

# TRADITIONAL FOODS:

# A



# HIDDEN



# TREASURE?



Perspectives from the Zambian School Children



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# Map of Zambia



## Participating schools

Angelina Tembo Girls High,  
Chipembi Girls Secondary School, Chisamba  
(Central)  
David Kaunda National Technical High, Lusaka.  
Fatima Girls High School, Ndola (Copperbelt)  
Helen Kaunda High School, Kitwe (Copperbelt)  
Kabulonga Girls Secondary, Lusaka,  
Malama Primary School, Kasama (Northern)  
Mary Queen of Peace School, Ndola (Copperbelt)  
Matero Boys Secondary School, Lusaka.  
Mukasa Minor Seminary, Choma (Southern)  
Mukuba Secondary School, Ndola.  
Munali Boys High, Lusaka.  
Munali Girls High School, Lusaka.  
Mununga Upper Basic School  
Mwaata Day High School, Kalomo (Southern)  
Nambeya Primary School, Ndola  
Roma Girls Secondary School, Lusaka.  
St John's Secondary School, Mongu (Western)  
Temweni High School,

# FOREWORD

Zambian school children are the authors of this book. They are writing about traditional foods! Primary school children submitted poems and drawings while the secondary schools held school debates and an essay writing competition for the “Promoting Traditional Foods Campaign” that was launched by PELUM in 2005 in Kabwe.

The origin of the Campaign was over-dependence on maize as the main source of food. Over the years, maize has become the single and most important food crop in Zambia with the Government of Zambia using a lot of resources to produce it. This is happening at the expense of other food crops such as cassava, sorghum, millet, yams, fruits and vegetables.

In this publication, we present poetry and drawings by primary school children from Kasama and Ndola Districts about the foods they eat and enjoy. This reveals the poetic talent that exists in the country. Through the eyes and language of these young children, we see the treasure -- untapped and often unappreciated wealth of food that is in our midst. We hope that these poems will inspire readers as much as they have inspired us here at PELUM. Most importantly, it is our hope that reading them will make readers connect vividly with the food that surrounds them. We edited some of the poems for purposes of publishing this book. The language and style of the children remain broadly untouched.

The drawing session was aimed at testing the imaginative capacity of children. It especially tested if they could represent their ideas on foods in a visual and concrete form. We hope what the children expressed will be as rewarding to you as it has been for us.

We present 15 essays written by school children from many parts of Zambia. In these essays, children share excerpts from their own lives. They also give us insights into the coping mechanisms of not only their families but of the entire communities in which they live. Through these essays, we also see opportunities and challenges of Zambian traditional foods and food crops.

The focus of the essays is traditional food and rural development. The theme was: “Stating economic and food security potentials of underused, traditional Zambian foods and food crops and using this potential for the benefit of the nation.” The Campaign had two aims: (1) To promote food self-sufficiency and diversification at the household level; and (2) To ensure that we do not lose the rich biodiversity the traditional foods contribute.

This publication gives us the thoughts of young children in a society that has lost out on good food. We must save the remaining traditional food varieties that are currently disappearing before our very eyes.



John Bideri,  
Chairperson, PELUM Association.

# PART I: POETRY BY PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS.

## The Savannah Gold Mine

By Idah Njunju, Grade 5, Nambeya Primary School, Ndola.

Very natural, found abundantly and locally,  
Yet looked down upon, regarded as food for the poor  
In the midst of the Savannah are foods so vast  
with nutritional value  
Even for the terminally ill and HIV positive loved ones.

Now I take time to educate you  
So that tomorrow's generation  
May not look down on what was and still is  
Our prized treasure of Zambia's Savannah soils.  
From the greens, kalembula and bbondwe  
(African spinach),  
Whose iron strengthens our bloodbank with  
taste second to none,  
Growing whatever and multiplying with great  
ease.

For appetite is okra, my delicious umulembwe  
It also neutralizes fats and cleans oral thrush  
We have black jack, we call kanunka  
Pumpkin leaves, we call cibwabwa  
Traditional egg plant, we call impwa  
Cowpea leaves, we call inyangu.  
Try all these with groundnuts and a healthy body  
And family you shall have.

Chilemba (beans) nutritious protein  
In all its colours and sizes  
Soya its offspring.  
Maize (amataba), millet and  
Drought resistant sorghum (amasaka)  
To make tasty brews and  
Filling nshima (diabetics need this for sure)!

The starch packed rooty tute (cassava)  
Fyumbu (sweet potatoes) and  
Chikanda (African polony) are good  
Snacks for all ages, never forget  
Fruits growing wildly yet so abundant.  
We have intungulu, masuku, muzauli,  
Mawawa, malnulahulu, monsomonso,  
Mabuyu, inchenza, infungo,  
Muchingachinga and amasafwa  
These are but a few.

All sweet, juicy and vitamin filled!  
My country is rich, my continent too  
With a healthy treat hidden  
Where we have chosen to forget,  
But I, my household and community  
Will not forget my roots and continue to enjoy  
And seek out new, valuable and cheaper food  
crops,  
Still hidden in the Savannah.  
This is my heritage!

## Caterpillar

By Epicare Mutale Kasonde, Grade 7, Malama Primary School, Kasama.

I am a caterpillar  
I am a good source of protein  
Though some people when eating me  
I make them feel anything  
From adventurous to uncomfortable!

Although I am not first on the menu  
I have 60% protein content  
I am a good source of protein for places where  
Quality protein is expensive or in short supply.

A portion of me competes effectively  
With a portion of meat and fish  
Supplying approximately three quarters of an  
adult's  
Daily requirements of proteins, vitamins and  
minerals,

Yes, I the Caterpillar  
I am a nutritious creature!

People of Zambia eat me  
You will never regret.  
I will make you healthy  
No kwashiorkor and malnutrition  
Only good health

In places where starchy staples  
Such as maize and cassava predominate,  
I the caterpillar, I am a welcome supplement to  
the diet.  
Please! Please! People of Zambia  
Eat me, you will never regret!

# Our Foods

By Sarah Munthali, Grade 5, Nambeya Primary School, Ndola.

Eat your nutritious food  
Eat your nutritious food.

Let me tell you such food we eat in Zambia  
We have, pumpkin, kandolo, carrots, nshima,  
Vegetables and green leaves  
Let me talk about vitamins  
To show you the importance of it  
But first examples to help.  
I will start with vitamin A  
This is my best as it makes me!  
Vitamin A is in vegetables, milk, green leaves,  
Together with egg yolk,  
These are vitamins that make you and me!

Let's talk about vitamin B2,  
Yes vitamin B2 found in liver, kidneys and egg  
yolk too!  
It is vitamin B2 which is in blood,  
And thus proper for growth of hair and nails.

Vitamin C, yes vitamin C.  
Let me give you examples of vitamin C.  
Oranges, apples, lemons, and banana.  
Eat a fruit and eat a life.  
That is my vitamin C.

Let me talk about vitamin B1 and B12 and D  
Again in eggs, liver, groundnuts.  
Vitamin B12 in meat and eggs  
But the D is in butter, eggs and yolk.  
It is D that makes your teeth strong.  
To chew fats, minerals, carbohydrates and  
proteins!  
Eat and grow health: good luck!

# Zambian Wild Fruit

By Mwenya Kunda, Grade 6, Nambeya Primary School, Ndola.

They fill the forest trees.  
The multi-sided and colored fruit  
Some poisonous but many harmless, too!  
And strangely vitamin-packed!  
Best eaten fresh, moisty, tasty and juicy,  
Like amasuku, ifungo, ifisongole and intungulu  
Some nice when dry and sweet though,  
But also the sourly and bitter-like,  
Baobab, ifibuyu, impundu, amakole and dry  
amasau

# My Vegetable Garden

By Melissa Machona Stephenson, Grade 4, Nambeya Primary School, Ndola.

Cabbage round, green, layered a vegetable.  
Kids hate to hear but give me a chance  
Listen and wait!  
Cabbage makes us strong, able to think right  
And not to do wrong.

Soya beans, small in size but nutritious,  
Even when made into different kinds  
The food that sweet soy is,  
Still remains delicious  
Milky sausages and mince all from the  
golden soy.

Kapenta, too, good, tasty high in proteins  
Is just your favorite added to groundnuts?  
Watery mouth? You will love it!  
Pumpkin chibwabwa, just yummy  
While nourishing the body.

Wonder pumpkin, eat the fruit munch the  
seeds, too!  
Chew them raw, dry, boiled, roasted or  
powdered  
Just the snack while waiting for evening  
nshima.  
What a rich land! What a godly investment!

# Traditional Foods of Zambia

By Bwalya Mulaka, Grade 5, Nambeya Primary School, Ndola.

Traditional foods are so delicious and  
nutritious  
Full of protective proteins against  
kwashiorkor-like diseases.

Proteins you must have for strength and to  
fight fats  
From too much fat to too little fat,  
Lest you suffer from coronary heart disease  
That's why you should remember  
carbohydrates  
Carbohydrates for your immunity.  
Avoid dying.

Be healthy and strong to protect yourself  
from diseases.  
Eat your traditional Zambian food!

## PART II: ESSAYS ON TRADITIONAL FOODS AND FARMING BY SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS.

### 1. African agriculture is 10,000 years old

How old is agriculture in Zambia? In Africa it is 10,000 years old! Agriculture is the growing of crops and keeping of animals. It is one of the oldest occupations on earth. Sustainable agriculture does not depend on chemical inputs like fertiliser. It produces good crops, livestock, traditional foods for people and raw materials for industries.

Agriculture is important because it is the source of food for people and livestock. The livestock include cattle, goats, donkeys, sheep, chickens, village chickens, pigs and guinea fowl. Agriculture feeds the people of Zambia. About 60% of the people in Zambia live in villages and other rural areas, while the rest live in the towns and cities. And agriculture brings foreign exchange by exporting agricultural produce and products.

Zambia has many traditional food crops that



nourish people. We can mention: cassava, sorghum, millet, groundnuts, maize and sweet potatoes. Our gardens grow pumpkins and pumpkin leaves or chibwabwa, bbondwe or amaranthus or African spinach, okra, bean leaves, sweet potato vines, katapa or cassava leaves, lumanda, mandabi, mpukilile or black jacks, impwa, lusala and ponda.

There are many benefits in growing these traditional food crops and foods. (1) Cassava, millet and sorghum can replace maize-meal

during years of hunger and disasters like drought or rain. (2) It is cheaper to grow these crops than it is to grow crops like coffee. (3) These crops are nutritious and healthy; many of them serve as medicines and they can cure a variety of diseases. (4) Growing such crops commercially to sell outside Zambia will provide a lot of profit. (5) We can create employment for many people in the country. (6) Production of these traditional crops and foods will increase our food security, incomes and economic growth.

Community groups and Government officials should visit many villages and rural areas. This would be one of the ways in which they could educate themselves and learn what they do not know about these traditional food crops and foods. After this interesting research, they should work to educate the public. The Government needs to spearhead this educational work. They can organise workshops and community groups can help with this work. Events like the annual agriculture and commercial shows -- district and national -- will help. People would then know how important these traditional crops are to both our economy and our health. There is need for consolidated effort by many people. Such traditional foods nourished our forefathers!

*By Salome Mulenga, 14 years, Grade 9, Mary Queen Of Peace School, Ndola.*

### 2. Youth: grow cassava in Zambia

Young people, youth unemployment is today obviously a major issue. Traditional crops can help the jobless youth because Government is trying first of all to diversify from mining to agriculture. Many unemployed youths are searching for jobs. Cassava and other cereal traditional food crops present an opportunity. Traditional crops do not use fertilisers. To grow these crops, you do not need a lot of expensive agricultural inputs.

In Zambia, we experience frequent droughts. So we would like to see the Government and some Non Government Organisations look into the



growing of traditional crops like cassava because they are drought-resistant. Droughts do a lot of damage because of the inconvenience to the people affected. Droughts bring hunger due to loss of crops.

In Zambia, most people depend on maize, our main staple food. People use it to cook nshima. It also has other uses. However, people can make mealie-meal from traditional cereals and food crops like cassava. If we do this on a large scale, we will have much more food even during droughts.

Traditionally, we eat cassava fresh, boiled or roasted and we can eat it in other ways. Storage is not a problem because we dry it and pack it in bags. If you go to Northern Province, you find people growing cassava, but they do not have cassava marketing support from the Government. There is even no market for cassava unlike maize. The Food Reserve Agency sells maize. Marketing cassava is very difficult for cassava farmers.

To grow cassava, we do not require much water. From a cassava plant, you obtain the root and the leaves. The root is cassava or tute. The leaves are a vegetable that some people call katapa. People eat katapa as a vegetable. This goes together with cassava nshima. As Zambians, we can make mealie-meal out of cassava! We should encourage restaurant owners and other business people to advertise cassava nshima. People living in urban areas can obtain traditional cassava nshima. People commonly eat traditional food during traditional ceremonies.

Traditional cereal crops like cassava have many

important advantages. These include the following: they do not go bad quickly; they are inexpensive and easy to store; you can eat them in many ways. From cassava, you can make cassava chips, cakes and other pastries. This crop has industrial uses: glue and other useful products like herbs, for which traditional healers use these crops. Traditional crops have many proteins. We also use some traditional crops to make spices, which we use to make foods tasty. They also help to make the soil fertile. We Zambians need to stand up and support cassava farmers so that they can sell their cassava crops and get a good price!

*By Nsangu Phiri, 14 years, Grade 9,  
Mukuba Secondary School, Ndola.*

### 3. Marketing of traditional crops

We need to promote marketing in traditional small-scale crops farming. Zambia has many traditional food crops that are nutritious. We should not depend on foreign foods like chips, pizzas and so on. A local or traditional food crop or food is one that people have always grown naturally. Root crops like cassava are crops which grow underground. European countries use a cassava flour product called tapioca to make puddings. People use cassava to make bread, cakes and other confectionery products. You can use it to make beer, spirits and industrial alcohol, as well as wood processing, livestock feed, starch, glue, industrial cardboards and other building materials.

We have cassava in the Northwestern, Western, Northern and Luapula Provinces. The cassava plant is a whitish or grayish tuber, which grows up to about 3 metres long. Its roots swell as it grows and we can



use its leaves as a rich source of vitamins. The cassava plant does not use seed and you can recycle the stems after uprooting the cassava plant. The leaves are vegetables called katapa or shombo. We wash cassava to get rid of a certain poison. We eat it raw, cooked, fried, baked or dried.

We make it into flour or mealie-meal to help build up young children. It provides the nutrients that a child needs and it is drought-resistant. Cassava grows in both fertile soils and poor soils. Street kids can get work from

growing cassava. It can play a big role in cutting down poverty levels and it brings revenue to Government.

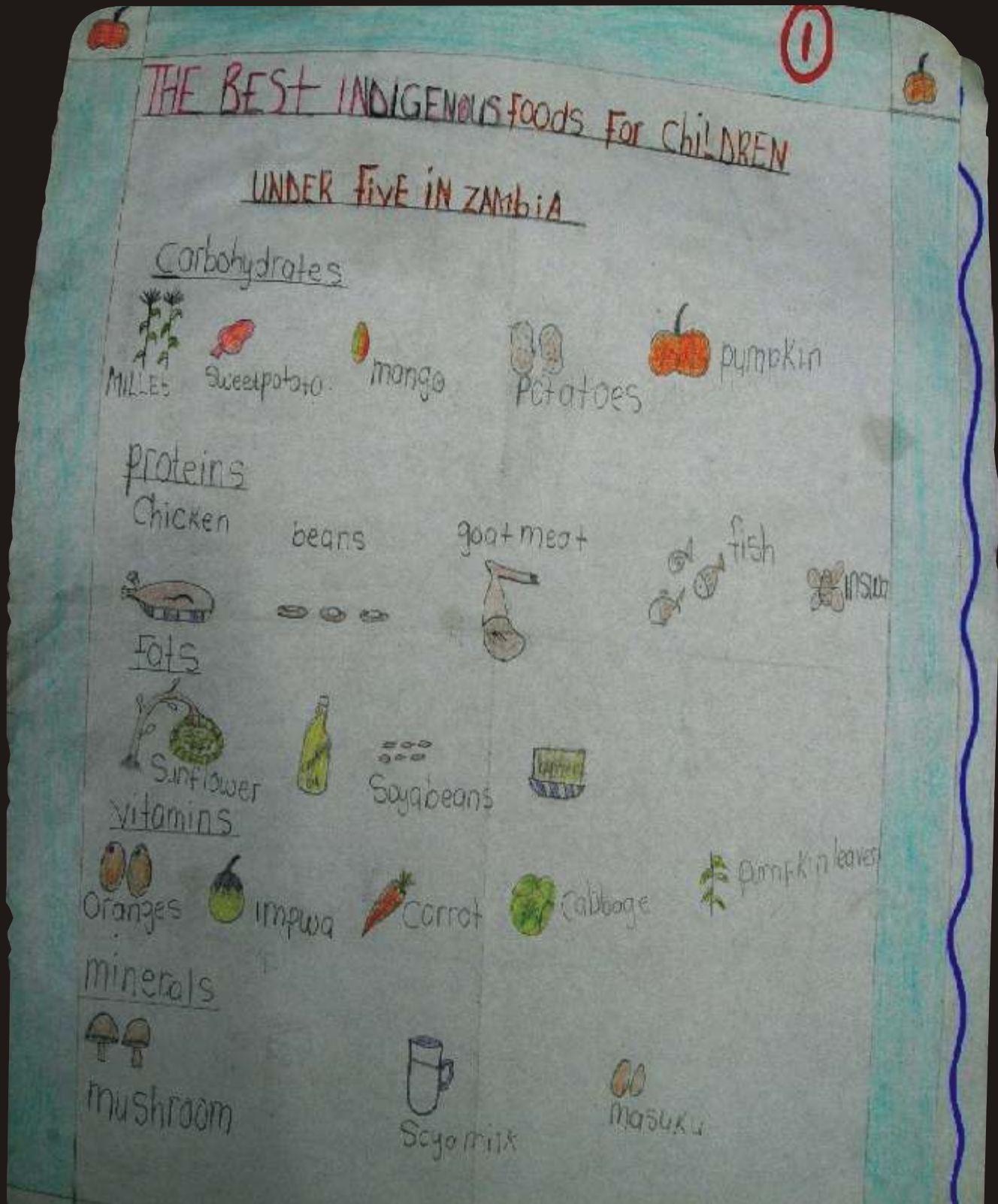
People have this root crop in tropical Africa, South America, Europe and parts of Asia. From 1995 to 2005, Zambia increased its cassava production by 42 per cent. We produce over a million tons of cassava in a year. We can start exporting large quantities of cassava to other countries worldwide. With cassava, we can compete with European countries, Nigeria and Sudan. Countries worldwide produce cassava totaling about 185,000,000 tons. Production is highest in areas like Barbados, with over 276,667 hectares of land in production. Sudan grows 17,458 hectares of cassava.

We need to improve cassava marketing, processing and storage. We must ensure that poor cassava farmers get a good livelihood. Government must help them and it can also encourage commercial farmers to grow cassava on a large scale. Companies like Sylva Catering are marketing such local foods. We can teach children to eat our Zambian traditional foods and avoid foreign food. We need to use cassava to order to increase incomes and livelihoods of farmers. It will help us to repay our debts to the International Monetary Fund!

*By Mombolwa Mubita, 14 Years, Grade 9, Roma Girls Secondary School, Lusaka.*

# 1. Best Traditional Food For Under-Fives

Unknown, Grade 5, Nambeya Primary School, Ndola.



## 4. Export Zambian Sweet Potato Fries

Sweet potato fries are only one of many exciting, local value-added foods for export. Think of fried and dried caterpillars, mushrooms, chibwabwa, chisungwa, bbondwe and inswa,. There are numerous such traditional foods. We have a variety of traditional cereal crops and foods in our diet: cassava, sorghum, millet and maize. These are some of the sources of our staple food, nshima. You can process these for export to neighbouring countries. Process these local traditional foods and do a proper job. Our traditional Zambian food crops and foods include many species that are wild, semi-cultivated and protected in some way. Most of these are very edible.

You can process and pack sweet potatoes and honey, two essential local foods. They are strategic products for export. We do not use sweet potatoes fully, but mainly for cattle feed, products like confectioneries, as well as in industrial processing. We also eat sweet potatoes boiled or fried and mix them with groundnuts, which provide cooking oil that we need so much in our food to make the food very soft and tasty. Groundnuts are important for many Zambian traditional foods. Honey has great potential that people do not know. Rural people can earn money as beekeepers, with support from Government. They need training to keep bees. This business can help us to have honey and its products: sweeteners, honey combs, floor wax and candles.

The world recognises Zambia as one of the poorest countries in the world today. There has been worry about the rising malnutrition levels in our country. Lack of a proper balanced diet and lack of money to buy food to sustain one's life causes malnutrition. However, Zambia has a lot of its own local traditional foods that are nutritious and tasty.

What are the traditional food crops and the resulting foods that we do not fully use so as to prevent poor health and malnutrition?

We have many of these traditional foods, which are a valuable source of rural nutrition. They represent a cheap and high-quality type of healthy foods for poor people. In gardens we have traditional vegetables and foods like chibwabwa or pumpkin leaves and katapa or

cassava leaves; we mix katapa with pounded groundnuts. Lumanda and mundabi are tasty traditional vegetables. Mundabi has red flowers to use to make tasty jams. We often cook a unique vegetable, mpukilile or black jacks, with pounded groundnuts. Cimpampila are leaves of beans and impwa a home-grown traditional eggplant. Ponda or mungu are nutritious crops that grow like pumpkins and we grow mbwila the same way as groundnuts. Lusala and tute or cassava are nutritious!

Hotels can sell these foods to tourists who enjoy traditional foods and Zambian dishes. Tourists and local people like tasty wild fruit: mangoes, pawpaws, avocado pears, guavas, nsipy, tumbulwa, muchinga, mabuyu, bafulwe, madoro and mafusmno. Local snacks are insects: inswa or flying ants, matingatila and caterpillars. We know our country is naturally rich in nutritious foods. So farm, process, market and export them!

*By Beauty Mulenga, 17 Years, Grade 11, Mwaata Day High School, Kalomo, Chanda Luchewe, 16 Years, Grade 12, Mukasa Minor Seminary, Choma, and Chibwe Kabwe, 15 Years, Mununga Upper Basic School.*

## 5. Promote and eat traditional foods

Our Campaign should focus on eating, growing and using traditional foods in Zambia. Government should continue the good work through its agricultural policies. They have been encouraging farmers to diversify from maize and to promote traditional crops. Government has done this in areas prone to droughts and to floods. They are introducing cassava from Northern Province to Southern Province.

Government needs to introduce more good agricultural policies. These will encourage us fully to use traditional foods. We must realise their economic and food security potential. Every country has symbolic things like traditional and cultural foods and values. Zambia is rich in local, traditional foods and food crops: cassava, sorghum and

sweet potatoes. They are extremely valuable for food security.



Sylva Catering and PELUM Association are in the lead. They campaign for full use of these traditional foods. Sylva sells traditional food and exports dried traditional foods to UK, Australia and other countries. Government also promotes traditional crops: traditional foods have economic value and earn foreign exchange. We must promote these foods with tourists in restaurants. Fairview Hotel offers traditional foods to tourists on certain days, too. They are all doing a great job, but they need help.

Local crops are available, can grow in our backyards and in the bush. They also grow in our fields during the rainy season and they are available during the dry season. These foods need drying and packaging for their sale in safety and security. They will sell in urban shops, supermarkets, restaurants and hotels. We cannot exaggerate how important these are: traditional food crops like sorghum and millet and their products. These are drought-resistant and cassava does well in areas of heavy rainfall. People can diversify from maize with these crops. Our gardens have traditional foods: groundnuts and beans are very nutritious and have many uses. Bbondwe and black jack are among the vegetables that help to reduce heart disease and boost our blood flow. This is very good for our children.

We can promote and package these foods and we will create rural jobs. We can also have industries where we harvest and market these crops and foods. When people grow these crops, they earn incomes and improve their standard of living. We can export these crops and improve their use. We need to sensitise the

public about these important crops. Look at the important work of Programme Against Malnutrition (PAM). There are also other such groups. We must be proud of our traditional foods -- very nutritious and valuable! We must begin from our homes, cooking okra, chibwabwa with groundnuts, kalembula and so on. We must also encourage children to eat these foods in schools. The children must eat these foods, not just learning how to bake cakes and to cook chicken. Children should learn to promote and appreciate their own traditional foods. What we need to do is to change the mindsets of the Zambian people!

*By Beaven Mwiinga, 23 Years, Grade 12, Munali Girls High School, Lusaka.*



## 6. Processing of Traditional Foods Crops

Cassava and millet on the market will expand the hammer mill industry. Traditional food crops promote food security: mushrooms, pumpkins and munkoyo. These benefit many.

(1) They are nutritious and good for the health of all. They grow naturally without chemicals or genetically modified organisms. Government can act through the Ministry of Agriculture or the Food Reserve Agency (FRA). You can teach people to go local and grow traditional food crops and foods. This will increase participation in farming, increase the amount of local foods on the market and produce more healthy people.

(2) These traditional food crops give income to many families who sell them. Traditional foods like mushrooms can develop our

families. Government should provide loans to peasant farmers in the villages. The FRA should reserve maize and, also, cassava. If they give loans, many people will join traditional agriculture and increase food production. As farmers earn money, they will pay tax and benefit. Government builds infrastructure which will benefit the public.

(3) Traditional farming leads to the creation of industries and the crops are raw materials. As traditional food crops increase on the market, many industries will result. Raw foods will turn into finished goods and cassava will generate a hammer mill industry. Cassava becomes mealie-meal. Housewives and the unmarried young men produce nshima from this. We can make many industrial and other products from cassava. Government should provide free tools like hoes and equipment to local village farmers. This will increase traditional food and industries.

(4) This creates more employment and occupations. The unemployed adults and youth get jobs for both young women and men. Industries will give Zambians many jobs. Such hammer mill industries require managers, operators, accountants and others. Traditional food production will give jobs to Zambians through creating industries. Government should invest money in traditional agriculture to boost its value.

(5) Traditional farming will earn forex by

producing and exporting traditional crops. As we export, we receive foreign exchange, Government and Zambians also benefit. The Government of Zambia should produce good farming policies for traditional farming. Tourists will come because of traditional food crops. Today people can find traditional food in motels and hotels and this gives Government some income. They translate this money into social services for Zambians, who benefit from social services: roads, schools, hospitals, clinics and markets. To encourage traditional foods and crops, Government can repair transport and communication systems.

We must sufficiently use traditional foods and crops, growing them without chemicals. We can get good, bountiful crops and also strengthen the value of our currency. Crime rates and unemployment levels will reduce. Many Zambians can have a high standard of living. I urge Government to promote traditional food crops and foods. We need FRA to reserve traditional crops like cassava!

*By Alex Mwila, 18 Years, Grade 12, David Kaunda National Technical High, Lusaka.*

## 2. Local Growing and Swimming Things

By Njavwa Mumbi, Grade 5, Nambeya Primary School, Ndola.



## 7. Traditional Food production is affordable

Zambians want the lower prices of inexpensive traditional food crops and foods! For a long time, they have complained of ever-increasing prices of imported foods. Escalating prices of imports have made manufacturers raise their prices so that people do not buy their products. These problems have a solution. It is: "Traditional Food Crops!"

Disappearing traditional Zambian food crops is a major danger. The causes could be such factors as: (1) Less use of such food crops; (2) Lack of knowledge of the value of certain crops and foods; (3) Poor security for crops during harvest and post-harvest times. Local food crops produce nutritious foods. The nutrition value of certain crops like cassava, sorghum, millet and groundnuts is very high. Farmers and the public have not utilised these crops. Some may not be able to read well, may not know some functions of their produce and may have lost touch with their traditional roots. They, thus, miss some chances to sell their produce to local and international markets.

For example, many local crops have value as medicine and they can earn income. If they sell them to manufacturers of medicines, farmers would make some profits. Neither farmers, manufacturers or Government have realised all this. Thus, some farmers have kept the uses and preparation of such medicines as a family secret.

These traditional crops have mostly adapted to the savanna type of vegetation. They have become resistant to disease and they can also grow in poor soils. Local people can take advantage of these facts if they can send them to external markets. Poor railway services and poor feeder roads and highways have meant that crops don't reach some of these markets. Zambian crops, thus, cannot actually compete at international markets. The poor transport links also prevent many small-scale farmers in remote areas from participating in the Zambia Export Growers Association (ZEGA).

People can process cassava into mealie-meal and the crop grows all year. Farmers should grow crops like cassava at different times of the year and use them for nshima. You can use these traditional crops alone or mixed with maize

mealie-meal. Cassava grows all the year and millers can use it to reduce prices of mealie-meal. Most local crops are disease-resistant, easily stored and less expensive.

Local citizens can have tremendous benefits from traditional crops. We should educate farmers, manufacturers and the public on the many uses of such crops. Manufacturers need awareness of the nutritional, the foreign exchange and the tax values of these crops. Medicine manufacturers should also test local crops to find less expensive traditional ingredients. Foreign exchange from international trade strengthens the local currency and helps make foodstuffs cheaper. These traditional cereals are available for harvest all year, ensuring secure foods. This increases food security for everyone. This will lessen Government spending and lessen times of hunger. Government should enhance local agriculture and, thus, boost agriculture and traditional crops production.

*By Chusi Mwanza, 18 Years, Grade 12, Matero Boys Secondary School, Lusaka.*

## 8. Produce traditional food crops

Many are the traditional food crops and foods that Zambians do not fully use. We can receive so many benefits from utilising our own diverse food supply. These crops do include: cassava, sorghum, millet, groundnuts, munyeleyele, pumpkins and fruits like masuku and makululu. Cassava, sorghum and millet are common crops that people grow. They are good and nutritious foods. People could use them much more. We mix cassava mealie-meal with groundnut powder to make various cakes. These cassava products cook very well with groundnuts. They make a very delicious dish and we commonly serve it with nshima. These are healthy foods and have industrial uses.

We can also use sorghum and millet for nshima and these are rich in nutrients. People must eat these traditional food crops. They do not need to depend only on

maize. If they also used these others for nshima, we would not be complaining of hunger in Zambia. These crops are drought-resistant and maize is not because it needs a lot of water for a good harvest. There is also a food crop called munyelenyele. We can use it to make cooking oil. This requires certain skills and machinery. Pumpkins are also very tasty and soft when properly cooked and they can grow on a large scale. If you slice and pack them properly, you can export them to other countries.

We need to plant more traditional food crops and they have many benefits. Masuku is a nice and tasty fruit and rural people in the villages use it; many urban people do not know about it. This is the same for makulukulu, in Lozi -- a very nice fruit with a very hard cover and jelly-like liquid inside. People in the villages need encouragement to plant crops like millet. In the villages they do not have money for irrigation. And these crops enable us to make drinks like beer, maheu and munkoyo.

All these traditional food crops grow on Zambian soils. Relatively, few people use them. An advantage of most of these traditional food crops is disease-resistance. If we were to grow them more, there would not be shortages of food. We can plant many of them all year round, too. For example, we produce maize in the rainy season, while we can grow cassava, sorghum and millet in the dry season. In addition, most of these crops maintain soil fertility. They do not need a lot of artificial fertilisers and chemicals. People can avoid using a lot of their money for buying inputs and they can use the same money to plant more crops. These crops need publicity around the country and the world.

In order to exploit this potential for Zambia, there is need to invest. There is also need for appropriate technology and local people need skills training to exploit such food crops and foods. We must invest in packaging, processing and preservation of these crops. These local crops are nutritious and they are healthy foods. They suit the local climate and we must promote their farming and use. People need explanations about the need to grow, eat and use local foods. Moreover, I think village people who eat traditional foods tend to live longer. Urban folks tend not to do so!

*By Mubita Masinda, 17 Years, Grade 12, St John's Secondary School, Mongu.*

## 9. Zambia: A blessed agricultural state

We can have a blessed agricultural state in Zambia. We need to develop agriculture and improve our products for export. Then we can earn foreign exchange, have sufficient food supply and lower the cost of living. We can use the money and foreign exchange obtained to repair our schools, hospitals, buildings and roads. We shall slowly develop and profit, encouraging more people to take part in farming!

Traditional Zambian foods and food crops are numerous. They include crops like cassava, sorghum, millet, sweet potatoes, maize and groundnuts. They also feature pumpkins, pumpkin leaves, beans and other vegetables in our gardens. Crops like millet, too, are very important to grow because they can survive with little rain or water. They only need manure to maintain and to develop soil fertility and good health. They do not need much weeding and they help us to produce things: cassava to bake bread, cakes, pastry, cassava mealie-meal and many industrial products.

We also grow groundnuts, we can eat them dried or fresh and we can export them. We can export dry groundnuts in their shells so that they do not get rotten. We can crush them at local mills to extract cooking oil. We use them to make peanut butter, soap, margarine and confectionery. We must not continue importing them from other countries. From groundnuts, we can make ifisashi by mixing them with vegetables. We grow sweet potatoes all over Zambia. These make starch and stockfeed. We can pack ifisashi and sweet potatoes in plastics for sale to tourists who have not tasted them.

We can use this potential for the benefit of the country in many ways. We need to learn more about our rich agriculture. We need to educate more people about local foods, helping farmers know how to grow these crops and to use them well. We must conserve land for future use. Introduction of loans to farmers will help increase production in farming. They need loans and subsidies to keep prices of goods low. The country can introduce agriculture

training institutions so as to promote proper use of traditional food crops. Farmers do not have enough equipment for irrigation and Government should invest in such local production to increase production of local food. Zambia benefits and we benefit by having enough food to export elsewhere, especially within Southern Africa.

We must construct and improve both existing main roads and local feeder roads. The farmers can then transport produce and goods for marketing. To strengthen this sector would greatly benefit Zambia for both locals and foreigners. Government needs policies fully to support small-scale village farmers. They will slowly become larger-scale farmers -- with enough financial assistance. They need an introduction to new farming methods and ideas. They need allocation of enough resources and we must set up more competitions and activities for youth in farming. They need to gain more interest and knowledge for future agriculture and to know more about traditional foods.

*By Muzingo Chilinda, 16 Years, Grade 10, Kabulonga Girls Secondary, Lusaka, Precious Phiri, 17 Years, Grade 11, David Kaunda Technical High School, Lusaka, and Gift Phiri, 17 Years, Grade 11, David Kaunda Technical High School, Lusaka.*

## 10. Traditional agriculture: a comparative advantage

Zambia has a comparative advantage in the field of agriculture. It has a favourable climate, fertile soils and abundant water, which includes perennial streams and lakes. The country experiences excessive rainfall and droughts and these affect the yields of maize that people produce. Government then has to import relief food for distribution. This may mean not enough agricultural inputs to support agriculture. We must improve household and national food security!

Peasant and commercial farmers need to grow other crops and not just maize. Traditional crops include cassava, sorghum, millet, groundnuts and wild fruits. The main growers of cassava are rural subsistence farmers. We eat groundnuts raw, cooked or roasted and we shell the nuts to extract oil and to make margarine and cooking oil. Waste material from crushing provides protein-rich stockfeed. Groundnuts can also make peanut butter and these grow in all parts of the country as a subsistence crop. We export commercially-

produced groundnuts. We know Zambia can produce cooking oil!

We can use cassava, sorghum, millet and other cereals to make many products. From them, we make mealie-meal, porridge, puddings, bread, chapattis, biscuits and beer. Sorghum also makes stockfeed, cooking oils and starches. Imfungo and masuku fruits can make juices and jams. Instead of importing cooking oil, juices, jams, wheat products and other foodstuffs, Government should grow these traditional crops commercially.

We have developed drought-resistant seed and early maturing seed varieties. These include sorghum, millet and maize seed. Seed companies, research institutions and farmers produce such seed. Government promotes seed distribution and multiplication, even of crops once considered only suitable for subsistence farmers. Our local, indigenous varieties of seed have existed for a long time. Zambian farmers should preserve them and keep them forever for future generations to use. Women village farmers are traditionally seed managers and seed specialists -- the village seed keepers!

Traditional seed are good and women farmers know the seed varieties to plant. They know which are the drought-resistant seed. This seed grows even when rains fail. These farmers know which seed have high yield and which are late-maturing or early-maturing. They know which seed resist disease and they protect the seed in their fields with pesticides. We must preserve traditional types of seed and avoid genetically modified organisms (GMOs), whether foods or seed. It is true that GMO seed and foods are risky and we have no definite knowledge of whether they are safe for our health. They are a danger to the environment and to traditional or indigenous varieties of seed. Farmers do not have any knowledge about management of GMOs and they must avoid them. We should wait until the people who promote GMOs prove that they are safe. We do not want our small-scale farmers to risk losing control over their farming and their seed. These types of foreign seed only bring complications.

*By Musenga Sanwa, 15 Years, Grade 9, Fatima Girls High School, Ndola, and Leya Nyimbili, 15 Years, Grade 8, Angelina Tembo Girls High,*

## 11. A food pot jetting to your table

The Ugandan Food Pot is "The Real Thing" -- boiled and smashed bananas! They mix in this famous Pot with spices and meat and they cook it in palm oil. This is excellent and it gets taste buds active and dancing around. It is most attractive, indeed! This East African approach to their food emphasises the nice aroma of spices. People enjoy food when those who prepare it also enjoy it. In short, it is essential that our traditional foods can "jet to the tables" of people, fresh -- and to other Zambians and the visiting tourists!

Why is it important for us to promote our local traditional types of crops and foods? We have many traditional food crops: cassava, sorghum, millet, groundnuts and sweet potatoes. Then in the gardens there are vegetables like beans, chikanda, pumpkins, pumpkin leaves or chibabwa, mundambi, impwa and okra. Mundambi is a vegetable and "an appetiser for the sick." Impwa is a traditional vegetable. Okra, another traditional vegetable, is a favourite of the ladies for relish with their nshima. When we, as Zambians, are proud of these foods, we shall convince others to enjoy them and realise their potential. Small-scale farmers must greatly grow and market them widely.

There are more reasons to promote these very essential traditional foods. It will increase our national pride to have a dish exclusively recognised as Zambian; a famous case springs to mind: pasta, spaghettis and macaroni are for the Italians. Local hotels and restaurants could serve our local traditional foods to local people as well as tourists. These foods are also very reliable in terms of health; many help to improve our health and to cure a variety of serious illnesses. And then we must improve the preparation, preservation and consumption of such foods.

It is high time that the preparation of foods like chikanda fits the highest standards. We need to comment on the preparation, preservation and eating of traditional foods. We need to expose these foods to laboratory tests and to make sure they meet the required standards. We must have recipe books for use in preparing this food. We need to publicise Sylva Banda's Cookbook and traditional food recipes. This food must meet standards of hygiene and safety to help us improve methods of cooking and preparation.

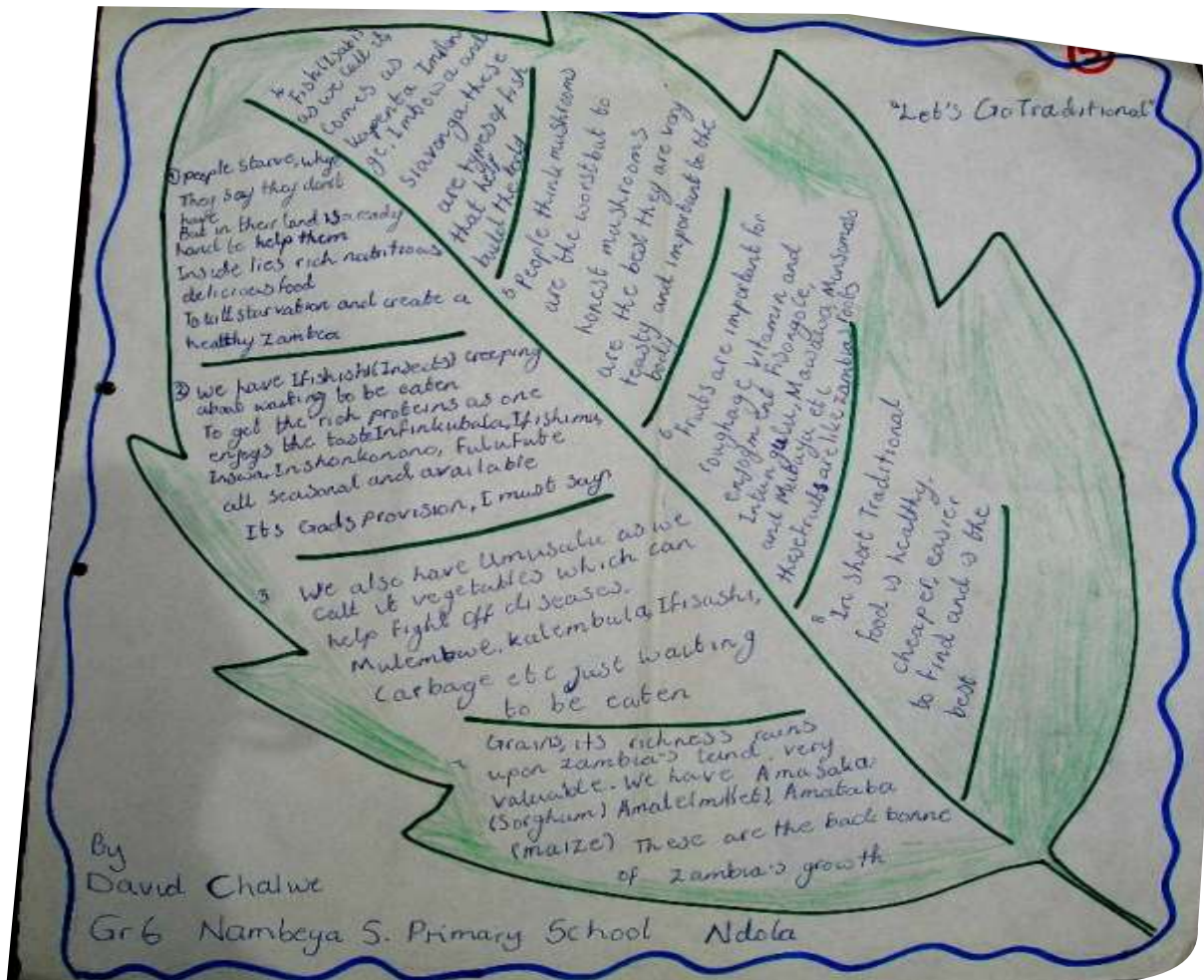
We have done very little to improve cooking, preservation and packaging. We just have the traditional simple methods of drying, frying, baking and boiling. This gives these foods a short shelf life. This gives them little chance of jetting to the table of consumers and to be fresh. We need to use modern methods of canning and adding preservative.

The ways of presenting this food need improvement. The way we eat cassava meal and boiled cassava leaves does not stimulate our taste and curiosity. Locals and people from other countries need to enjoy this traditional food -- like the Italians do with their pastas, macaronis and spaghettis! We can store traditional foods in warehouses until the time for shipment. Many of these have a big market, both locally and internationally.

*By Thandiwe Uteka, 17 Years, Grade 11,  
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and Japhet McKeown, 17 Years, Grade 11,  
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# 3. Lots of Wisdom Growing on This Leaf

By David Chalwe, Grade 6, Nambeya Primary School, Ndola.



## 12. The youth and local traditional foods

Great men have always said that the youth are the future of our modern nations! The youth are future leaders. Zambia has a diverse culture and many traditions. Among the most genuine traditions are local traditional foods in all nine provinces. These local foods have a great deal of variety. This includes vegetables and other food crops. People have often ignored these foods. Many people in our nation do not think much about the potential of this food for food security. We cannot rely on our staple food like nshima from maize. We need to remember we have many other types of traditional foods and that these are very relevant to the youth!

When you draw a flask of water from the river, it may be in its own container. But it is still part of a great body of water. In the same way, these traditional foods are part of our culture and tradition. It is up to us to exploit their full potential for food security. In the end, it is all up to us. As the English say, "the ball is in your court."

We have changing climatic conditions and we cannot predict floods or droughts. They seem to come without warning. This can lead to hunger. We should consider having other traditional food crops for when we need them. Some of the others include: cassava, sorghum, millet, dried fish and dried vegetables. Government can possibly add some of these foods other than maize to the food reserves. This will also benefit

farmers in rural areas and in the villages. They can organise better their reserves of such types of food. This could help them to be more independent of Government. The farmers – small-scale and commercial -- can grow these crops on a larger scale.

We, as the youth, are the future leaders of tomorrow! Today jobs are few and use of traditional food can help the youth to get training in farming these crops. They can learn how to grow these foods and how to preserve them for future use. The introduction of more Production Units and Young Farmers Clubs in schools will help tap the potential of these foods. In schools, pupils can learn how to grow such foods and they will benefit very much. Government can invest in more creative ways of cultivating these crops and foods. They can invest in factories for processing them. This will help us to increase export and trade and this can bring many more benefits to the youth.

We also need to be cautious of some types of chemicals to make plants grow fast. For example, a cabbage that used to grow in five months can now mature in three months. The plant scientists are altering the genes that constitute or make up these foods. If we alter genetically such foods, we might well have new diseases in future and they may not have any cures. We must emphasise traditional and natural foods. This will supplement Government efforts to improve on the health services.

In order for us as individuals to tap into this potential, we must start from our homes. An African proverb states: "The ruin of a nation begins in the homes of its people." That is why we must start to include these foods in our livelihoods and our lifestyles. It is not enough to exhibit them during occasions like matebeto and other traditional ceremonies. They must become a part of our cultures, our traditions and our way of life!

*By Mwamba Kanyanta, 17 Years, Grade 11,  
Helen Kaunda High School, Kitwe.*

### 13. Eat traditional foods for good health

Zambian local food has a lot of nutrients that keep one healthy and strong. They give us energy and are cheap. Our staple food is the thick maize mealie-meal mash, nshima. To prepare nshima, women in rural areas pound dried maize into a fine meal and they use a large mortar and pestle. But we can also use cassava mealie-meal for nshima. We can serve it with fish and many kinds of vegetables.

Our many lakes and rivers provide fish called kapenta. This is a small sardine-like fish from Lake Tanganyika. It now thrives in Lake Kariba. We may dry it, fry it and make it into relish. We can sell baskets of dried kapenta in markets across the country. Other fish include bream, ndombe or catfish, nkupi, mpasa or lake salmon, Nile perch and tigerfish. These can benefit the country and its tourism.

Our traditional foods include sorghum, millet, sweet potatoes, groundnuts and others. For example, we have the case of cassava. Katapa or cassava leaves provide relish during meals. We do use cassava in food industries and we use it to manufacture mealie-meal and glue. We need to find out how we can use these types of foods. They are very helpful. Also, traditional foods and nutritious vegetables are good as foods to preserve. One of these is mudyoli or pumpkin leaves and you add groundnuts. Makowa or cucumber is nutritious, with pounded groundnuts, tomatoes, onion, and spices. You can add cooking oil instead of pounded groundnuts. Mukilile or black jack leaves are very nutritious and delicious food. Mafwungu or boiled maize is another traditional food that many do not fully use. These traditional food crops prevent sickness and are nutritious.

Tourists can help us popularise traditional foods from Africa. In the hotels, lodges and guesthouses, we can serve them our delicious dishes. Local people can cook traditional foods there. Our parents and grandparents can teach us how to prepare them. We must take this culture to the next

generation and promote food security.

Local traditional green vegetables grow well in many places. These include the leaves of beans, okra, cowpeas, pumpkin leaves or chibwabwa. We can serve them with nshima made from maize-meal or cassava-meal. We can also use roots like garlic onion, a remedy for many ills. It is unique, high in potassium, low in salt -- an advantage if you have high blood pressure. Pure honey is also good for high blood pressure!

"A banana a day keeps the doctor away" -- famous African saying. Use traditional food for your health. Bananas and other fruits make our health much better, as do avocado pear, masuku, mangoes, apples and mwiyi. Banana leaves are good for medicine and they cure illnesses. Bananas give us a lot of energy and one banana can provide enough energy for a 90-minute work-out. Fruit help us with intestinal disorders and digestion, neutralise over-acidity and reduce stomach irritations. They help expectant mothers, physically, emotionally. Here is the potential of local crops, plants and foods!

*By Cornelius S. L. Phiri, 17 Years, Grade 12, Mukasa Minor Seminary, Choma.*

#### 14. Traditional foods -- "Made In Zambia"

Use our wonderful traditional foods and ensure you tell your neighbour to do the same. The former "Dark Continent of Africa" has many known potentials that contribute to the well-being of people throughout the world. Before the word, civilisation, was in anyone's mouth, the masses of Africa were eating our rich traditional foods. They were promoting and improving their well-being. At present, we are eating many refined foods. All who can see further than their noses know these refined foods bring bad health: obesity, high cholesterol and heart problems. We in Zambia should take action!

It is a known fact that disease affects us all. Remedies for various diseases come from traditional herbs and plants. This simply shows that traditional foods are the best. Conventional foods are refined and they lose many nutrients

because of methods of preparation. Traditional foods are cheaper to obtain. Much of our population is under-privileged. Their standard of living is bad and traditional foods are an answer for them.

Our traditional foods have great potential for health. They have no side-effects at all for our health. Their healing power and all that is advantageous about them will help our livelihoods. Because of all that is good about these foods, we can export them for revenue. We need the foreign exchange to develop our country. We will spread the goodness of our traditional foods in the world!

Government has taken measures to promote our own local food crops. These traditional food crops are crucial. People have now migrated from rural areas. Everyone wants to live in town with the hope of having better lives. But the question still hangs -- have their lives got any better? Traditional food crops and foods are precious gifts that we must use. We must place them on the market. We have our own groundnuts and do not need to go to East Africa for peanut butter. Why bring cornflakes from South Africa when we have plenty of maize here? We are always complaining about poverty. What is the major cause of this epidemic? It is our serious dependence on aid from others.

We will eradicate this poverty if we use our own resources to fight it. No one will make this country a better place for us, if we do not do it ourselves. We need to utilise our home-grown food crops and food. It is from these little discoveries that we will bring about contributions to the development of this country.

Zambians have many different types of traditional food crops and foods in our nation. We have sweet potatoes, maize, wheat, groundnuts and millet everywhere. We have rice in Mongu, Nakonde and Chama. Such foods are fabulously healthy. Why should we suffer? There are also a lot of products that we can make from these crops. We can also market them and sell them very competitively in other countries. We can process these crops and these

foods. Everything that we grow in this country we can exploit. Wouldn't it be amazing in future to find our traditional food products in international markets? We can imagine them written, "Made in Zambia."

*By Rita S. Shamboko, 17 Years, Grade 11, Chipembi Girls Secondary School, Chisamba. and Esther Chabangulula, 16 Years, Grade 11, David Kaunda Technical High, Lusaka.*

## 15. Our traditional foods for food security

Our food security has become dependent on only a handful of foods. We must increase our use of traditional foods in modern society. Food security is access by all people at all times to enough healthy and nutritious food for an active healthy life. Food security requires adequate and available nutritious foods and it involves the ability to obtain socially acceptable foods by growing them or by buying them. This refers to both household food security and national food security.

Food security in agricultural development requires a variety of crops. To attain food security, we need to use the species of traditional plants and seed that we have neglected. We need to increase genetic diversity through available germplasm of local species and varieties of seed and plants. We need to preserve genetic resources and distribute and promote much more our fantastic traditional crops.

We have under-utilised crops like cassava, sorghum, wheat and finger and pearl millet. We need to use well the foods from these important cereal crops. Sorghum survives droughts and can thrive in semi-arid areas. Such drought-resistant crops are essential and will help our agriculture to grow and thrive!

We need to provide our young population with sources of agricultural employment. We must use agriculture to fight against poverty among the young and the adult populations. Small-scale producers need much more resources and opportunities. They need access to the right kinds of local seed and other agricultural inputs. They need the development of roads in rural areas and, especially, feeder roads. They must have access to cattle or donkey draught power, to seed and chemical inputs, to markets and production assets such as marketing skills and

sufficient farming implements. They need drought-resistant crops like cassava, sorghum, millet and sweet potatoes. Food security, thus, requires availability of food, access to food and stability of food supply.

Our traditional foods have certain requirements to produce food security. The people need several things regarding under-utilised foods and food crops. The starting point is information about the food they want to buy or grow. They need the agricultural inputs and other requirements for growing their own food. The nation needs a secure resource base for growing or buying the needed food. Nationals like the ever-increasing numbers of the unemployed youth want to have opportunities for employment or self-employment.

Farmers want to improve their food production and marketing to support their families. The rural community needs the opportunities of growing and eating traditional foods -- the neglected and unused foods and crops. People going into business want to know about income-generating, production, processing, marketing and investment opportunities and situations suitable for them. Finally, the people farming in the villages need to have much more support from the institutions set up to serve them!

*By Imanga Wamunyima. 15 years, Grade 11, Munali Boys High, Lusaka.*

## PELUM ASSOCIATION.

### WE HAVE A DREAM: SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

PELUM Association is a regional network of 217 civil society organisations in east, central and southern Africa. We are working towards sustainable agriculture, food security and sustainable community development in the region. The Association -- launched in 1995 in Harare -- is currently working in ten countries: Botswana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The Association's long-term objectives are: (1) To build capacity of farming and rural community groups to accumulate ecological capital; (2) To stimulate farmer learning and inspire small-scale farmers to experiment and to innovate in empowering ways for food security and sustainability. To attain these objectives, PELUM Association is facilitating learning, networking, participatory research and capacity-building.

The key strategies of PELUM are capacity-building, information-sifting and dissemination, networking, advocacy and lobbying. The Association also supports small-scale farmer organisations and groups to speak for themselves on policies that do not meet their needs.

Vision: "To see communities in east, central and southern Africa become self-organised to make choices towards an improved quality of life that is socially, economically and ecologically sustainable."

Mission: "We are a civil society network in east, central and southern Africa, which is passionate about equity, people-driven development and integrity of creation, working toward sustainable local community empowerment, food security and prosperity by facilitating learning, networking and advocacy."

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## SCHOOL FARMS: CULTIVATING YOUNG MINDS

Garden Based Learning (GBL) is now enjoying a world-wide revival. And more increasingly, people value it as a practical means of showing the benefits of farming for young people. At the same time, it teaches important lessons about nutrition and about contributing to household food security. School farms are not as widely available as many would like. This is partly because people still see GBL as a marginal rather than a mainstream educational activity. However, the scenario is gradually changing. School gardens now form a key element of the new educational policies and schools now run gardening classes in most or all African nations.

We can use Garden Based Learning to reach the children in schools. This focuses on teaching healthy diets and environmental awareness -- as well as the actual gardening work. It stresses the income-generating potential of growing fruit, vegetables and other crops.

In Zimbabwe, the Schools and Colleges Permaculture (SCOPE) Programme has introduced the concept of organic farming into the curriculum of more than 50 schools. In western Kenya, the Gimonoi Youth Polytechnic has recently incorporated agro-forestry into its timetable. Young people take part in on-farm research, and they raise tree seedlings for sale. Said head teacher Joel Amakoye, "Our project on agro forestry is creating a positive attitude towards environmental protection. This goes together with monetary returns for the Polytechnic through the sale of tree seedlings." Such ideas for action have also reached Zambia." Source: SPORE Magazine, February, 2007.