beyond sustainable farming by actively restoring degraded ecosystems and enhancing the health of the soil, water, and biodiversity.

Some of the regenerative practices we promote include:

- **Soil regeneration:** Techniques such as composting, mulching, and crop rotation help improve soil fertility and structure, allowing the soil to better retain water and nutrients.
- **Agroecology:** A holistic approach to farming that integrates ecological principles into agricultural production, focusing on creating resilient, self-sustaining ecosystems that support biodiversity and human well-being.
- **Integrated pest management (IPM):** A combination of biological, cultural, and mechanical pest control methods that reduce the need for chemical pesticides while preserving beneficial insects and maintaining healthy ecosystems.

By restoring degraded lands and protecting natural resources, regenerative agriculture helps farmers increase their productivity while preserving the environment for future generations.

## 5. Building Capacity and Knowledge Sharing

At the core of Mainah Organisation's approach to sustainable agriculture is the belief that knowledge is power. We prioritize capacity building and knowledge sharing among farmers, agricultural extension officers, and community members. Through farmer field schools, workshops, and demonstration plots, we provide hands-on training in sustainable farming techniques that are tailored to the specific needs of each community. Our goal is to create learning hubs where farmers can share their experiences, exchange ideas, and experiment with new practices. These hubs serve as platforms for scaling up successful agricultural innovations and ensuring that knowledge is passed on to future generations. We also advocate for the inclusion of sustainable agriculture in school curriculums, recognizing the importance of educating young people about the benefits of environmentally friendly farming practices.

## 6. Promoting Agro-processing and Value Addition

In many rural areas, farmers struggle to add value to their agricultural produce, often selling raw products at low prices with limited market access. Mainah Organisation aims to promote agro-processing and value addition as a means of increasing farmers' income and enhancing rural development. By supporting the development of small-scale agro-processing enterprises, such as milling, drying, and packaging facilities, we help farmers move up the value chain and capture more of the profits from their produce. These enterprises not only create new economic opportunities for farmers but also contribute to the local economy by creating jobs and promoting entrepreneurship. We also work to connect farmers with markets and buyers, both locally and regionally, to ensure that they receive fair prices for their products. By improving market access and fostering stronger agricultural value chains, Mainah Organisation seeks to enhance the economic sustainability of farming communities.

## Collaboration for Sustainable Agricultural Transformation

Mainah Organisation recognizes that transforming the agricultural sector requires collaboration at multiple levels. We work closely with government agencies, research institutions, local farmers' associations, and international donors to promote sustainable agriculture policies and practices. By advocating for supportive policies and investments, we aim to create an enabling environment for the widespread adoption of sustainable farming methods.

# Conclusion.

Mainah Organisation's sustainable agriculture initiative is rooted in the belief that a prosperous, food-secure future for Zimbabwe and the SADC region can only be achieved through a commitment to ecological balance, community empowerment, and economic sustainability. By promoting climate-smart practices, enhancing food security, supporting women and youth, and restoring ecosystems, we aim to build a more resilient and equitable agricultural sector that benefits both people and the planet.

Through partnerships, knowledge sharing, and capacity building, we are working to create an agricultural future where sustainable practices thrive, rural communities prosper, and the natural environment is protected for generations to come.