



**COMACO**  
Community Markets for Conservation



Elinat Explains  
it all [HERE](#)

## *The Tree That's Changing Everything for Small-Scale Farmers in Zambia*

I don't believe she had ever planted a tree before. Though I can't remember her name, I will never forget how her face lit up. Kneeling down with her *Gliricidia sepium* tree seedling, she gingerly placed its roots into its new home and filled the hole with dirt. When she looked up, the smile on her wrinkle-worn face said it all. She had successfully planted her first tree, probably in her entire life. With her friends and family, she planted over 500 trees that day in her groundnut field.

From December 2020 to January 2021, 90,700 small-sale farmers across the Eastern, Central and Muchinga Provinces repeated this act by planting over 44,000,000 *Gliricidia* tree seedlings! Perhaps the largest tree-planting operation ever undertaken in Zambia, and probably the region as well, COMACO is leading this initiative to help farmers replace chemical fertilizers with a tree that does it better and for free.

A growing number of small-scale farmers, over 140,000 to date, have discovered the benefits of this tree that also yields an annual, renewable supply of woody stems for cooking and a natural source of insect repellent to ward off army worms and other pests. These farmers tell their stories over the radio that COMACO hosts on the Farm Talk program and a wave of interest for this new way of farming, called agroforestry, is growing fast.

To continue reading please follow the link [HERE](#)

### GLIRICIDIA FACTS FROM THE COMACO TEAM



44 million trees planted by 90,700 farmers in 2020



40,000 tons of fuel wood produced annually



Crop yield comparable to yields with fertilizer



Mineral nutrients in food crops higher than crops produced with fertilizer



Cost to farmer less than \$4

## *Inventory of Community Forests to Assess Carbon Stocks*



COMACO undertakes an active role in helping communities understand the value of their forests by increasing opportunities in the market place through careful management of these resources. This past February COMACO, together with colleagues from the Forestry Department and with help from community forest guards, conducted environmental inventory assessments in eight community conservation areas totaling --- hectares. The inventory helped to quantify the volume of carbon stocks and the diversity of tree species and potential forest products found in these areas.



The exercise produced an important body of work that will inform communities what resources they own as well as the basis for earning revenues from carbon credits.

Despite the almost incessant rains, the team completed their work, often in remote forested areas that required overnight camping. As part of our cultural practice, the team paid a courtesy call to the Royal Highnesses (local chiefs) to explain the purpose of the exercise and ask permission to undertake the survey. The final results will be shared with local community leaders.

## *Expanding COMACO's Bee Hives -Now Over 30,000*

COMACO is supporting communities living around Kasanka National Park in Chitambo District, and Lavushimanda National Parks in Lavushimanda District, with alternative livelihood activities like beekeeping, through its partner KASANKA TRUST LTD.

The main objective of the project is to uplift the community livelihood and incentive for wildland and wildlife conservation in Kasanka and Lavushimanda National Parks and adjacent areas within the two Chiefdoms, through land use planning, honey production, conservation farming and market linkages for produce issued from these communities.

COMACO is supporting 1,600 farmers with 8,000 Top Bar beehives both in Chitambo and Mpumba Chiefdoms respectively. So far, Farmers have baited and hung 5,976 beehives in the Community Forest Area with GPS points and other data collected for each one.

COMACO Staff, Cooperative leaders, beekeeping mentors and Community Forest Managements Group (CFMGs) leaders are working together to bait and hang the beehives in the community forest areas.



## *Forest Guards Watching Over Forests and Wildlife*

The people of Nyalugwe chieftdom have continued to show commitment to enforcing their Community Conservation Plan that includes the protection of their Conservation Area, which recently became gazetted as a Community Game Ranch where sightings of wildlife have become more frequent. Safeguarding this area requires constant surveillance. Just a few weeks ago, local forest guards together with village scouts apprehended over 50 illegal immigrants from Ethiopia and Somalia. They are believed to be part of a syndicate carrying out illegal activities in multiple countries, including Zambia and were suspected of using the Nyalugwe Conservation Area as a clandestine entrance into Mozambique. The illegal immigrants were cornered during a routine patrols by the local guards. Because of the well-preserved thickets in the Conservation Area, the syndicate found a safe haven before crossing into neighboring Mozambique.



*Nyalugwe Community Forest Guards on patrol of Community Conservation Area*



*Group of illegal immigrants apprehended by Nyalugwe Forest Guards*



## *It's Wild! Products USA Bound!*



We are excited to announce that our It's Wild! products have gone international! On March 7th, 2021 our first container filled with peanut butter, honey, dried mushrooms, dried mangos and soya pieces was shipped to the United States. We have partnered with Sharingourbest to distribute and sell initially our products across New England in local food cooperatives. With a vigorous marketing campaign to begin soon, we hope to target premium nice markets across the US in the coming year.

*Follow Us On:*



## First in the World!

COMACO got its start in 2003, when it posed the question: what if instead of arresting poachers, we trained them in livelihood skills, offered them markets by using these skills, and then asked them to surrender their weapons.

Our pilot program started with 24 of the most notorious poachers in the Luangwa Valley. The poachers were trained and sent back to their communities after signing a pledge never to revert back to poaching. Today, those 24 poachers we transformed have grown in numbers to 1,731 with over 2000 firearms surrendered. Of even greater significance, they have formed the first in the world, Transformed Poachers Association of Zambia, to turn their collective membership into a positive force for conservation..

The goal of the association is to continue to transform poachers, represent their interests and opportunities for employment in legal markets, and support their efforts and skills to help communities live with wildlife. Many, for example, help their fellow-farmers keep large animals from destroying crops by blasting chili out of their old muzzle-loading guns, saving crop losses in the tens of thousands of dollars

We sat down with the Association chairperson, Smoke Phiri, and asked him how life has changed since he was transformed. This is what he had to say: "When I was poaching, I was not a free man. I was always having to hide at the sound of any vehicle due to the fear that the police were around and coming to arrest me. Today, I am a transformed poacher and a farmer. I am a free man; I no longer have to live a life of fear."

To see an interview with Smoke click [HERE](#)



Members from Mwasemphangwe chapter of transformed poachers association

## New Product Launch



Our food production and research team is working hard to bring a new product to the stores soon! It will be a first for Zambia and packed with taste and nutrition. Just a few kinks to work out, but we are almost there.

Can you guess what the next product is going to be? Here is a clue: the first letter of the main ingredient starts with "C".

COMACO can be your call to action. Help us reach more farmers who can make conservation happen. Support schools with honey farms. Turn poachers into farmers. Replace chemical fertilizers with trees. Create products for better nutrition. Reward communities that keep forests and wildlife safe. There is so much we can do together, but it takes support.

Click the button below if you would like to make a donation. For USA donors, we are privileged to partner with [Elephant Cooperation](#) to receive donations on our behalf.



## Conservation for Kids

March 12th was Youth Day here in Zambia. COMACO recognizes how important it is to educate everyone of all ages on the importance of conservation and the danger our forests are facing. We have started an initiative to distribute our Better Life Books into schools for further education. Our communications team is also hard at work creating a special radio program for school-based learning.



## Meet Our Staff



Senior staff members at our headquarters in Lusaka

We employ 274 staff across 4 provinces. Our staff are the backbone to our operations and their spirit and passion have made us what we are. For those that have been with us from the very beginning to the most recent, we thank you for your hard work. To learn more about our staff, please follow the link [HERE](#).

## Thank You to All of Our Donors and Partners

A special thank you to the following organizations! You've helped COMACO reach out to over 225,000 farmers, helping keep our soils, forests, and wildlife safe.

Cartier Philanthropy  
 Department of Agriculture  
 Department of National Parks and Wildlife  
 Elephant Cooperation  
 EU  
 Forestry Department  
 GIZ  
 Global EverGreening Alliance  
 Heidi and Harvey Bookman  
 KfW  
 Mulago Foundation

Myorrhizal Fund  
 The Nature Conservancy  
 NORAD  
 Pilot House Philanthropies  
 Prospero  
 Rotary Club  
 The World We Want  
 UNDP  
 USAID  
 Wildlife Conservation Society  
 World Vision

**Curious about how our 2020 year went?**

Check out our [Annual Report!](#)