



# 2022 ANNUAL REPORT

FOCUSED ON DATA RESULTS



**Making conservation profitable so farmers can care for and live with wildlife and trees**

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# 2022 SNAPSHOT



## 01 Farmer Level

- 253,142 farmers have signed a conservation pledge and joined 15,157 farmer-producer groups from 113 local cooperatives.
- 52% registered female farmers.
- 1,569 certified seed growers.
- 243,727kg of legume seeds produced to support cooperative seed banks for farmer inputs.
- Seed cost to farmers reduced by approximately 50% as compared to commercial market price.
- 76% farmers complying to conservation guidelines (minimum tillage, crop rotation, no burning, fire breaks, compost management), covering 168,800 ha.
- 53% practicing agroforestry to replace the need for chemical fertilizer.
- 84,491,547 *Gliricidia sepium* trees planted on-farm for soil improvement and improved crop yield.
- 86% farmers growing more than three major food crops.
- ZMW 64,045,857.89 paid out to 52,315 farmers for over 8 million tons of commodities purchased by COMACO.
- 91% of the households are food secure, meaning they have sufficient food till next harvest.
- 855 lead farmers currently using smartphones for compliance monitoring and activity reporting.
- 4,004 certified organic groundnut growers.
- 131,000 kg of certified organic groundnuts produced in 2022 for export markets.

## 02 Conservation

- 2,114 reformed wildlife poachers in total have transitioned to alternative livelihoods. In addition, 80,623 snares and 2,715 firearms that were once used to kill wildlife have been surrendered.
- 65 reformed poachers contracted by cooperatives to guard crops from wildlife using a non-lethal method called chilli blasting.
- 1.58 million hectares set aside as community protected forests for earning income from carbon markets.
- Annual rate of deforestation from these forests has reduced from 3% to 2.1%.
- Since 2015, the project has verified 1,638,099tCO<sub>2</sub>-e (equivalent carbon credits) in the 9 Chiefdoms and transferred to their accounts a total of \$US 4,853,801.92 from the sale of these credits.
- 102,358 fuel-efficient cookstoves installed contributing to the annual saving of 42 trees per household or a total of 3,118,816 trees per annum.
- 35,957 beehives installed in community forest areas.
- 58 chiefdom-level conservation task forces enforcing local conservations plans.

## 03 Community Level

- 113 cooperatives providing farmer extension services at varying stages of proficiency in 96 chiefdoms across four provinces (Eastern, Central, Southern & Muchinga).
- Cooperative federation formed in Eastern Province called Chitetezo representing 55 cooperatives.
- All cooperatives in the East with active bank accounts managing local enterprises, averaging annual gross revenue of ZMW 80,000 (However, annual gross revenue for cooperatives in the 9 carbon chiefdoms averages about ZMW 600,000).



# COMACO BUSINESS



- Total sales revenue of 106 million in 2022 with an annual average sales growth of 25%
- IT systems improved to enhance COMACO performance and cost efficiencies.
- Continued investments in new equipment to support new products (Soya Pieces, Jumbo Combo, Yummy Soy banana flavoured) and food safety standards.
- 26 trucks operating to collect and distribute crops within the COMACO network.
- 2 distribution centres (Lusaka and Ndola)
- 12 Green Markets and four mobile shops (3 Trucks, 1-Tricycle) (Lusaka, Ndola, Katete, and Chipata districts respectively)
- Mary's Meals contract to feed 350,000 school children everyday.

3 new It's Wild! products for local market



## Export Market

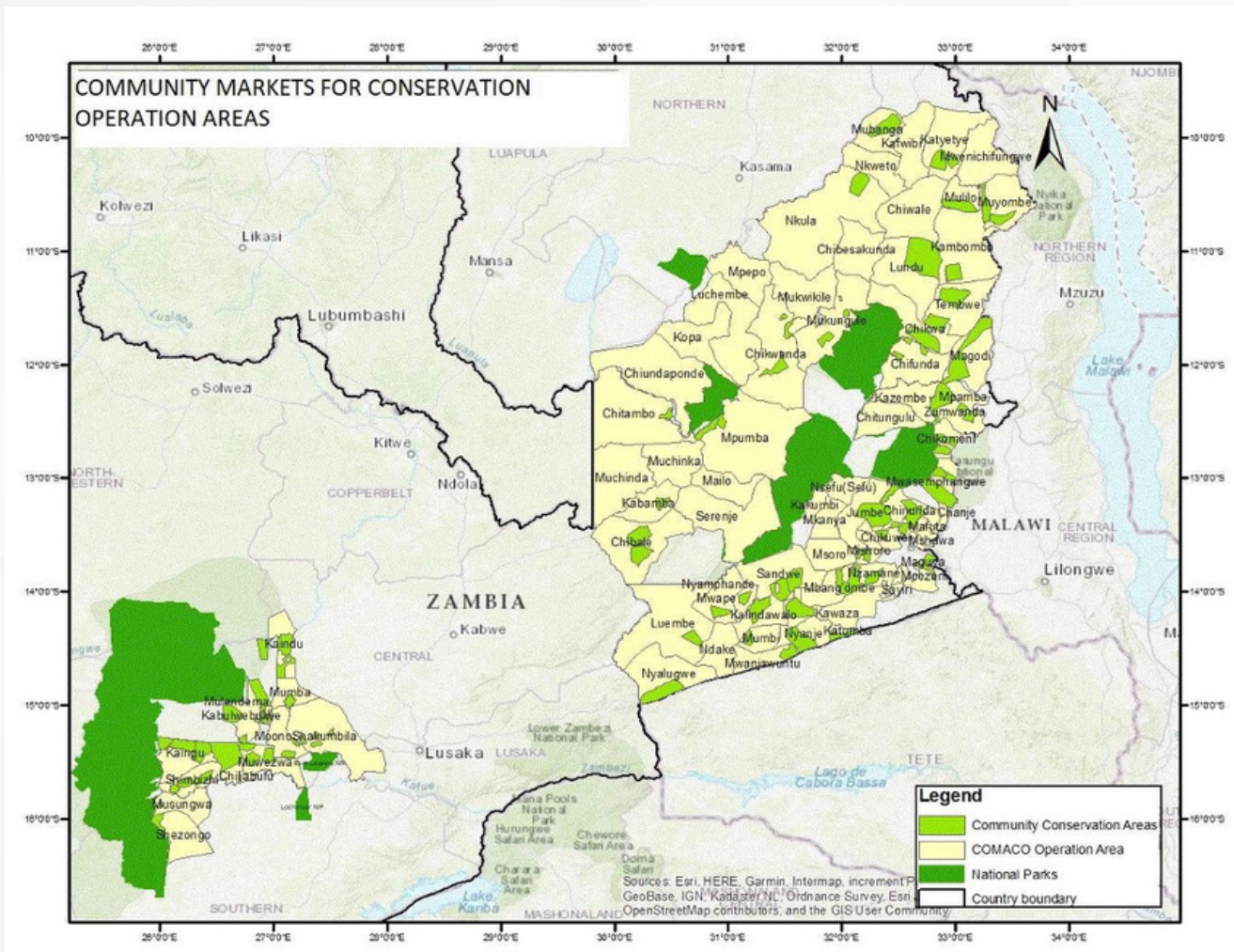


- Expanded markets with export sales up by 65% compared to 2021.
- New packaging and brand design for natural food market in SA for 2022.
- Organic peanut butter launched in South Africa.

# COMACO OPERATIONAL AREAS

COMACO operates across a rural landscape of 14,642,089 hectares, covering 96 chiefdoms and four provinces as shown below. We have reached this scale to provide market access to enough farmers to have an ecosystem level impact for mitigating environmental threats. Scale, however, brings its own challenges of high transaction costs of bringing raw materials to market. ICT innovations and a shift to digital banking are helping COMACO to mitigate these costs. Within

its operational areas and by working closely with its community partners and the Forestry Department, COMACO has helped to establish 95 Community Conservation Areas (CCAs) totalling 1.58 million hectares. These CCAs are being monitored for carbon credits, which creates an important added incentive for communities to steward the long-term protection of their natural forests and habitat for wildlife.





# GETTING CROPS TO MARKET



*Difficulty in transporting commodities from farmer to process hubs due to long distances and tough terrain*

## A supply chain that works for small scale farmers

Working through a network of 1,110 bulking points under supervision of 113 cooperatives, COMACO has developed an increasingly cost-efficient way of buying, aggregating, collecting, and transporting farm commodities safely to warehouses at one of our five processing centres. This has taken a number of years and substantial investments for COMACO to achieve but it has given communities the confidence that reliable markets are improving and replacing the need to rely on destructive practices like charcoal making or wildlife poaching.



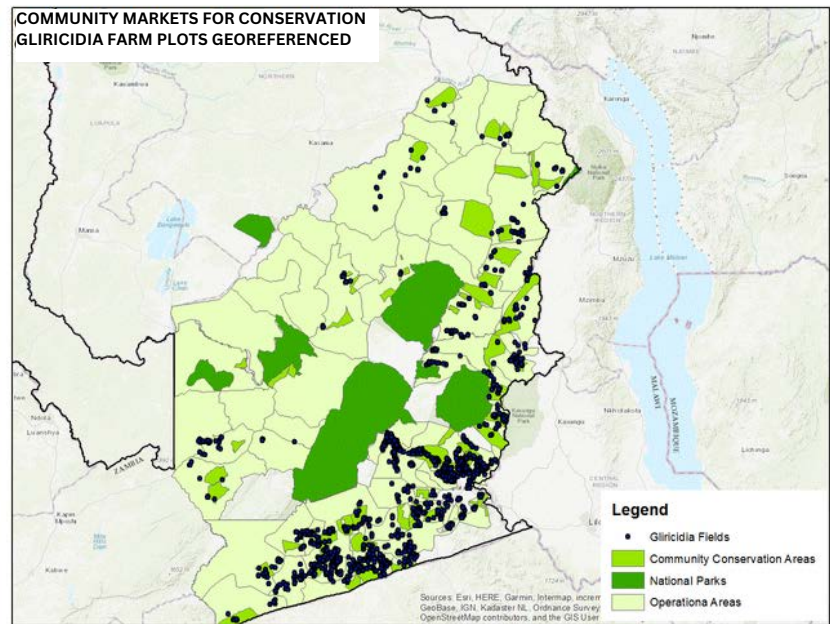
COMACO's system of bulking points and cooperative depots linked to small-scale farmers provides the foundation for a large-scale food production system that supports a food chain of healthy, nutritious products to local consumers under the brand ***It's Wild!*** With few exceptions, COMACO buys all of its raw farm commodities from farmer cooperative members who have signed a conservation pledge to adopt practices compliant with conservation goals of healthy soils, more trees and more wildlife.



# AGROFORESTRY ADOPTION

COMACO is carrying out one of the largest agroforestry programs in Africa and is giving small-scale farmers an enormous financial relief from not having to rely on Chemical fertilizers. *Gliricidia* trees make it for free. We have currently achieved a survivorship of 84,491,547 trees. From this number we have geo-referenced over 27,000 farm plots shown in the map below representing a total of 18.37 million surviving trees. Another 100 million trees are scheduled for planting in 2022/23.

This farming system is called alley cropping where *Gliricidia sepium* is grown in rows five metres apart, with food crops grown in between. COMACO has initiated a partnership with ACORN of Robobank to monitor the above-ground biomass of *Gliricidia sepium* for awarding individual farmers carbon credit value for this way of farming. We anticipate in the coming years this extra market incentive will stimulate a rapid uptake of agroforestry by a growing number of farmers, contributing to multiple social and environmental benefits

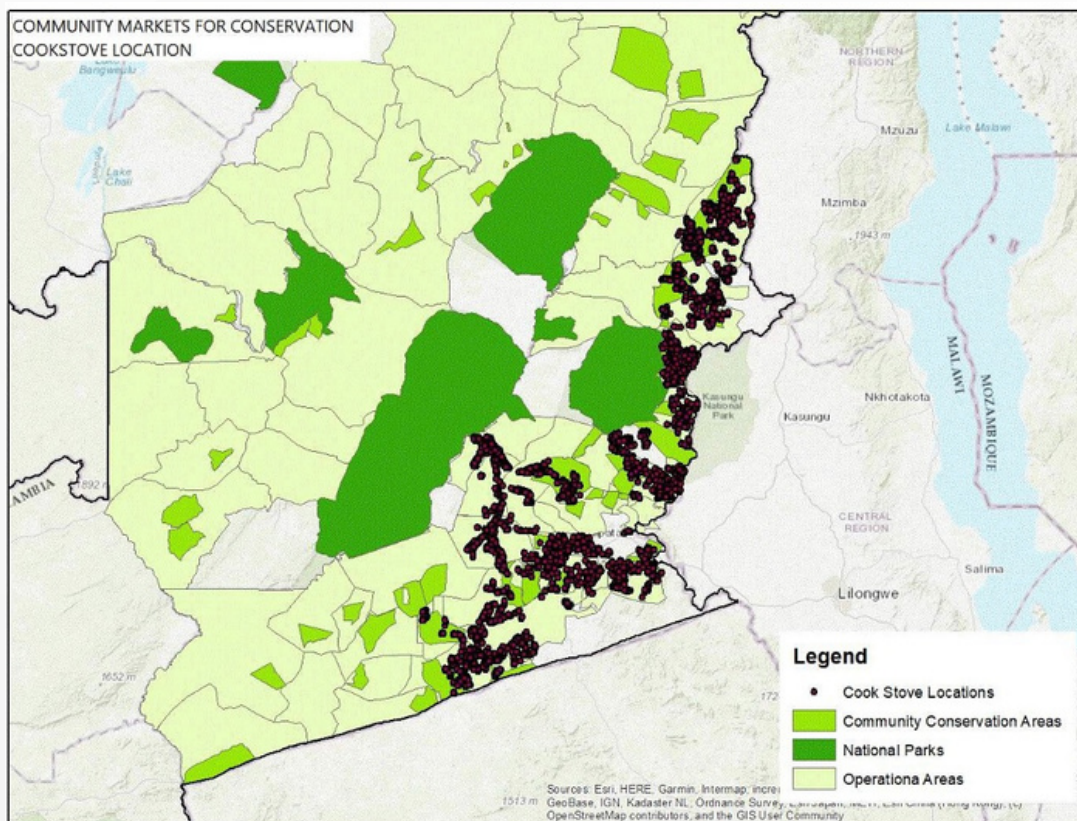


# FUEL-EFFICIENT COOKSTOVES



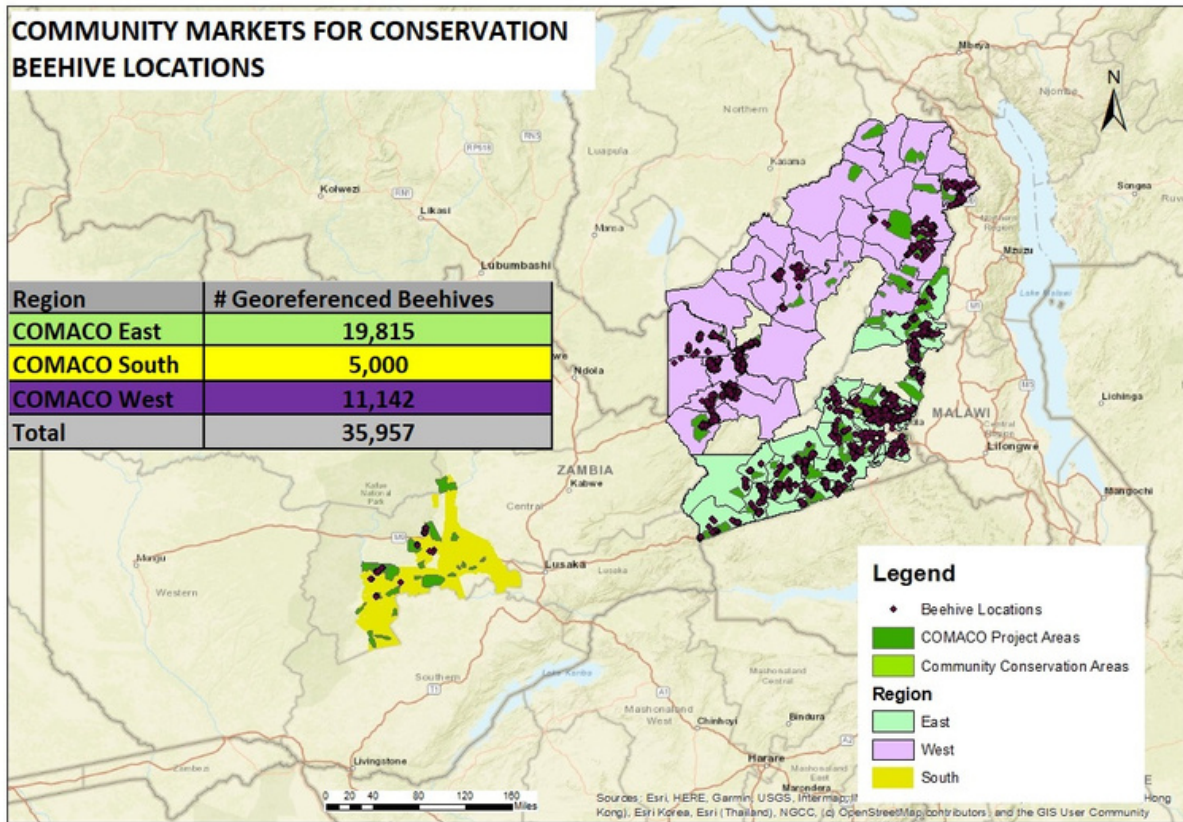
In partnership with CQuest, COMACO has distributed 102,358 fuel-efficient cookstoves that are monitored annually to assess their use. Rather than extracting logs from local forests to cook with, farmers use small twigs with these cookstoves, which are ideal for using off-cuts from *Gliricidia* trees introduced by COMACO. From surveys, we estimate as many as 37 native wild trees of varying size are spared annually from being cut down as a result of these stoves, which

are approximately 60% more fuel efficient than open fires that use larger pieces of firewood. They also give off significantly less smoke and reduce the risk of respiratory diseases caused by inhalation of smoke by mothers when cooking. Distribution of stoves is currently limited to Eastern Province, as illustrated in the map below. However, COMACO is actively planning to expand the use of these stoves in all of its operational areas in the coming year.





# HONEY FARMING WITH TREES AND BEEHIVES

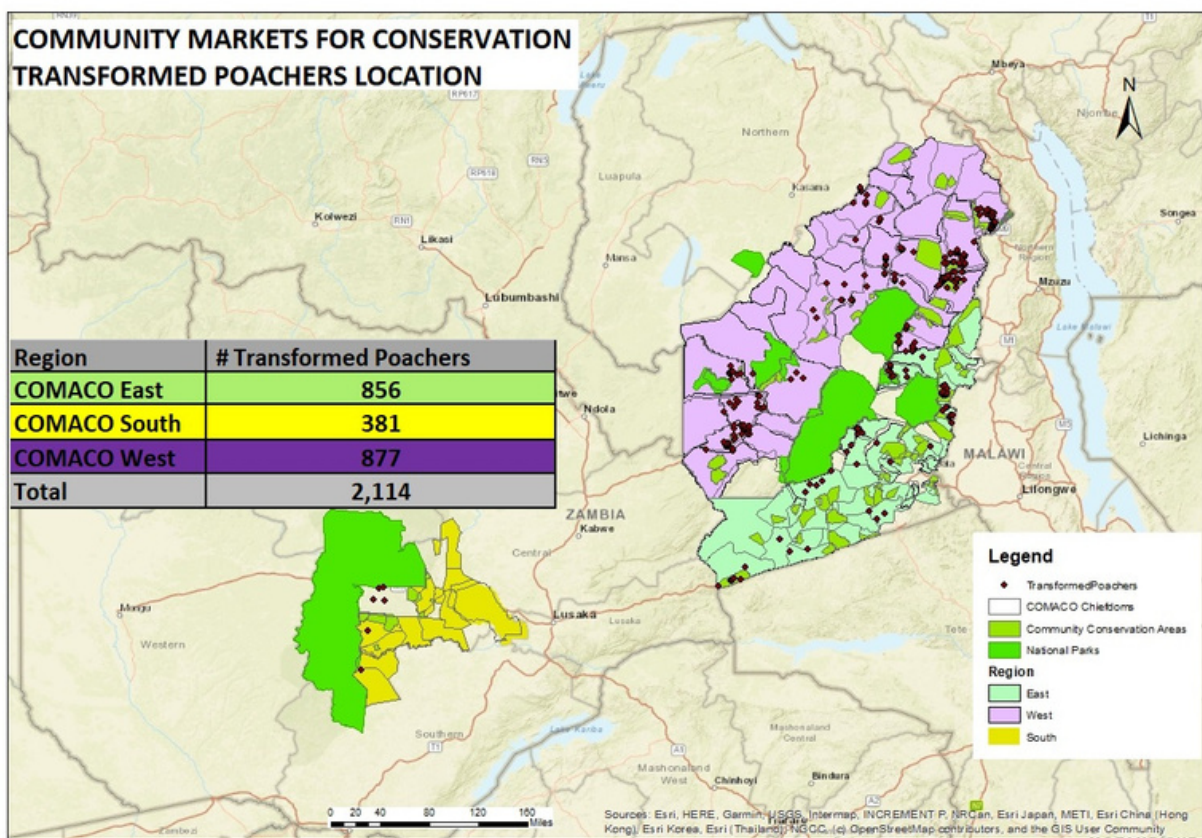


Farmers become more sedentary with increased adoption of soil-improving farming practices and fuel-efficient cookstoves. This helps local forests to recover and support market opportunities from such forest products as honey and wild mushrooms. This in turn provides additional incentives to local farmers to care for their forests. To date, COMACO has assisted communities to own and benefit from 39,085 beehives. The locations for 78% of these hives are illustrated in the map above. 44% of these hives are occupied with honey production potential of over 200 tons per annum. The quality of this honey is among the best in the world and COMACO is currently exporting its honey to the UK. However, South Africa has imposed a trade embargo on Zambian honey, which has denied local farmers access to an important market opportunity. COMACO requires government help to resolve this problem.



# TURNING POACHERS INTO FARMERS

We have learned that most if not all who practice wildlife poaching started this livelihood because they were not good farmers. Lack of skills, farming inputs and market access were often contributing factors that made them poor, food insecure, and vulnerable to poaching. Through the presence of local trainers and active community leaders, increased availability of locally produced seeds, and reliable markets with access made easier, COMACO provides a good solution to this problem. To access these opportunities, farmers must sign a conservation pledge to follow conservation standards such as no poaching, no charcoal making, and adoption of soil improving farming practices. Local hunters come forward to surrender their firearms with the desire to take up farming as well as other market opportunities supported by COMACO.

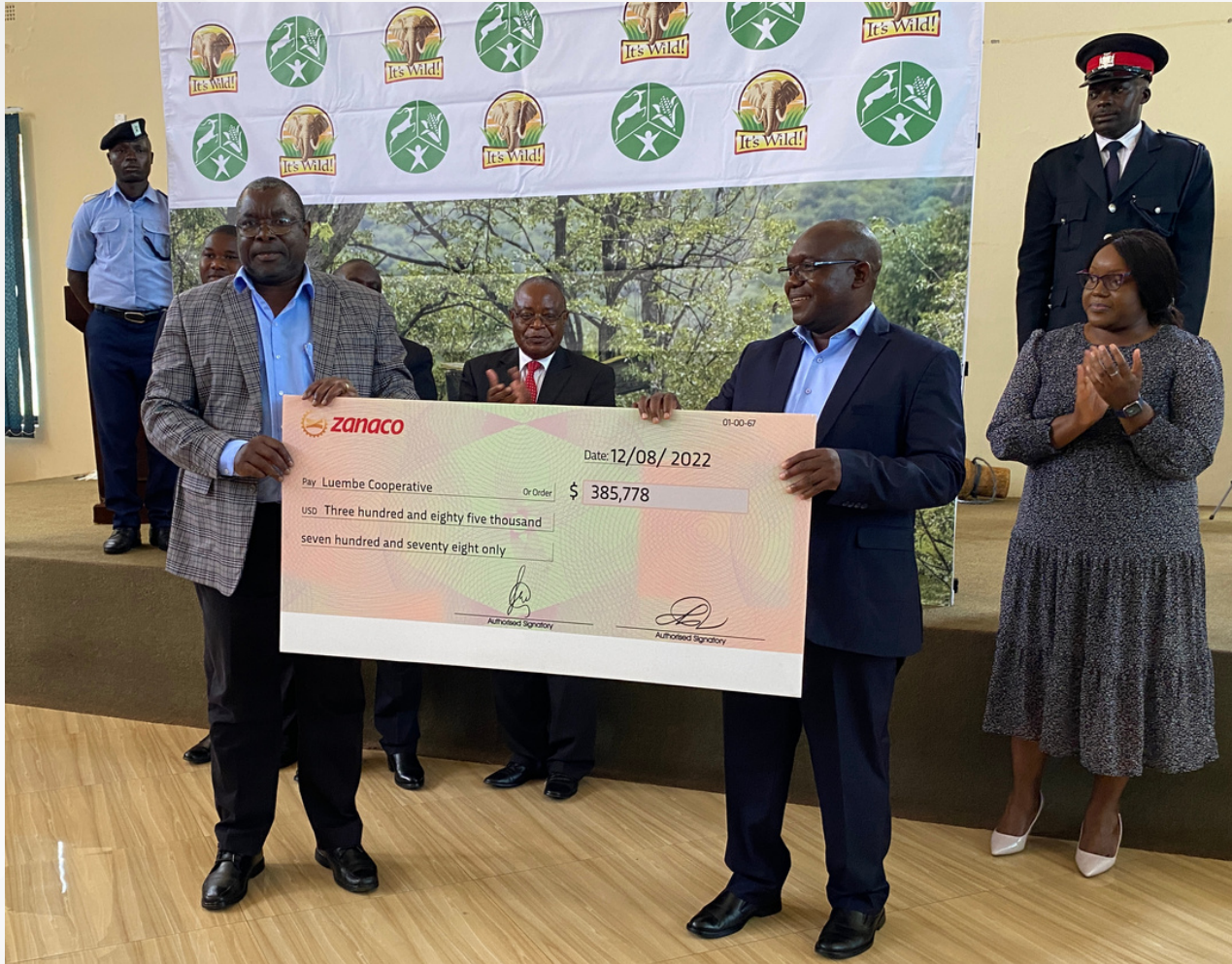


In 2020, representatives of transformed poachers supported by COMACO met with local government officials to explain their desire for a higher purpose by establishing an association and demonstrating how they can repair the damage caused by their former lives. This desire to be a positive force for conservation found a receptive audience.

In the ensuing months, they succeeded in registering the Association of Traditional Hunters with an executive board of transformed poachers leading the organization. Members totaling 2,114 are spread out across Luangwa Valley, representing 15 chapters from 13 chiefdoms. Each works to carry out the mission: “to end wildlife poaching by transforming illegal hunters to become more prosperous through alternative livelihoods that reinforce conservation outcomes.”

# CARBON MARKETS

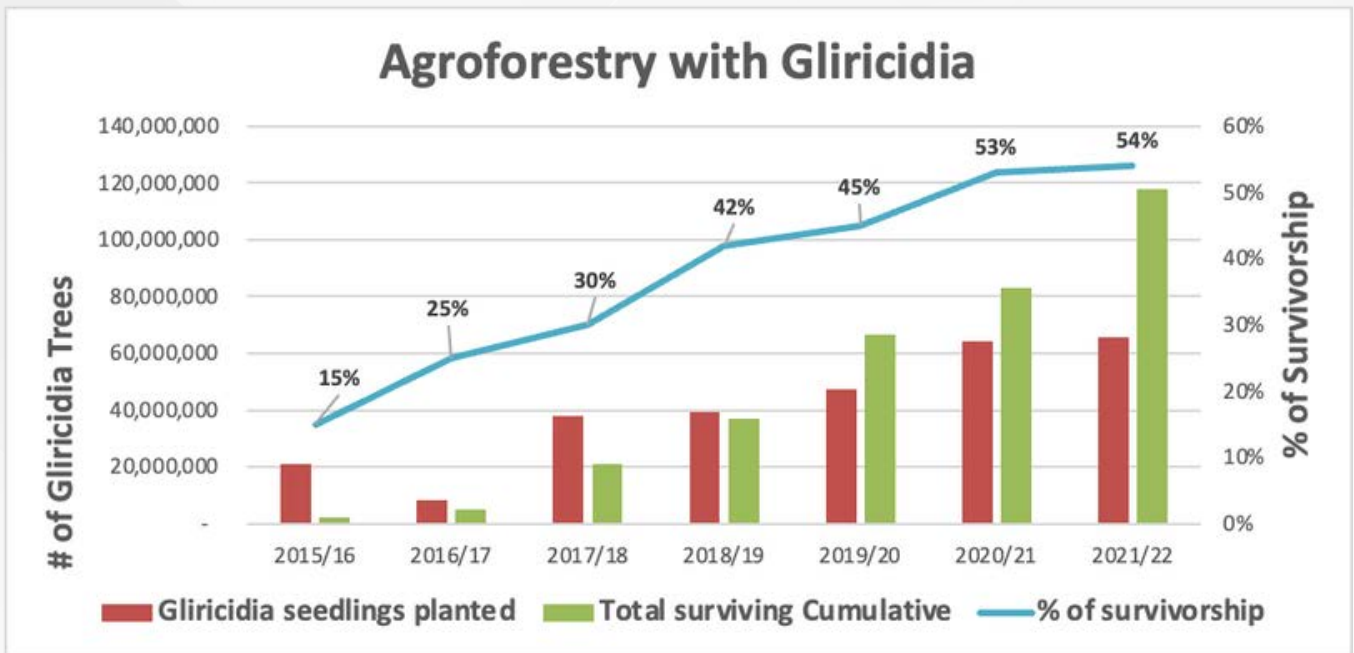
With support from different partners and the Zambian government, COMACO works with local communities in conservation to reduce deforestation and promote the adoption of agroforestry. Through these efforts COMACO was able to verify 883,068 carbon credits in 2022 for nine chiefdoms in eastern province. From these credits these chiefdoms received \$3.1 million. This was the third verification for these nine chiefdoms with other payments made in 2016 and 2019.



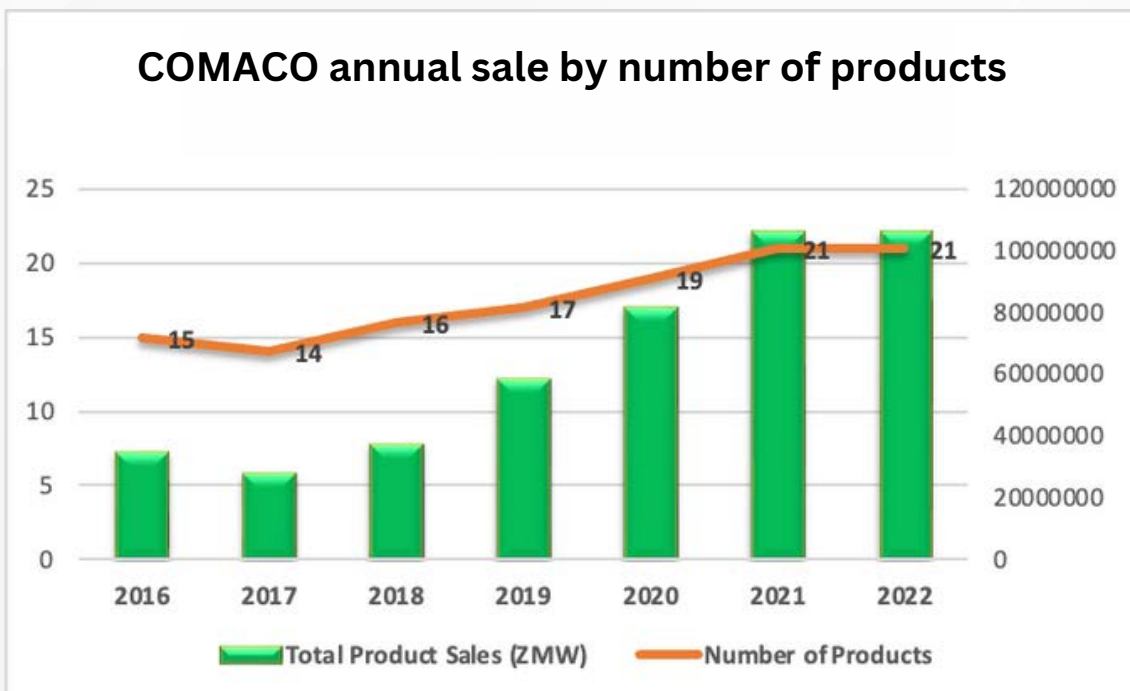
The nine chiefdoms who received their \$3.1 million carbon payment have begun utilizing the funds based on community priorities that were agreed at community gatherings to support both community improvement projects and resource management needs. To ensure funds comply with these priorities and are accurately accounted and reported on, COMACO has a full-time team training local leaders and their finance people in accounting skills with quarterly audits to confirm transparency and accountability of these carbon funds. Eight of our nine recipient chiefdoms were fully compliant with accounting procedures and will now move forward with learning to use a tablet-based (digital) accounting system. Some exciting investments with the carbon money keeping farmers out of poverty include Zumwanda chiefdom, that purchased a 15-ton truck to help farmers transport their crops to market.



# TRENDS



Gliricidia trees are planted on-farm as part of COMACO's sustainable, eco-agriculture practices. An important outcome of this growing trend in agroforestry is the cost-saving from avoided fertilizer expenses by farmers and potentially the nation. 100 million trees are expected to be planted in the 2022/23 season.





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