

# Local Resources for Local Development

Large portions of the people of Zambia live of agriculture and live in rural areas. Migration to urban areas is often the result of a lack of opportunities, particularly in terms of income generation coupled with limited access to education, poor health services and infrastructure.

Despite the Government of the Republic of Zambia's t increased efforts on improving access to market for rural areas, e.g. by developing or rehabilitating the main roads in the country, urban and peri-urban industrial projects remain high priorities on the government's agenda. Undoubtedly, existing challenges of the rural areas will not be addressed sustainably this way. An alternative approach could lie in tackling underutilised resources through small-scale projects. Unwanted developments can be recognised more easily thus making corrective measures less problematic to implement compared to large-scale high-cost projects. Against this background, value addition at the source makes for an interesting approach, e.g. through processing of existing wild and forest fruits.

Since September 2015, I have been working on a sustainable concept for small-scale localised food processing using a specially fitted freight container. I have since established a working relationship with members of a community in the Western Province of Zambia. The choice of country is because I had lived in its capital city, Lusaka, from January 2010 until November 2015 where I worked at the then Ministry of Finance and National Planning. As an initial step, my objective is to show that Zambian fruits can be processed and marketed locally in a commercially viable manner. The following step will be the establishment of companies created with and run by local entrepreneurs so that they may be able to exploit these business opportunities. It will be necessary to present a credible business plan in order to gain support from investors or foundations to fund a pilot project. Currently, some data to do this is missing from the following areas (see annex for further details):

- a) **Raw Materials,**
- b) **Market Intelligence,**
- c) **Technology,**
- d) **Logistics,**
- e) **Competition,**
- f) **Standards & Quality Management,**
- g) **Financing.**

Some of these gaps can be captured through extensive personal research. Others demand a background and experience in food science, food technology, logistics, engineering, quality management or financing. In order to facilitate this work, I am planning to form a non-profit organisation during the first half of 2017. This organisation will be working towards a) securing funds for research and small pilot projects, and b) developing business models that will be implemented in Zambia in conjunction with local community members. In the long run, the intention is to form a non-profit consultancy that can provide an opportunity for a meaningful and sustainable source of income for all those involved in the project both in Zambia and elsewhere.

For the first half of 2017, two trips were planned for answering parts of the outstanding questions. In February I visited Lusaka to explore potential markets for products made from forest and wild fruits. In April/May 2017 I am planning for longer visit (about 4 weeks) with the partner community in Western Province to develop and test food-processing ideas with local community members. These tests will be documented using various media such as videos, photos and brief reports which will be uploaded to the existing web-portal: <https://www.civocracy.org/bfpin>. An example for such documentation of the locally available Mubula fruit is already available for commenting and discussion at: <https://www.civocracy.org/discussions/96/learn?code=49e43c>. The web-portal offers interested an opportunity to gain a better understanding of the situation at the community level and to participate in the development of solutions.

Currently, my main objective is to find motivated comrades, co-founders and experts in the above-mentioned fields – on a voluntary basis for the time being at least. Are you interested in knowing more? Or would you like to share your knowledge or ideas? Do not hesitate to contact me! I look forward to hearing from you.

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## **Annex: Detailed Questions for Improving the Data Basis**

- a) **Raw Materials:** At what time of the year are fruits available; in what quality and quantity? Are there seasonally different materials available? What nutrients are contained in the fruits? What are the options for processing the fruits available? Are any components of the fruits of interest for non-food applications? How are the fruits currently utilised? (Could commercial use of these fruits have negative effects, e.g. increasing malnutrition?) Are the trees cut down due to the fruits having no commercial value? (Could commercialising the fruits fight deforestation and support climate change adaptation?)
- b) **Market Intelligence:** Is there a market for processed forest fruits? What type of processed product can be marketed, e.g. fruit pulp, fruit puree, concentrate or dried fruits? Who and where are the potential clients? What quantities can be offloaded to the markets? Is there a minimum amount of products required by clients? What is the pricing level that can be achieved? Which trends can be observed that could grow into future markets, such as Superfoods? Are there scarce botanical resources that are sought after?
- c) **Technology:** What technology and processing method is best suited? How can the necessary electricity be generated, preferably from renewable sources? How can energy consumption be optimised? What are the best packaging solutions? What available options are there for extending shelf life (e.g. to reduce transport volumes and cost per item)? What are the cost implications? How should maintenance be dealt with?
- d) **Logistics:** Should the container solution be mobile or is it better to have it stationed at one location? How can information on the status of processing, provided through IT solutions, assist in optimising transport costs? What are the transport costs? Would it be efficient to have an in-house transport service? How will the raw material get to the processing facility? How can the facility reach a high utilisation ratio? Can IT be incorporated, if a GSM network is available?
- e) **Competition:** Who are the competitors, especially in areas closer to the major cities? What can be the unique selling point for the local market? Which potentials can be exploited internationally?
- f) **Standards & Quality Management:** What type of certification is important? How should a situation where no processing standard was defined for forest fruits be addressed?
- g) **Financing:** What are the requirements for investors to put their capital into small-scale projects in Zambia?