

# Mafinga Hills Zambia

Mid-Year Update 2023



© Ruben Foquet, WeForest

## Project status

**Year 3** out of 5  
(first phase)

**1507 ha**  
under restoration

**1.62 million trees**  
protected and growing



Our restoration here with the Wildlife and Environmental Conservation Society of Zambia (WECSZ) is safeguarding the water catchment of the Luangwa River, protecting biodiversity and ensuring that the farming communities neighbouring the Mafinga massif have an increased resilience to climate change.

With slightly larger Community Forest Areas (CFAs) under the protection of the Community Forest Management Group than we initially estimated – just over 1507 ha as opposed to 1450 ha – we’re growing even more trees! At an estimated density of 1080 per hectare, this equates to more than 1.62 million trees protected and regenerating.

Read on to find out more about what’s been happening in the Mafinga Hills project.

The project's livelihoods programmes are aiming to support local families to transition away from using slash-and-burn agriculture (chitemene). Due to the perception that soils are more fertile up the mountain, farmers relocate to the middle of the Forest Reserve, where they grow crops in ash gardens made by burning wood cleared from a larger area. This burning increases the pH of the soil temporarily, but after just a few harvests the farmer abandons the now nutrient-poor area and moves on to do the same somewhere else.



© Ruben Foquet, WeForest



© Ruben Foquet, WeForest

This view (left) shows how slash-and-burn agriculture is encroaching on the forest in the Mafinga Hills. There's a small area to the right of centre where burnt trees are visible. The cultivated area at bottom left was previously cleared by a farmer, and it has now been turned into a permanent demonstration plot under the Sustainable Agriculture programme to show farmers how they can establish similar plots on their farms and avoid shifting cultivation or agricultural expansion. Beans, maize and finger millet mixed with *Gliricidia*, a nitrogen-fixing species, can be seen as pale green sprouts.

In February and March, 50 farmers that had already signed up to the Sustainable Agriculture programme received seeds and other materials – pesticides not included! – to set up their plots (below). The farmers will grow cultivated maize, beans and finger millet, and once the seeds are planted, they each receive a biweekly inspection by Agriculture Extensionists, who monitor the progress of the plot and help with pests and other challenges.



As in many of WeForest's other project locations, honey production will be an important forest-friendly alternative source of income in Mafinga. 103 beehives were hung in the Community Forest Areas during 2023 (above), and they are now being monitored for occupancy.

Farmers' Field Days are a great way to drum up interest for our Sustainable Agriculture programme! Over 200 farmers from 15 villages attended this Farmers' Field Day in April (right), during which visits were made to maize and finger millet demo plots set up by three lead farmers. The potential Sustainable Agriculture adopters were able to ask the lead farmers questions about particular challenges they've faced, as well as the benefits they've seen so far.



In March, 21 Community Forest Management Group members, including the 8 Honorary Forest Officers (HFOs) that patrol and enforce the law in our restoration areas, received the final part of their training in Community Forest Management and Governance from a Forestry Consultant, the Provincial Forestry Officer, the District Forestry Officer and two police officers. One of the HFOs, Loyd Mulambia, expressed his delight at being a part of the training. “This has really broadened my horizons. I want to do everything I can to protect the community’s resources,” he said.



© Ruben Foquet, WeForest

## How do we know our restored forests are growing and making an impact?

Every hectare under restoration is mapped with GPS points to generate polygons (areas on a map) that are assigned to sponsors. Permanent monitoring plots are established in our sites and our forestry and science teams conduct surveys to monitor progress of biomass growth, tree density, survival rate and species diversity, among other indicators. Where social impacts are also critical, we measure socio-economic indicators such as the number of individuals or families directly benefiting, people trained, and income generated from forest-friendly livelihood activities.

Please visit our [What We Do](#) webpage for more information.



You'll receive an annual update in March. Meanwhile, stay up-to-date with our interactive [Mafinga Hills](#) map, and check out the [photos](#) on Flickr.

You can find an overview of all communications assets and guidance on how to communicate about your partnership with WeForest [here](#).