



mahlathini
development foundation

MAHLATHINI

An Overview Natal Midlands

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MAIZE TRUST



30
YEARS OF
IGNITING NEW WAYS

WWF NEDBANK
GREEN
TRUST

OUR FOCUS AREAS

We work with smallholder farmers in KZN (Bergville, SKZN and Midlands). EC (Matatiele) and Limpopo (ametja/Sekororo) on Community based Climate Change Adaptation, natural and water resources management and conservation, Local food systems(including seed, traditional foods and local marketing) and microfinance support (Village saving and loan associations –VSLA's and small business mentoring.)



NATAL MIDLANDS

The Midlands covers the following areas:

- Ozwathini
 - Mayizekanye
 - Gobizembe
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Crops commonly grown: maize, beans, amadumbe, sweet potatoes, potatoes, vegetables

Majority of participants are females between the ages of 40 and 70

Most are breadwinners in their homesteads

Over 90% have no formal employment and depend on social grants, remittances, pension and disability grants

All are smallholder farmers who farm mainly for consumption smoothing and selling surplus



CLIMATE RESILIENT AGRICULTURE

- How do we provide support that speaks to the needs to farmers but also drives them to improve their current practices?
- How can we improve the farming system without causing excessive damage to the environment?
- What are the best options for water and soil conservation in smallholder farming systems?
- Is agro-ecology a viable option for long term food security?

What we have been doing:

- Agro-ecology
- Conservation Agriculture
- Livestock production
- Marketing & Value Adding (in the pipeline)

Project description

CRITERIA (140 participants)

- EC: 5-8 Villages per year x 2
 - Linked to spring protection
 - Linked to village savings and loan associations
 - Linked to resource conservation efforts
- KZN: 4-6 Villages per year x 2
 - CRA learning group members already implementing CA, intensive homestead food production and livestock integration
 - Intention is to “double” production and support and set up localised marketing options
- Learning group of ACTIVE farmers
 - Women headed households
 - Unemployed
 - Loss of jobs and income
 - No grants/ pension
 - Must have some access to water and labour

ACTIVITIES

- Climate change analysis and choice of CRA practices
- Learning sessions in CRA practices
- Farmer level experimentation with a basket of options in
 - Intensive gardening – tunnels plus
 - Field cropping – conservation agriculture and livestock integration
 - Small livestock – broilers, layers, traditional poultry
- Marketing options and ideas to try out

Impact of COVID: Case mam’Nene, Swayimane



- Mam’Nene sells green maize, cabbages, beans, amadumbe and sweet potatoes to street traders in Pietermaritzburg. The produce are collected by bakkie owners.
 - She also sells her produce in the small close-by town of Wartburg on days when the government old age pensions are paid out.
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Observation of COVID impact on labour

- These elderly women farmers do not employ labour, which they say is unaffordable. They work the fields themselves with the assistance of adult children when they return from the cities, where they work and live. During lockdown, children were not able to return home, creating additional labour burdens.

Conservation Agriculture: Five principles



- **Minimal soil disturbance**
- **Diversified cropping**
 - Intercropping
 - Mixed cropping (multi-species)
 - Crop rotation
- **Keep living roots in the soil**
 - Extension of season – late season cover crops
- **Permanent organic soil cover**
 - Inclusion of cover crops
 - Crop residues and mulching
- **Integrate livestock**

CA implementation in KZN

Area, (No of villages	No of participants	1000m ² trials (10x10 's)	400m ² trials	Strips	Fodder species	Seed	Poultry	Two row planter	Short season maize	Actual planted (hectares)
Bergville (12)	172	71	69	79	12	5	5	9	29	14,01
Midlands (10)	98	22	61	22	17	3	12	6	11	6,64
SKZN (9)	80	0	72	15	0	0	0	7	4	4,8
TOTALS	350	93	202	116	29	8	17	22	44	25,45

Category	Description	Bergville	SKZN	Midlands
Socio-Economic information				
Gender	% women	77%	48%	85%
Age	31-39yrs	10%	6%	5%
	40-49	17%	6%	10%
	50-59	37%	33%	15%
	60-69	30%	50%	35%
	>70	7%	11%	15%
Income	Farming	40%	13%	50%
	Ave monthly farming income	R1 585,71	R933,33	R3 750
	Grants	90%	87%	90%
	Ave monthly income from grants	R2 648,21	R1 906,41	R2 655,88
	Ave overall monthly income	R3 241,07	R1 956,06	R3361,76
Per capita income (monthly)	Average members per household ()	R463,01 (7)	R391,21 (5)	R480,25 (7)
VSLA membership		53%	30%	10%
Average number of years saving		5	3	2
Saving for farming inputs; annual amounts	Min	R200,00	R1 000,00	R1 200,00
	Max	R3 000,00	R2 000,00	R5 500,00
	Ave	R1 275,00	R1 050,00	R2 900,00
Bulk buying		33%	13%	45%
Active in learning groups		43%	65%	90%
Collaborative working		43%	52%	60%
No of years of CA implementation	Average	4	3	3
	Range	1 to 7	1 to 6	1 to 4

Case study

Zodwa Zikode

Unemployed. Woman headed household, looking after 1 orphan.

- 0,14ha, mostly under CA; Maize, beans, cowpeas, SCCs, potatoes, pumpkins
- Able to supply her own annual staples and vegetables from her farming
- Sale of crops in community, pension points, selling of sweets and snacks at schools and local loan shark. Monthly income ~R1200/ month
- Pigs (8); slaughters and sells locally.
- Livestock stolen



Intensive homestead food production practices

- Agroecological practices including; *composting, deep and shallow trench beds, mulching, mixed cropping, natural pest and disease control, crop diversification, grey water management*
- Microclimate management; *shade cloth tunnels*
- Improved irrigation practices; *drip irrigation, irrigation scheduling (chameleon sensors)*



Fodder supplementation and small livestock

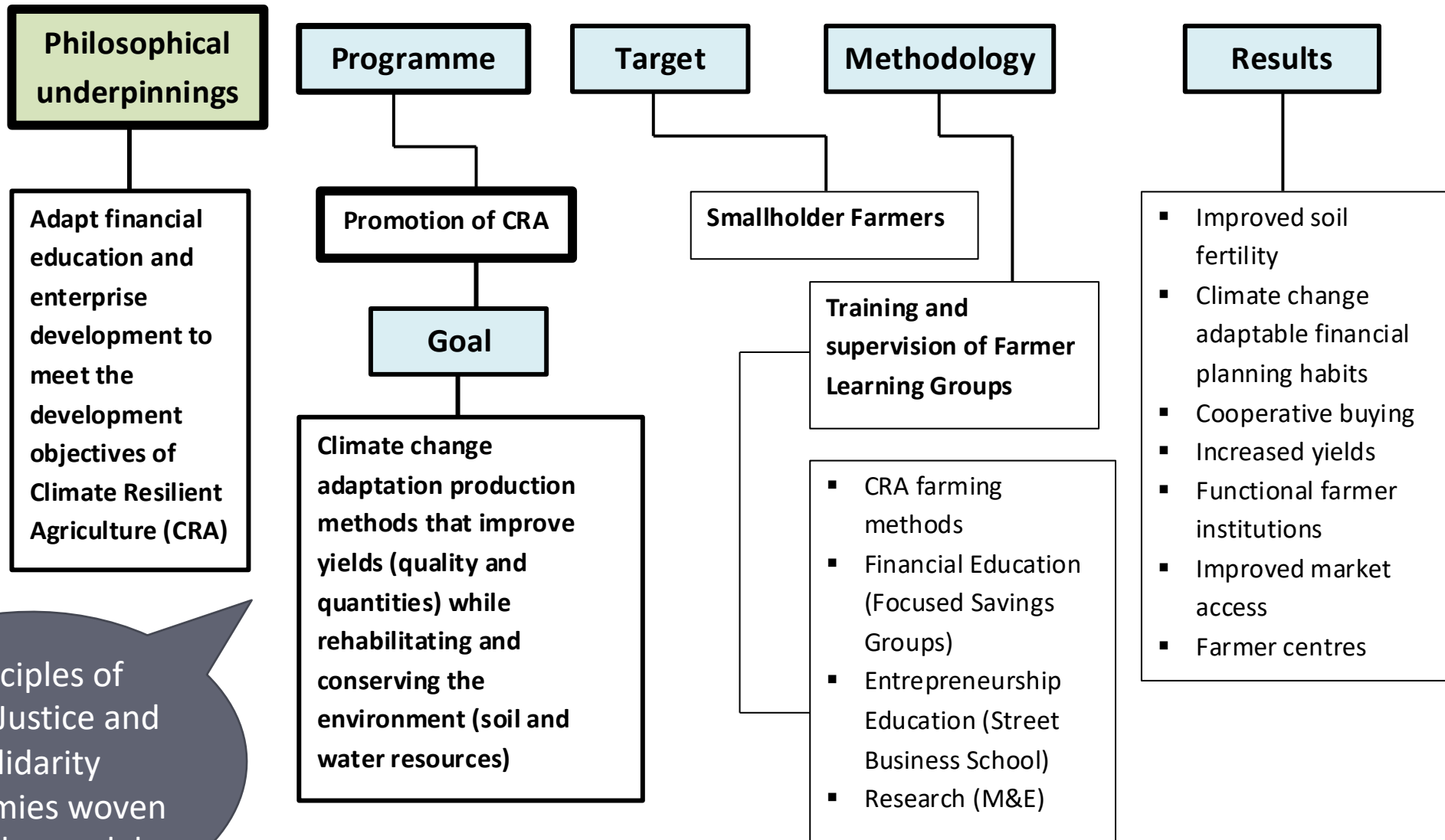
- Learning workshops and experimentation: supplementation, nutrition, and condition scoring
- Manual balers; for veld grass, lab-lab, cowpea, Teff and maize stover
- Poultry management workshops and implementation

DATE	NAME	ISIRU ESINAZO	UBUNTU BAO	ENSILAGE
14 June 2019	umkhala labe	2L	Number 4	0
	ubuhlabi beane	2L	Number 4	0
19 June 2019	umkhala labe	2L	Number 4	0
	ubuhlabi beane	2L	Number 4	0
26 June 2019	umkhala labe	2L	Number 4	0
	ubuhlabi beane	2L	Number 4	0
29 June 2019	umkhala labe	2L	Number 4	0
	ubuhlabi beane	2L	Number 4	0
4 July 2019	umkhala labe	2L	Number 4	0
	ubuhlabi beane	2L	Number 4	0
9 July 2019	umkhala labe	2L	Number 4	0
	ubuhlabi beane	2L	Number 4	0
16 July 2019	umkhala labe	2L	Number 4	0
	ubuhlabi beane	2L	Number 4	0



CRA pictures





Principles of social Justice and solidarity economies woven into the model

VSLAs

- The intention is to provide farmers with cash flows to be able to do consumption smoothing, pay off loans and undertake small businesses and farming
- Meet once a month to save and borrow, share out is done once a year.
- Majority based in Bergville
- Established to create a pool of money locally which participants could also borrow from and repay at 10% interest rates
- Money is from participants and fully managed by them
- Groups include both agricultural participants and general community members
- Looking to set up VSLAs in Midlands. Farmers currently part of stokvels and burial societies





Pillars of a VSL Association

- Manageable size of the group (up to 19)
- **Trust**, neighbourly, care for one another
- **Strong social bonds**
- Transparency, commitment and democratic principles
- Focused savings to support CRA objectives
- On-going training and supervision

LESSONS FROM VSLAs (Bgvl, SKZN)

- The VSLAs make a huge contribution to peoples' livelihoods, assisting them to continue farming and stabilizing their small incomes
- It assists them also to save jointly for larger items such as fencing, Jo-Jo tanks
- In the first few savings cycles, people tend to prioritize immediate needs, therefore most of the money goes towards consumption smoothing. After 2-3 years they start to use the VSLAs actively for their enterprise development
- Great space to create a strong network, most participants in savings groups are also in the same learning groups (which have now diversified from CA to agro-ecology) and often start other social ventures such as water committees, calf rearing groups, jointly run farmer centres, mechanization committees etc.
- These VSLAs do however have a reasonably low ceiling in terms of how far savings can go in improving livelihoods. New farmer bank model being developed to enable larger amounts for savings and loans and longer savings cycles including banking and investment options.
- Groups which do not follow the group constitution have fairly high levels of inter-group conflicts, however they have been surprisingly resilient, mostly surviving these upheavels to continue with their group based activities.

MARKETING

- Main objective is to strengthen the local economy
- Find alternative ways to sell when conventional ones fail
- Create stronger farmer networks
- Increase household income
- Reduce risk of exposure to COVID-19 by making food available locally



MARKETING: OZWATHINI

