


Chapter 5

Cultural Ecology and Agriculture in Rural Areas in Zimbabwe

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ABSTRACT

This chapter is concerned with indigenous wisdom in agriculture in rural Zimbabwe, with a particular focus Mutoko South and Guruve regions. It argues for the enduring presence of indigenous agricultural systems amidst a predominantly modernized, Western-influenced society. From land preparation to sowing, weed management, harvesting, and yield storage, this study underscores the resilience of indigenous agricultural practices. This chapter shed light on the crucial role of Indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) in fostering sustainable farming practices within Guruve and Mutoko South communities. Passed down through generations and deeply ingrained in daily routines, this knowledge has emerged as a vital tool for predicting weather patterns, managing pests, and enhancing soil fertility. It examines how people in Mutoko South and Guruve have steadfastly embraced traditional methods using qualitative methods. The study primarily involves interviews with 20 subsistence farmers residing in tribal trust lands in 10 villages.

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter concerns indigenous wisdom in agriculture in rural Zimbabwe, focusing on the Mutoko and Guruve districts. We highlight that the people have continually relied on indigenous agricultural systems in a predominantly modernised, Western-influenced agricultural society. The broader question we sought to address in this chapter has been the role of IKS in farming practices in rural areas of Zimbabwe. We are not bringing a new phenomenon to the discussion; however, we suggest that what has been done as an everyday routine and never termed sustainable farming practice is an essential study area. Traditional, read localised farming practices, from land preparation to sowing, weed management, harvesting, and yield storage, guided by indigenous agricultural practices, should be understood under sustainable farming practices. IKS and sustainable farming in Zimbabwe have not received enough academic attention, not taking away the research that has led to the re-introduction of the Pfumvudza system (by the Government of Zimbabwe), which attests to the importance of IKS. The centrality of IK in sustainable farming practices is vital in the broader discussion of sustainable development goals. The IK on farming has always aimed at providing enough food to the people and hence plays a role in reducing hunger and poverty within the community. It must be highlighted that we are not dismissing the existence of hunger in the areas where research was conducted.

In addition, we established the IK's emphasis on using locally available inputs to help reduce the use of inorganic materials in agriculture. We highlight using organic material, which is arguably good for the soil. Our argument also goes on to show the significance of IK in telling the beginning of the farming season; the shedding of leaves and the emergence of new green foliage serve as a cue for activities like hole-digging and manure application in preparation for the season.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Despite ongoing efforts to combat climate change, Zimbabwe faces many challenges brought about by these changes, including erratic rainfall patterns, increased temperatures, and extreme weather events. These climatic changes pose significant threats to conventional agricultural practices, necessitating a shift towards more sustainable and resilient farming methods. The failure of conventional systems to address the sustainable use of resources and practices has led to the realisation of the importance of indigenous knowledge. The World Commission on Environment and Development conference, also known as the Brundtland Commission of 1987 and the Convention on Biological Diversity of 1997, underscored the significance of indigenous knowledge in development. While this chapter is not a development

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