

A 2-kilometer freshwater journey to food security: Zambian farmers benefit from tree preservation

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After travelling over 2 kilometres, the freshwater finally quenches the thirst of the 1st garden. Credit: WWF Zambia

While some communities in Central Province of Zambia are resorting to cutting down trees as an alternative source of energy, a group of young farmers in Serenje District of the same province has vowed to keep trees around river streams blossoming.

This is because of the fact that for years long forgotten, forests have been playing a critical role in the preservation of ground [water](#).

The young farmers belong to a [youth](#) driven project which is being implemented by WWF-Zambia and its partners.

For some time now, lack of uninterrupted access to water and modern irrigation infrastructure have been among the main factors hindering Africa's food security.

But motivated by the desire to put to good use the conservation farming skills they have acquired with the assistance of WWF-Zambia, the youth have rejected to give in to the challenge and have dug a furrow stretching over a distance of about two kilometers, driving [fresh water](#) from upstream right into their flourishing gardens.

"We did not want to accept the challenge of lack of water. First of all, we decided to commit to preserving the trees around the stream. Then upon realizing that our stream was flowing year-round, we agreed as a group to dig this furrow all the way into the fields. And here we are now. Looking at how valuable this water is to us, we have vowed to keep trees in this area flourishing, so that we continue having enough water to support our vegetables and animals," explained Emma Kalunga, a visibly motivated young [farmer](#), who is only 20 years old.

Travelling through a thicket of various tree species, the water also provides much-needed life-support not only to the vegetables the youth grow but also to a range of bird species which dwell in the [trees](#) above.

Now what is even more interesting to note is that after it has supported the vegetables in the gardens, the water is not wasted. It is flushed into a pond, where it collects. In an event that the furrow does not hold enough water, the youth then rely upon the water which would have collected in the pond.

The fact that the youth do preserve the water after it has flowed past the gardens does reduce the pressure on the stream. And in so doing, this directly speaks to WWF-Zambia's desire to also project [freshwater habitats](#) and sustain freshwater ecosystems.

To an ordinary visitor, this is simply ordinary water. But to this WWF-Zambia-supported group of young conservation farmers, this water is the lifeblood of their animals, wild and domestic birds, their vegetables and ultimately the pivot of the food security of their surrounding communities and the district at large.

Provided by WWF

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