



Seed and Knowledge

TOWARDS STRENGTHENING SEED AND FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

The Seed and Knowledge Initiative (SKI) is a dynamic partnership of Southern African organisations committed to securing food sovereignty in the region. We work with smallholder farmers to become more seed, food and nutritionally secure through agroecology, farmer-led seed systems, improved crop diversity, and the revival of local knowledge systems. While we have strong relationships with a number of organisations and individuals in the region and all over the world, our primary stakeholders are the partners and farmers we work with in Malawi, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Rooted in a history of collaboration between three pioneering organisations, Biowatch South Africa, EarthLore Foundation and the NRF Bio-economy Research Chair at the University of Cape Town (UCT), SKI has grown into a network of 13 partners in 4 countries. As we enter Phase 2 (2019-2023) our work is even more relevant, and even more urgent – and increasingly validated: our context, and the achievements during Phase 1 (2013-2018) compel us to continue forming alliances, acting and advocating for seed sovereignty in the face of climate change, destruction of biodiversity, and increasing food insecurity and malnutrition.

We believe seed sovereignty is the basis of food sovereignty – and stands as a symbol for farmers' (and especially women's) autonomy, access and control over locally produced, culturally appropriate, increasingly diverse, seed and food, and for the health of the ecosystem on which it all depends.



AN INNOVATIVE COLLABORATION ON SEED AND KNOWLEDGE

Local knowledge, seed and agricultural systems form part of complex social-ecological systems in farming communities throughout Southern Africa. They are not only vital for livelihoods, but also for humankind as a whole. Together they enhance food security and nutrition, strengthen social cohesion, and build climate change resilience.

Such agricultural systems, however, have been eroded by decades of policies and laws that promote the interests of commercial farmers and multinational seed and agrochemical companies and limit and undermine the rights of smallholder farmers and communities. While industrial agriculture produces only about 30% of the world's food, it is a leading contributor to climate change and environmental degradation through massive exports, use of fossil fuels, and its reliance on chemical inputs.

Our vision, together with that of millions of farmers across the world, is for our food production systems to revive and enhance tried and tested methods which are low-carbon and low-input in nature; preserving and regenerating resources rather than destroying them; and supporting smallholder farming systems. This movement affirms and advocates that agroecology and seed diversity cool the planet and create a world where agriculture is productive and sustainable and where seed and food systems are in the hands of local communities. It is this world, based on food and seed sovereignty, which embodies ecological integrity and social justice. This is what we want to support through our work.

Resilient seed systems for food security and nutrition





OBJECTIVES OF THE SEED AND KNOWLEDGE INITIATIVE (SKI)

SKI objectives for Phase 2 (2019-2023) are informed by what we learned in Phase I (2015-2018), and were developed with regional partners through an iterative, participatory and rigorous process.

OBJECTIVE 1: The practices of agroecology and farmer-led seed systems are strengthened, spread and deepened in participating farming communities in Southern Africa

SKI partners support a range of farmers in the region to deepen and spread their practices on both seed and agroecology, spreading diversity, knowledge and agroecology practices. A strong body of knowledge is built through participatory research and documentation.

OBJECTIVE 2: A stronger, growing movement on agroecology and farmers' rights in Southern Africa

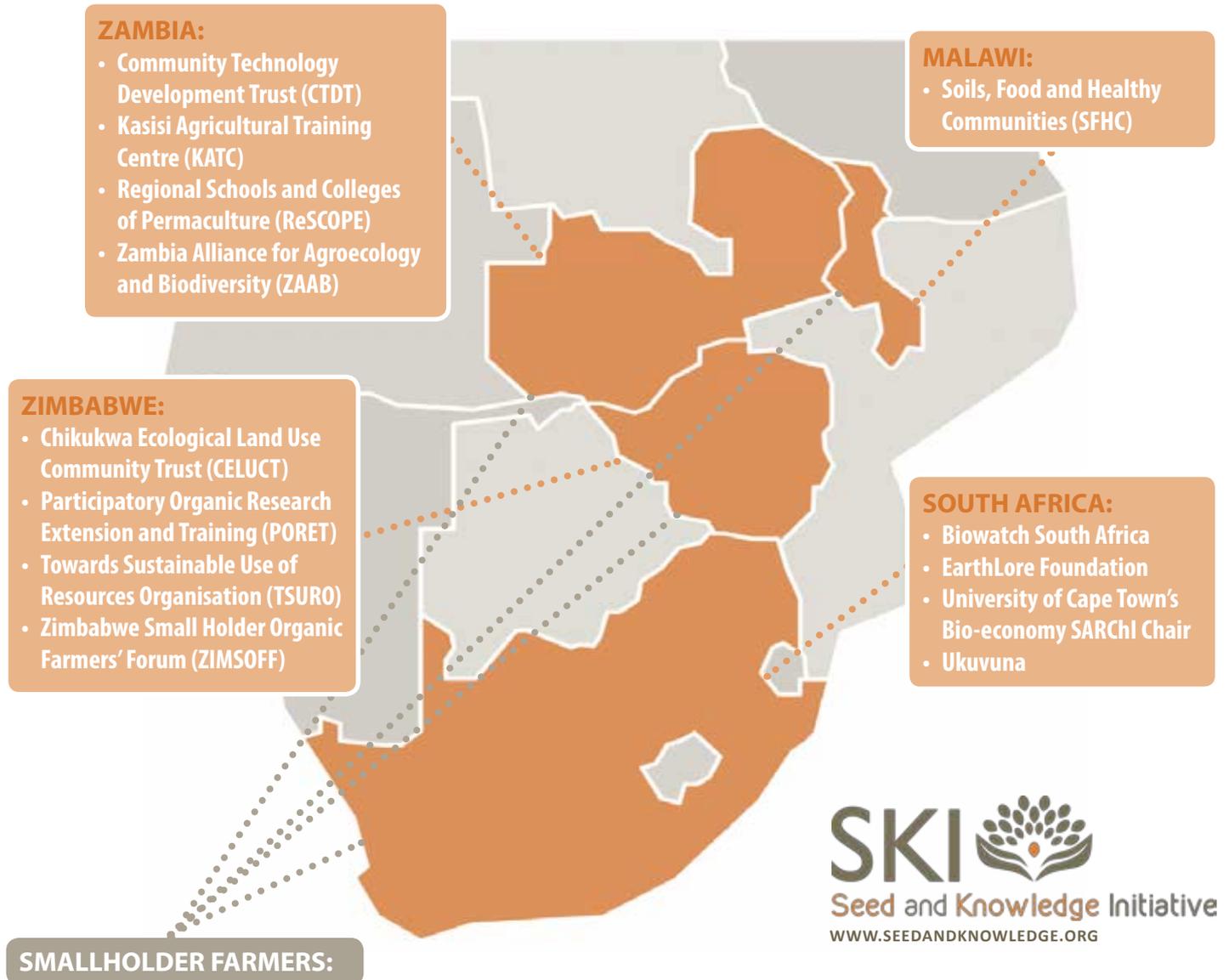
SKI contributes to the food sovereignty and agroecology movement, building relationships across sectors. Leadership is nurtured on all levels, and resources are mobilised to build stronger organisations that can make meaningful contributions to the food sovereignty movement.

OBJECTIVE 3: Decision-makers increasingly support the policy agenda for farmer-led seed systems, localised nutritious food systems, and climate justice

SKI's advocacy work is informed by research and is guided by and implemented with SKI partners, and includes farmer-led advocacy. SKI partners and the farmers they work with, and SKI allies, are capacitated to engage in policy change and nurture relationships with decision makers.

Research is threaded through all our work. Accumulated evidence, stimulating dialogues and the wide dissemination of findings to the public, the scientific community, the media, policy-makers and other actors, contributes to changing discourse locally, regionally and internationally.

THE PARTNERS



Smallholder farmers in Southern Africa are rich repositories of traditional agricultural knowledge who have been selecting, saving and exchanging seed for generations, based on customary practices. As active plant breeders, farmers have been conserving traditional varieties, continuously selecting seed with characteristics such as hardiness, drought tolerance, good storage qualities and taste in mind, and using seed preservation and storage techniques which have been passed on for generations. The traditional communities involved in the project are governed by customary and living law and practices that encompass shared rules and responsibilities about how their common ancestral biodiversity heritage can be accessed, used or benefited from, including the sharing, saving and exchange of seed and crop management. SKI is respectful of these governing systems and practices and gives recognition to the fact that communities are the custodians, researchers and revivers of their own knowledge.

For more information about SKI and its regional partners, please contact info@seedandknowledge.org

The **Seed and Knowledge Initiative (SKI)** is supported by:

