

# FROM THE FIELD

## SPRING 2024



**FARM AFRICA**

## STAFF SPOTLIGHT: MEET ANISSA MSALLEM

**Anissa leads Farm Africa's Partnerships team and has been at Farm Africa since 2022. She began her career in financial services before transitioning to the third sector. Before joining Farm Africa she worked at WaterAid and Plan International UK. She is also a keen baker and singer, with a fondness for adventure...**

### **What do you consider your greatest success of 2023?**

The big success last year was our Mahale Mountains Challenge. We took a team of 12 senior executives from food businesses including Sainsbury's and Aldi on a challenging six-day trek through the stunning Mahale Mountains in western Tanzania. The team raised £216,000 for Farm Africa's work with smallholder farmers, which was a fantastic achievement!

### **What are you most looking forward to in 2024?**

The London Coffee Festival on 11-14 April. As the Festival's charity partner, this is a great opportunity to raise awareness and funds to support Farm Africa's work such as helping coffee farmers improve the quality of their coffee, as well as get a fair price for it.



### **Our supporters might not be familiar with the responsibilities of a Head of Partnerships. Could you walk us through what a typical workday looks like for you?**

My role is to raise funds through partnerships with companies, family trusts and foundations. A typical day involves holding meetings with potential new company partners. I respond to queries and support activities of existing company partners such as those in our Food for Good network. I also work with my team on projects like the London Coffee Festival and an overseas women's challenge event we are planning in October 2024.

### **What are your hopes for the future, both for your team and Farm Africa?**

Farm Africa's work is more relevant than ever as the world focuses on how to tackle climate change for the benefit of people and planet. We have a real opportunity to work with businesses to create sustainable, transformational change for rural communities in eastern Africa and I'm excited to be working with my team to deliver this vision.

## THE SEEDS OF CHANGE WERE SOWN THIS WINTER

**We have been delighted by the incredible response to our recent 'Seeds of Change' appeal. Farm Africa supporters have so far raised over £84,000 to help farmers across eastern Africa grow healthy harvests in the face of climate change. Thank you so much to everyone who has donated!**

In the Dodoma region of Tanzania, farmers have just sown a fresh crop of sorghum: a cereal that is both a staple of their families' diet and their main source of income. But the climate is making it increasingly difficult for farmers to grow healthy harvests using traditional farming methods. If they don't find ways to adapt, they'll face immense challenges – no matter how hard they work.

The solution? Local access to high-quality seeds.

High-quality seeds can truly revolutionise harvests. They help to boost crop yields, are tolerant to droughts and are more resilient to pests and diseases. But these seeds are in short supply...

Farm Africa's Climate-Smart Agriculture project, funded by Irish Aid through the World Food Programme, is helping farmers access the high-quality seeds they need. Our solution is clear. We want to equip farmers to become quality seed producers, like Elizabeth Lenjima. With specialised training, Elizabeth now produces, processes, and sells high-quality sorghum seeds, ensuring a sustainable future for her community.



Elizabeth's son, Gaspar (pictured above), has been learning from his mother's journey with Farm Africa.

He told us: **"Farm Africa has helped us hugely. Firstly, because of our mum - she received the training and expertise to grow and make a profit. We were able to go to school!"**

**"Mum has passed her knowledge onto us, generation to generation. We earn a lot more by working together and sharing knowledge."**

The farmers in the Dodoma region of Tanzania are facing a significant challenge due to unreliable rainfall. Gaspar shared that, in the past, his family's food supply used to run out before the first harvest of the year in February. However, with the support of people like you, they are now producing enough high-quality seeds to ensure a steady supply for the next season and beyond.

# SAVING UP FOR SUCCESS, TOGETHER!

**Where would you go if you wanted to take out a loan or set up a savings account? For many of us, the answer seems obvious: to your bank. But what if your access to formal financial institutions was restricted and you had to travel long distances to reach your closest branch?**

Access to loans or savings can often be tricky in rural parts of eastern Africa. Especially if you are a woman. But Farm Africa knows there is power in feeling invested, both literally and metaphorically, in your local community.

Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs) will be a recognisable acronym for many of our long-term supporters. They are often part of our projects for the simple fact that they work: VSLAs empower participants to increase access to and control over resources and use collective power to overcome financial barriers by offering self-managed savings and loan services in remote areas. They are self-managed groups who meet to save their money and access small loans.

In Megerisa village, Tiyo Woreda in the heart of Ethiopia's Central Rift Valley (CRV) exists one of the 14 VSLAs supported by Farm Africa's CRV project funded by Sida. Established in February 2019, the group has 18 dedicated members; all of whom are women. The VSLA members meet every fortnight to make their contributions to the group's savings, giving an equal amount to the savings fund and a 'social' fund at every meeting: around 90p in total. It may not sound like much, but over the first year the group saved a total of 77,725 Ethiopian Birr (around £1085), and issued a total of 30 loans to its 18 members!

One of the women in the group told us: **"After we organised into a VSLA, we gained access to loans in our village without long processes and according to our saving amount."**



Now the women have easy access to fair finance, enabling them to invest in small businesses to increase their incomes. VSLA member Jemanesh Merga, a 28-year-old mother of three, took out a loan that she used to buy seven goats. After fattening the goats for four months, she was able to earn enough from the resale of the animals to repay her loan and make a 40% profit.

# PURÉE SUCCESS FOR YOUNG TOMATO GROWERS IN TANZANIA

**In Tanzania, the country's youth population (those between 15 and 35 years old) is one of the fastest growing in the world. But whilst they are frequently hard-working, energetic and family-oriented, many young Tanzanians are unemployed. Limited job opportunities in rural areas, as well as a lack of access to finance and land, is stopping young people from becoming an energising and essential part of the local economy.**

Farm Africa's Youth and women in agribusiness project, funded by Mastercard Foundation through the World Food Programme, aims to sustainably increase the incomes of over 60,000 young and female farmers in Tanzania's Dodoma and Singida regions. Farmers like the Nyota 3 youth group!

Our project team has been working with these budding farmers to improve agricultural production techniques and seed varieties, as well as giving them better access to climate technologies that will affect their crops.

The youth group has been developing their business managing a productive horticultural garden, using the financial literacy and entrepreneurial skills they've learnt as part of the project.

Together, they have cultivated an area of about a quarter of an acre and are growing tomatoes! As popular in Tanzania as they are in the UK, quality tomatoes can command a good price and are ideal for succession sowing, ensuring repeat harvests throughout the season.

The first time they harvested 12 crates of tomatoes and sold them at 33,000

Tanzanian Shilling (TZS) a crate and the second time they got six crates and sold at 35,000 TZS per crate, giving them a gross profit of £190! Their harvests will continue until February and the group harvest at weekly intervals.

The tomatoes are picked whilst they are still green to ensure they ripen perfectly in time to be sold at the market. The group is particularly excited as the price of tomatoes looks set to rise steeply over the next few months, encouraging them as they go into the next season, and proving that a little grit and knowledge go a long way to tackling big problems.



Spot the *Tagetes* (French Marigold) planted alongside the tomatoes. Marigolds, a favoured companion for tomatoes, help control whitefly issues!

## STEPS TO SUCCESS: BREWING UP A STORM ACROSS FARM AFRICA'S COFFEE PROJECTS

Last year, Caroline Asimwe, our technical manager for markets and value chains, visited the scenic coffee districts of south-western Uganda, where the intricate dance between coffee and climate challenges unfolds. As a passionate advocate for climate-smart agriculture, she went to uncover the challenges and opportunities facing the coffee sector and we're delighted to bring you a short summary of her findings.

### 1. Navigating coffee markets

Coffee is more than just a drink; it's the heartbeat of livelihoods and a pivotal component of Uganda's economic fabric. Our work in the region, as well as investment from government and coffee companies, has helped smallholder farmers enter the coffee market; boosting livelihoods. Yet, recent EU regulations have introduced a strategic dance in our journey: the need for a deforestation-free supply chain that may negatively affect farmers' access to markets.

Smallholder farmers require thoughtful support to embrace technology, secure necessary certifications, and ensure the sustained presence of their beans on the global stage.



### 2. Empowering women in coffee

Pictured on the left in red is Innocent Asimwe, a remarkable 41-year-old coffee farmer challenging norms in Kanungu. Traditionally a male-dominated sphere, coffee farming is undergoing a metamorphosis, thanks to the Kanungu Coffee Farmers' Cooperative Society (KACOFACO), supported by Farm Africa.

Innocent's journey began with scepticism; she, like many women, believed coffee farming was a realm reserved for men. The obstacle? Land ownership, typically controlled by men.



The cooperative facilitated Innocent's access to land, inputs, technologies, markets and finance. Through a ground-breaking intra-household land-user agreement, Innocent now proudly owns 1.5 acres of land on which to farm coffee, signed over to her by her husband. The cooperatives' work is breaking through social and cultural biases, enabling more women and young people to actively participate in decision-making.



Innocent's story demonstrates the incredible transformation that is possible when women are empowered in coffee farming. It's not just about cultivating beans; it's about cultivating equality and prosperity!

### 3. Sustainable solutions to weathering the storm

Picture verdant hills and coffee farms set on winding roads – still, climate change poses a formidable challenge to coffee farmers here. The weather conditions that were once favourable to small-scale farming are changing: heavy rainfall increases the risk of mudslides and long, dry spells are causing water and heat stress. Conventional farming practices that encourage mono-cropping, heavy reliance on chemicals, and land expansion that leads to deforestation place further stress on dwindling natural resources and contribute to greenhouse gas emissions. Sustainable agriculture, which focuses on healing the land, rather than solely profit, is needed.

And that is what Farm Africa is encouraging: an eco-friendly approach to cultivating resilience in this precious coffee region.



Inspired by our mission to bring climate-smart agriculture and coffee farming together? You can read more from Caroline herself in her blog on our website: [www.farmafrica.org/UgandasCoffee](http://www.farmafrica.org/UgandasCoffee)

Supporting smallholder farmers is one of the most effective things you can do to boost food security, build livelihoods and tackle climate change. Thank you for helping change lives and give rural communities in eastern Africa a brighter future.



# THANK YOU!

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