

CONSERVATION AGRICULTURE NEWSLETTER

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FROM DEGRADED LAND TO THRIVING LANDSCAPES: How TSURO Trust is using Livestock to Restore Nature in Zimbabwe

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A NEW STORY FOR CHIMANIMANI

In the rolling hills of Chimanimani, Eastern Zimbabwe, communities are witnessing a remarkable transformation. For decades, communities faced worsening land degradation, declining pasture, low crop yields, and increasing pressure on natural resources. Today, these same landscapes are showing remarkable signs of recovery through Holistic Land and Livestock Management (HLLM), a community-driven Nature-based Solution led by TSURO Trust, a long-standing local organization partner and through the CFGB member, Alongside Hope.

HLLM is built on a simple but powerful principle: working with nature rather than against it. Inspired by the work of Zimbabwean ecologist Allan Savory, the approach mimics the natural movement of wild herbivores. Instead of allowing livestock to graze randomly, animals are managed in large, closely grouped herds that graze intensively in non-fenced paddocks for at least four days before moving to new grazing areas. This planned movement allows vegetation to recover, improves soil health, increases water infiltration, and restores ecological balance.



"When nature is given the chance to heal, communities thrive alongside it."

TSURO Trust introduced HLLM in 2012 with initial funding in 2011 that enabled its launch across five wards, marking a shift to community-based livestock management. *By 2020, HLLM had scaled with 21% of Changazi's land area (16,208 hectares) under HLLM, organized into 95 unfenced paddocks averaging 629 hectares. The system engaged 262 trained herders managing 5,647 cattle belonging to 1,322 livestock owners. Over the years, the initiative has grown into a large community-driven movement involving 2,927 registered livestock owners (302 female and 2625 male) with 11,157 cattle herded together.* Communities organize themselves into grazing clusters, where trained herders manage communal livestock under carefully planned grazing schedules. The system combines rotational grazing with collective kraaling, supported by investments in solar-powered boreholes, spray races, and movable boma sheets that enable livestock to fertilize crop fields naturally. The communities are organised in clusters, for resource management, which has seen improved livestock health while reducing the labour burden on families and especially women and children. Today, what began as a small pilot has evolved into a landscape-scale restoration initiative that is restoring ecosystems while strengthening rural livelihoods.

HOW HLLM WORKS

The TSURO communities organize livestock into large communal herds through clusters and are managed by trained herders (10 herders (8 males and 2 females) using rotational grazing schedules. During the cropping season, cattle are enclosed overnight in movable kraals (boma sheets), where their hooves naturally break hardened soil while manure and urine replenish soil nutrients.

This simple, low-cost practice restores degraded land by improving rainwater infiltration, increasing soil fertility naturally, reclaiming bare and eroded areas, encouraging the return of native grasses, and reducing overgrazing through planned grazing rotations with TSURO's support.

REGENERATING LAND THROUGH LIVESTOCK: "HEALTHY LIVESTOCK CREATES HEALTHY SOILS. HEALTHY SOILS CREATE HEALTHY COMMUNITIES."

At the heart of HLLM is the understanding that well-managed livestock are not a cause of land degradation, but they are part of the solution. Hoof action physically breaks compacted surface layers, presses seeds and plant litter into soil, and creates small surface irregularities that capture and hold rainfall. These actions improve water infiltration and storage, contain greater soil moisture availability, and vegetation responds positively (grasses, shrubs, and trees) establish more successfully, maintain growth during dry spells, and mature fully rather than remaining stunted, resulting in diverse, productive plant populations.

As livestock move together, their hooves gently break hardened soil surfaces, allowing rainwater to infiltrate rather than run off. At the same time, manure and urine enrich the soil with nutrients, stimulate microbial activity, and improve soil fertility. During the cropping season, movable night kraals are rotated across farmers' fields every seven days, distributing nutrients evenly without the need to transport manure manually. These practices restore degraded land, reclaim gullies, improve soil structure, and create healthier conditions for crops and pasture to thrive.

The approach also strengthens complementary Nature-based Solutions through bush management, Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR), enrichment planting of indigenous grasses and trees, and fire management, creating resilient landscapes capable of withstanding climate shocks.

"HLLM's ecological engine is hoof action plus in-situ urine and manure deposits through permanent kraals, which break soil capping, boost infiltration, seed bare areas, reclaim gullies, and enrich poor soils. High-density, time-planned communal herding within demarcated paddocks with rotations and rests delivers ecological and social benefits. The support by traditional leaders and the communal setting assists in managing non-member compliance.

BARE LAND IMPACTION

HLLM uses hoof action and manure deposition to facilitate vegetation growth on previously bare rangelands. Collective kraaling in fields using Boma sheets enables in-situ manure and urine deposition with hoof action, improving soil health and yields in degraded lands. *“Boma sheets are 25 meters by 25 meters impacting 525 square meters every seven days”.*

CROP FIELD IMPACTION

Night enclosures (boma sheets) are sized and rotated weekly to cover field portions, optimizing nutrient distribution and infiltration. The animals stay in one farmer's crop field for seven days, and they move to another portion or land or to another farmer's crop field. TSURO uses *“3 square meters per animal”.* So, for 100 animals, they are enclosed in an area of 300 square meters, every night for seven days”.

TANGIBLE RESULTS FOR PEOPLE AND NATURE

The Nature+ project is demonstrating how integrated Soil and Water Conservation (SWC) and Holistic Land and Livestock Management (HLLM) can restore degraded landscapes while strengthening livelihoods. Today, **3,848 farmers** (2,466 women and 1,382 men) are practicing HLLM—a tenfold increase since the programme began—while **3,948 farmers** have adopted SWC practices. Farmers report improved land productivity, with **86% noting better soil moisture retention** and **84% improved water infiltration**.

The initiative has improved livestock health and resilience through collective herding, resulting in **1,419 cattle vaccinated** and livestock mortality remaining below **2%**. Crop and forage diversity has increased from **40% to 75%**, while farmers practicing crop-field kraaling report higher yields and food supplies lasting more than eight months.

Environmental restoration is equally visible. Six indigenous grass species have naturally returned to restored rangelands, **5 hectares** have been reseeded with indigenous grasses and acacias, and **9 hectares** are under Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR). Project nurseries have also produced **9,719 seedlings** to support landscape recovery.

Across the landscape, conservation agriculture now covers **1,638 hectares** managed by **7,167 farmers**, while soil and water conservation measures have been implemented on **1,450 hectares** and have helped protect **4,391 hectares of cropland** from erosion and runoff. Together, these achievements demonstrate how nature-based solutions are restoring ecosystems, improving food security, and building community resilience

STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES

Beyond environmental restoration, HLLM is transforming rural livelihoods and strengthening community resilience.

Shared livestock management reduces the workload on individual households, particularly women, who now spend less time caring for livestock and transporting manure. Solar-powered water systems and spray races reduce long journeys to rivers and dipping facilities, while keeping livestock within designated grazing areas minimizes road accidents involving animals. Community members jointly employ trained herders, fostering cooperation and reducing labour demands on individual families.

The programme has also revived traditional communal herding practices known locally as majana, where families share duties to manage livestock, strengthening cooperation among neighbors while promoting natural resource

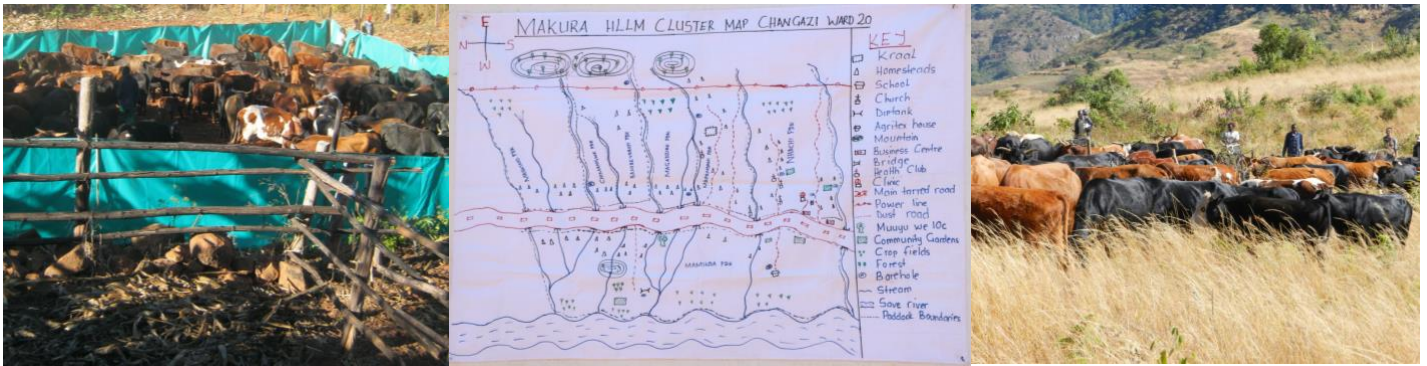


Figure 2 Livestock in the kraal at Tagarirwa cluster with herders assessing the herd; Overnight kraal and Community grazing plan

management. Strong partnerships between farmers, traditional leaders, government agencies, and development partners have strengthened local ownership and improved compliance with sustainable grazing practices.

Participation has expanded dramatically, ten times more than when the programme began. Women have played a leading role in this growth, accounting for the majority of participants in restoration activities and emerging as technical leaders alongside youth. Their involvement is helping build stronger, more inclusive communities while preserving valuable indigenous knowledge shared by older generations.

MORE THAN ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION

HLLM is improving lives as much as landscapes. Families report higher crop yields and improved food security following crop field impaction. Many households are now producing enough food to last more than eight months after harvest.

Improved livestock productivity has enabled families to sell cattle to pay school fees, invest in household needs, and build greater financial resilience. Community-managed herding has reduced livestock losses while freeing valuable time particularly for women to engage in farming and other income-generating activities. "Restoring land is not only about grass—it is about restoring hope, livelihoods, and opportunity."

LOOKING AHEAD

TSURO Trust's Holistic Land and Livestock Management demonstrates that locally led Nature-based Solutions can simultaneously address climate adaptation, biodiversity conservation, and rural livelihoods. The programme is delivering multiple benefits through a single integrated approach: restoring degraded rangelands; improving household food security; increasing livestock productivity; strengthening community institutions; empowering women and youth in restoration activities; and building resilience to climate change. Most importantly, communities are leading the transformation, ensuring that the gains are sustainable long after the project ends.

PARTING SHOT!

As climate change continues to threaten dryland ecosystems, TSURO Trust's experience shows that restoration is not only possible, but it is scalable. By combining indigenous knowledge, community leadership, and innovative land management, HLLM is creating landscapes that are more productive, more resilient, and better prepared for the future.

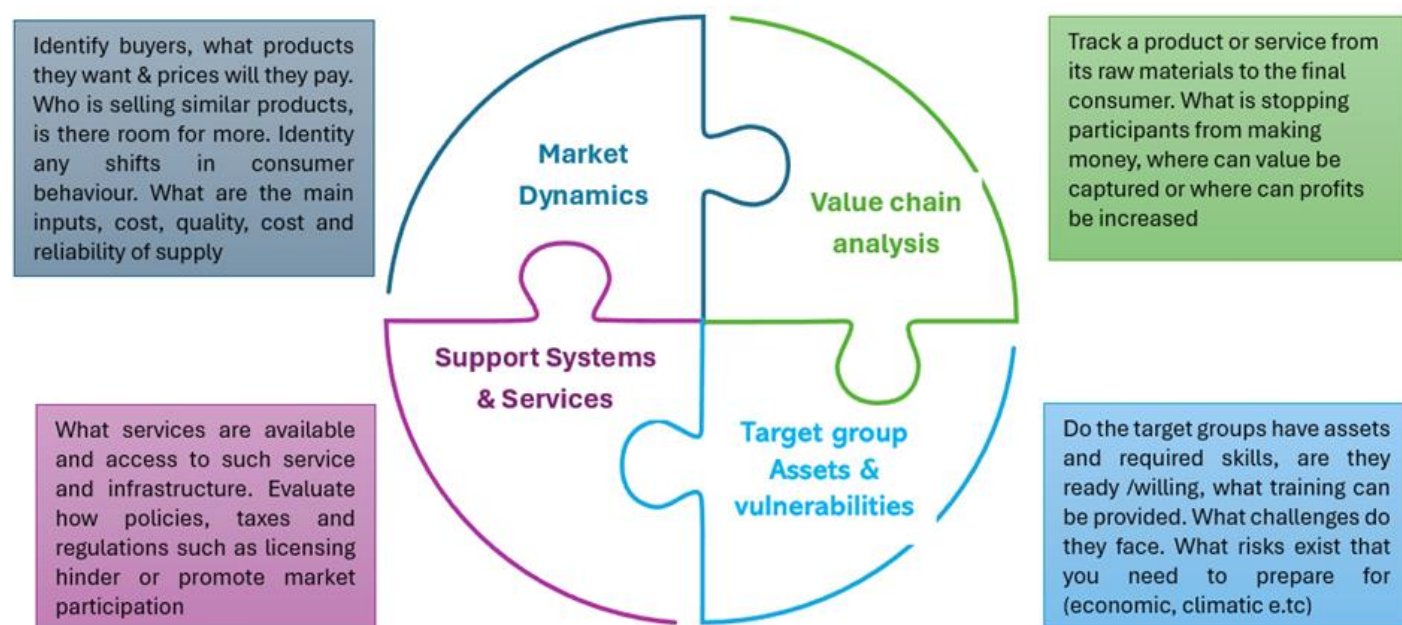
Together, communities are proving that when nature thrives, people thrive too.

Market Assessments in Agriculture and Livelihoods Programming

By: Lilian Zheke, Agriculture and Livelihoods Technical Advisor-Southern Africa

Integrating market assessments into Agriculture and Livelihoods programming is crucial. Without market assessments, we risk promoting products or skills that do not reflect market realities, wasting resources on interventions that will not provide sustainable income and economic resilience to target communities.

Market assessments involve a comprehensive evaluation of a given market within a specific target to find viable opportunities, address bottlenecks and reduce risks, enabling target communities or groups to participate and build resilient and sustainable livelihoods.



KEY ELEMENTS TO ASSESS:

In conducting marketing assessments, it is important to think of markets as a system; this means looking at the entire chain: people, rules and regulations that get the product to the consumer. Assessments entail analyzing the market dynamics, value chain, support services, and regulations and assessing the capacity and assets of target groups. To understand local markets and support small-scale farmers, ensure your study covers these (six) areas.

1. Find out who is buying, who is selling, their preferences, and how prices change
2. Track how the product moves from inputs to final consumer or consumer's plate
3. Check out who is providing service, loans, transport, seeds, and other inputs, extension, or training
4. Review local laws, policies, taxes, and rules for doing business, how they hinder or promote participation in marketing of particular products
5. Checking out what resources and skills our target group already have or may require. Who has access and control?
6. Understanding climatic, economic, and other operational shocks that may require mitigation or to be managed

KEY STEPS IN CONDUCTING A MARKET ASSESSMENT

Define objectives and scope

- Clearly outline the purpose of the assessment: what do you want to learn?
- Which markets and sectors are you targeting- local, national markets, export markets and specify sectors (e.g. example on organic produce, horticulture, small grains, livestock)
- Align purpose or goal and priority sectors in consultation with stakeholders to align with local needs
- Define the region or area where the project will operate and where the products will be sold.
- Which exact group you want to help (e.g. Youth, women). Consult stakeholders (government, community leadership on the targeting.
- Early engagement of stakeholders secures buy-in and community backing in proposed interventions

Desk review and mapping

Review existing data sources like reports, studies and trade data to identify gaps and risks

- Capture current trends, pricing and general demand and supply indicators, risks, and identify relevant policy framework
- Engage with experts such as government officials, trade associations, researchers in the sector to fill in any gaps and also indicate any hidden risks
- Visualise and trace how the product moves from production to final user or consumer
- Engage market actors and share the initial mapping with stakeholders to validate the flow of products and missing links in the initial mapping. Market actors such as traders, producers, input suppliers, transporters can be consulted



ZCC staff Logic Maphosa conducting interviews with local traders during market assessment in Bikita, Zimbabwe

Field data collection

Define where you will go and who you will talk to. As a rule of thumb, you can interview 3-5 people at each stage of the market chain. Gather data directly from market actors and producers using key informant interviews, surveys, and focus group discussions. Choice depends on available resources and on goals of your research.

Collect data and insights on prices, seasonal deficits, costs, production information, market prices, consumer preferences and trends, buying habits and challenges and risks

Market system and institutional analysis

Examine the broader environment to understand the impact and influence of policies, rules, regulations, and support services and infrastructure

- Identify bottlenecks and their causes- for example, farmers may fail to sell their fresh tomatoes; the bottleneck may be a lack of storage due to failure to access loans
- Engage with regulatory bodies, microfinance institutions and other service providers; this will help as you try to uncover root causes of some of the bottlenecks
- Analyze infrastructure services and rules or regulations, such as licenses, which may be prohibitive

Synthesis and design

- Find points where intervening will yield the highest impact
- Convert the findings into preliminary strategies & actionable plans
- Present findings to key stakeholders including representatives of those interviewed
- Debate or deliberate on findings and codesign actionable strategies

Market Monitoring & evaluation

Markets are constantly evolving; regularly review market conditions and ensure continuous feedback of monitoring insights to stakeholders engaged in co-design, and refine and adjust strategies as necessary.

CONCLUSION

Market assessments provide the foundation for the design of agricultural and livelihoods interventions and help identify economic opportunities that respond to direct needs and market dynamics. Combining these market insights with capacity building for the target population aligned to existing assets and risks will help realize long-term income.

Brethren in Christ Compassionate and Development Service in Malawi conducted a Market assessment at the beginning of their project, Agricultural Improvements for Climate Resilience II (AICR II).

Market assessments for sesame, cotton, sorghum, cowpeas, and pigeon peas revealed the highest commercial potential in sesame and red sorghum. However, critical constraints were identified, including inadequate post-harvest handling, inconsistent quality, low volumes, limited market information, and an over-reliance on middlemen who dictated unfairly low prices to farmers.

To overcome these challenges, targeted interventions were implemented, including agronomic training to improve volumes and quality, access to improved seeds, and the creation of collective aggregation groups and direct linkage to reputable buyers at the start of the season. During the 2024/25 marketing season, these organized farmers successfully sold sesame to Afrisian Agro Limited at MK3,500 per kilogram. This achievement was 75% above the government's recommended farm-gate price of MK2,000 per kilogram



RESOURCES

A number of organizations have developed manuals and provide detailed resources on market assessments specific to long-term programs

Manuals on conducting livelihoods market assessments

[ILO Market-Based Livelihood Guide](#)

[IOM livelihood market assessment report](#)

Conducting agriculture specific market assessments

[IFAD How to conduct rapid market assessments for livestock](#)

[GIZ Rapid market assessment of agriculture value chains](#)

More details and case studies and other useful resources can be found in

https://care.at/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/RELIVES-Market-Assesment-Report_Final.pdf

Partner Profile: Lutheran World Federation (LWF) – Chad

By: Jean Twiringiyumukiza, ALTA – Central/West Africa

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) World Service is a vital partner in Chad, acting as the humanitarian and development arm of the LWF. LWF Chad plays a critical role in addressing food insecurity, climate resilience, and ecosystem restoration. Working alongside key partners such as Canadian Lutheran World Relief (CLWR), LWF implements integrated projects that address the complex needs of vulnerable populations, including refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and host communities.

Chad is one of the largest landlocked countries in Central Africa, covering 1,284,000 Km² and administratively divided into twenty-three provinces. Characterized by a hot, semi-arid climate, the nation is frequently exposed to climatic shocks such as floods and droughts and faces a complex humanitarian crisis. As per the World Bank, the national poverty rate rose from 42.3% in 2018 to 44.8% in 2022. Consequently, more than a third of the population requires assistance due to the intersection of armed conflict, persistent food insecurity, and climate hazards. Additionally, Chad hosts large numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs).

KEY STRATEGIC AREAS

LWF Chad's programming is rooted in Nature-based Solutions (NbS) and is aligned with three key strategic outcomes/areas:

- **Climate and Resilient Livelihoods:** This area includes actions related to the Gender Transformative and Climate Adaptation project. It focuses on climate resilience, Nature-based Solutions, Farmer Field Schools, food security, natural resource management, reforestation/nurseries, fisheries, and Integrated Water Management.
- **Protection and Social Cohesion:** This area encompasses conflict prevention and management actions, strengthening women's participation in decision-making within governance structures, positive masculinity, and women's economic empowerment through initiatives like Village Savings and Loan Associations and income-generating activities.

- **Quality Services:** This area includes actions related to improving access to water, education, and basic socioeconomic infrastructure for vulnerable communities.

CROSS-BORDER IMPACT AND CONTINUITY

Beyond their local impact, LWF Chad is currently implementing a significant cross-border project (GPTA) through the partnership with CLWR, a CFGB member. This project, funded by Global Affairs Canada, addresses the interconnected needs of communities across the border, demonstrating LWF's capacity to manage complex, multi-regional interventions.

The CFGB Agriculture & Livelihoods Technical Advisor has been indirectly supporting LWF through: Field Visits for quality oversight, Online Capacity sharing to strengthen technical skills, and Utility-Focused Evaluation (UFE) to apply evidence-based learning to future project design. As the current Global Affairs Canada funding cycle concludes this year, LWF through CLWR is working proactively to secure bridge funding from CFGB. This support is crucial to ensure the continuity of these essential services and support and to sustain the gains made in resilience and food security.

LOOKING AHEAD

LWF Chad remains a model of resilience and adaptability. By bridging humanitarian response with long-term development, they empower communities to thrive despite a fragile security and climatic context. We look forward to continuing this vital partnership to ensure that food security, gender equity, and ecological health remain at the heart of their work in Chad.



LWF empowers women farmers to build food security and resilient livelihoods. Lettuce plots, 9eme arrondissement, Chad. Photo: Jean T.

ALTA TRAVEL SCHEDULES

Jean Twiringiyumukiza:

21 July 2026

Kicukiro, Rwanda

Support to PDN/MCC Situation Assessment

31 July 2026

Nyandungu, Rwanda

Visit to the national Agri-show

31 August - 4 September 2026

Kigali, Rwanda

African Food System Forum

22-26 June

N.d, Rwanda

Master Trainer Refresher Session for Rwanda

John Mbae:

13-17 Jul 2026

Muanga, Kenya

Curriculum review Approval workshop with county Government for ADSMK

27-31 July 2026

Dodoma, Tanzania

DCT Visit and Support

3-7 August 2026

Marsabit Kenya

CITAM Training and Support

31-4 September 2026

Kigali, Rwanda

African Food System Forum

Lilian Zheke:

31 August - 4 September 2026

Kigali, Rwanda

African Food System Forum

20- 25 September, 2026

Masvingo, Zimbabwe

Field support visit- ZCC and /PAOZ

Nester Mashingaidze

7 – 14 July

Zala, Ethiopia

Field visit and mentoring to EKHCDZ ZALIP project

31 August - 4 September 2026

Kigali, Rwanda

African Food System Forum