

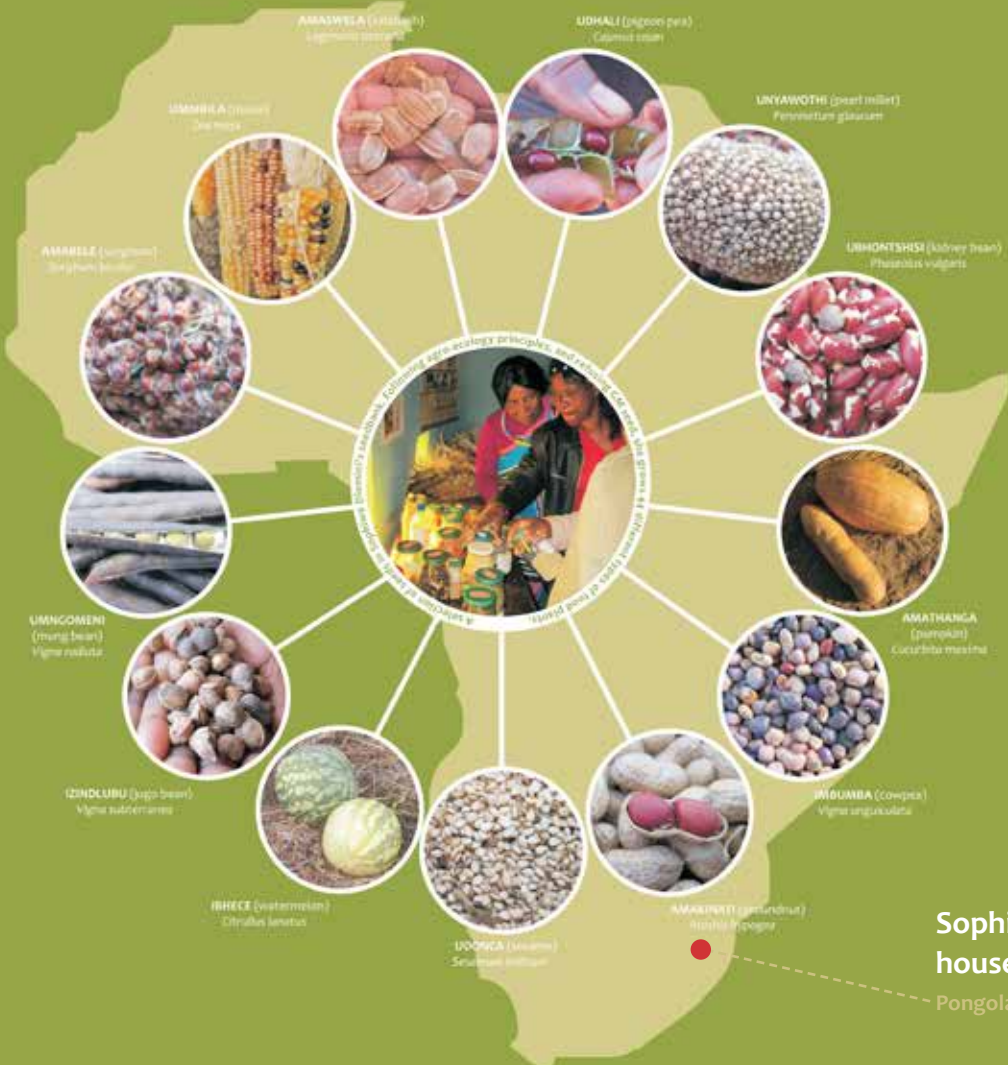


biowatch

SOUTH AFRICA biodiversity | food sovereignty | agro-ecology | social justice

Annual Report

March 2014 to February 2015



Sophiwe Dlamini's household seedbank
Pongola, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

In the context of multiple global crises (including food, energy and climate change) we envision a country and a world in which people have control over their food, agricultural resources and practices, and other natural resources within a biodiverse, agroecological and sustainable system.

Established in 1999, **Biowatch South Africa** strives for social and ecological justice through challenging industrial agriculture and demonstrating ecologically sustainable alternatives by:

- Supporting small-holder farmers to make informed choices; have control over their agricultural resources (including land, water, seed, infrastructure); and secure their farmers' rights.
- Contributing to building platforms for civil society to develop joint understanding and action in the interests of Biowatch's vision.
- Challenging and supporting government to implement policies and practices that promote, facilitate, and actively support agroecology, and that safeguard people and land.
- Resisting corporate appropriation of natural resources.

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“Drawing on and sharing a wealth of indigenous knowledge.”

Chairperson's Report

David Fig

This has been a positive year for Biowatch. Its work on the ground, with rural communities, has been consolidated, especially in its catchment area of northern KwaZulu-Natal. However, by virtue of the role it is playing in the Seed and Knowledge Initiative (SKI), its message is going out to many other rural projects in the Southern African sub-continent. Not only does this approach stimulate co-operation, but it is also an opportunity to draw on and share the wealth of indigenous knowledge further afield. Contacts and exchanges with farmers helps to strengthen agro-ecological practices, safeguard biodiversity, and build food sovereignty in ways that transcend artificially-imposed colonial boundaries. We foresee SKI becoming a platform for the generation and dissemination of relevant research that will help overturn the privileging of the industrial model of agriculture.

Sometimes an unexpected windfall can ease an orchard's harvest. The bequest to Biowatch from the estate of the late Joan Wrench has helped the organisation in many ways.

We hope to use it to seed a number of beneficial processes: helping to consolidate financial stability, pay off our housing bond obligations, provide more career security for staff, generate research and bursaries, and allow for modest expansion of our premises. We are therefore most grateful to Joan for her contribution to the sustainability of our work. We likewise encourage other potential benefactors to remember Biowatch in their wills.

Research is showing that one in every four South Africans is hungry. Yet the country produces sufficient food for its people. We therefore have to question the ways in which the current system of production and distribution of food is failing. We believe that the key reason for this is official support for an inequitable, unsustainable and profiteering form of agriculture. New emphasis should be placed on land distribution, resettlement support, embedding food production in our education and extension systems, price control of staple foods, and strong promotion of agro-ecological principles in farming, to ensure the integrity of seed, soil, water, climate and social progress. These values are stressed in all the work which Biowatch and its partners undertake. Please support us.

**David Fig, Chairperson
Biowatch Trust**



“Agro-ecology training – building farmers’ resilience.”

Director's Report

Rose Williams

Biowatch has gone from strength to strength during the year under review. Expanding our staff with advocacy and farmer support functions has been a key development especially as the demands on the organisation have increased – more people wanting to know about agro-ecology and seed sovereignty; more support needed on the ground as the delayed rains and drought increased the complexity of our context; and the unrelenting push from agri-business for agriculture that undermines small-holder farmers, agricultural biodiversity and biodiversity!

Engaging at local, national and international levels has been integral to our approach and the development of a long-term initiative around seed and knowledge that will link Biowatch strongly to other partners, lays the basis for our future work.

Highlights of 2014/2015 included the successful completion of the 17-month Seed and Knowledge Initiative (SKI) pilot, re-establishment of an advocacy staff position, as well as

the strengthening of Biowatch as an organisation, and the stabilisation of Biowatch's finances.

Our work has supported farmers' productivity and resilience by training in agro-ecology, seed multiplication, and Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) – more on page 18. This resilience is critical with changing climate conditions – increasingly experienced as very late rains and extremely hot conditions. We posit that PGS and agro-ecology are viable alternative food production and marketing methods which are low-carbon, low-input and democratic in nature.

Details of our work with farmers, our advocacy at local and national level, the deepening of our understanding of agroecology and seed sovereignty, and our engagements at regional and international levels are given in the following sections. We have found that the issues we are dealing with have strong resonance across the country as well as internationally. This is especially so with respect to the importance of seed and the great need for a seed system free of corporate control.

Seed and Knowledge Initiative

Biowatch is a founding partner and holds fiduciary responsibility for the Seed and Knowledge Initiative (SKI), a pilot regional programme started with the University of

Cape Town and the Mupo Foundation. During this pilot period (September 2013 to January 2015), SKI's key focus was the building of institutional capacity to enable the sustainable implementation of a more comprehensive longer term project at a regional level.

There was a focus on building relationships for future collaboration and network building in South Africa and the region, with a scoping visit undertaken to Zimbabwe, which included field trips and meetings with government officials, NGOs and farmers' organisations. Links were also made with several organisations in Zambia.

The development of a four-year plan (2015-2018) was based on a joint strategic planning workshop in May 2014. A workshop in November 2014 took the strategic planning process to the next level, laying the foundation for the M&E and baseline study for the project. Much of Biowatch's work in 2014/2015 fed into SKI.

Organisational Development

We strengthened our financial systems in 2014/2015. We now have a full-time Finance Officer and the support of a chartered accountant who specialises in the non-profit sector and who assists with higher level financial management.

Two positions we have long strategised for, planned for and hoped for – an Advocacy Practitioner and a Farmer Support Officer – were filled and the new staff and energy brought strength and important new dimensions to the organisation, further developing and intensifying our work on biodiversity, agro-ecology and farmers' rights. Interviews for the position of SKI Project Manager were also held and the successful applicant will begin work with us in the new financial year. We were also delighted to have two interns with us in 2014: an agriculture graduate, and a masters student in Development Studies, both at University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN).

Annual reflection

A stimulating five-day reflection, learning and planning week was held at the end of November 2014. The first day focused on a reflection of the previous year's work; the second on agro-ecology; the third on farmers and Biowatch practice; and the fourth on advocacy and Biowatch practice. The last day focused on detailed planning for 2015.

In November, Biowatch also had a reflection and planning workshop with 20 elected representatives from the five project sites we work with. The purpose of the workshop was to inform participants of the new four-year Seed and Knowledge Initiative, to confirm each project's willingness

to participate and to gather views on the activities to focus on, the impact that the farmers would expect the project to achieve, and any initial ideas on the type of information to monitor. There was unanimous support for the Initiative, and common themes emerging from a visioning exercise were: seed diversity, agro-ecological practices, sharing with others, marketing and advocacy.

Financial situation

Overall, Biowatch's financial situation in 2014/2015 was sound, however, we experienced a difficult period when expected funding from the National Lottery was delayed. We were not the only organisation negatively affected in this way. By the end of the financial year the funding had not yet been received and it was thanks to Oxfam Australia and Davine Thaw that we were able continue our programmatic work mostly unhindered. Their support is deeply appreciated. The stabilisation of the organisation's finances means that should a similar situation ever arise again it can be more easily managed.

Bequest to Biowatch

In November, Biowatch was contacted by the Executor of the estate of the late Joan Wrench, who informed us that Biowatch had been nominated as a beneficiary. Joan's extraordinary gift will make all the difference to our sustainability. Joan Wrench was not a person known to the Biowatch staff or the Biowatch Board and we do regret not ever having the opportunity to meet her.



A close friend of Joan's described her wonderful sense of humour, her intelligence and how she "always had her eye out to see where she could help those around her".

Thanks

Our thanks go to our donors who have supported our work – the Foundation for Human Rights, IDEX, the National Lotteries Board, Oxfam Australia, the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation and Swiss Development and Cooperation.

Thank you to all the farmers and project members with whom we work, to our partners and all those who have supported and facilitated our work during the year.

Thanks also to our Board of Trustees for their dedication and inspiration. Thank you to the Biowatch staff – we are a small but effective team. Your hard work, dedication and commitment is greatly appreciated.

Rose Williams, Director

Activities

Our activities fall into three main focus areas: advocacy, monitoring and research work; promoting agro-ecology and working with farmers “on the ground”; and regional and international experience sharing. There is overlap between these focus areas and work in one informs and supports work in the others. In each of these focus areas we engage strongly with partners.

As a partner on the regional Seed and Knowledge Initiative (SKI), and the partner that holds fiduciary responsibility for SKI, most of our work during the period under review fed into achieving SKI’s objectives (see the Director’s Report on page 7).

Advocacy, Monitoring and Research

Our approach March 2014 to February 2015 was to target specific areas including: critiquing climate smart agriculture; participating in the annual global March Against Monsanto; giving presentations on request; participating in key civil society strengthening events; restructuring and revitalising

our website; and the start of a key piece of research on household seed banks which are crucial in supporting household food security. We continued to monitor the South African policy environment, with submissions on the Plant Breeders’ Rights Bill and the Plant Improvement Bill being prepared for Parliament during 2015.

Presentations

Presentations given during the year included:

- “A rights-based approach to seed sovereignty” at the Eastern Cape Agricultural Research Project (ECARP) Food Sovereignty Dialogue, in Grahamstown in May.
- “The future role of agro-ecology in the world” as part of an international panel on this topic, at the Third National Encounter on Agroecology (III ENA) in Juazeiro, Bahia, Brazil in May.
- “Seed Laws in South Africa” and “Report back on III ENA”, at the Surplus People Project (SPP) national workshop on “Agro-ecology: towards food and seed sovereignty” in Cape Town, in May.
- “Reviving and adapting traditional agricultural knowledge in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa” at the SKI session “Reviving agricultural traditional knowledge systems to support diversity and resilience” at the 14th Congress of the International Society for Ethnobiology (ISE) in Bhutan in June.



“We say NO to GMOs and the takeover of our seeds.”

- “Food sovereignty, agro-ecology and seed banking” at The Feminist Table, in Johannesburg in August.
- “Views from the ground: Seed systems and farmer innovations” and “Civil society engagement: Strategies, support and lessons” at the Seed and Knowledge Initiative (SKI) September seed seminar on “Strengthening Support for Small Farmer-led Seed Systems: Knowledge Exchange, Collaboration and Innovation between Formal and Informal Seed Systems” in Stellenbosch in September.
- “Agro-ecology” at the National Right to Food Dialogue in Johannesburg in November.
- “Food Systems, Health and GMOs” at the provincial Anglican Environmental Workshop in November.

Climate smart agriculture

Following on from our contribution in 2013 to the scoping study on the State of Climate Smart Agriculture in South Africa, commissioned by FARFAN (Agriculture, Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network) and undertaken through the University of Fort Hare, Biowatch made a further contribution to the process.

Key points made were that Biowatch was part of a much wider network of organisations in South Africa, the region and internationally, who all had a common position that

disagreed with some of the conclusions of the scoping study – we disagreed that carbon markets, conservation agriculture (which go hand in hand with GMOs) and biofuels would make a positive contribution to climate change.

We noted that:

“Any response to climate change, and therefore climate smart agriculture, should start with a clear understanding of how current agricultural practices and food systems contribute to climate change. It is very important to base policies and practices on independent scientific evidence and not promises from agribusiness. Evidence is very clear that we can only mitigate climate change by reducing energy use, moving towards a no-carbon fuel economy, and sequestering CO₂. Biotic sequestration of CO₂ is natural, cost-effective and easily adopted by any farmer. Large-scale industrial agriculture, where the use of GMOs, commercial seed varieties, fertilisers, mono-cropping, irrigation and exporting are the focus, is one of the biggest contributors to climate change and therefore neither ‘climate smart’ nor resilient.”

Global March Against Monsanto

Biowatch supported the global March Against Monsanto (MAM) in May 2014, participating in the Durban march

and supporting the farmer-organised march in Pongola, northern KwaZulu-Natal. Although this global protest targets Monsanto because it represents some of the worst products and practices, it is also aimed at other agribusiness multinationals responsible for the globally damaging industrial agriculture system, part of the industrial food system which is the biggest cause of climate change.

Sustainable Living Exhibition

Biowatch participated in the eThekweni Municipality's Sustainable Living Exhibition, where we shared a stand with Earthlife Africa Durban, South Durban Community Environmental Alliance (SDCEA) and Timberwatch. The four organisations combined their efforts to promote their work and environmental justice.

Participation in other events

In June, we participated in an Actionaid and Oxfam Australia event "Influencing the NDP in favour of the rights and aspirations of women in South Africa". The one-day dialogue focused on how the women's sector could engage around the National Development Plan.

In July, we participated in the Oxfam Australia (South Africa) mid-term review of their "No Longer Vulnerable" strategy, which integrated all its programmes. In September, we

participated in the AWETHU! process¹ by attending the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial People's Congress.

In October, we hosted and participated in the inaugural meeting of the KZN Environmental Network – a network of environmental NGOs in KwaZulu-Natal. We brought a critique of industrial agriculture and climate smart agriculture and the promotion of agro-ecology to the agenda.

Lastly, in November we were part of the National Food Dialogues, which laid the basis for forming the South African Food Sovereignty Campaign.

Materials development

A Biowatch Facebook page was started in May 2014 and offers a more interactive space, with information about the organisation and on Biowatch's areas of interest.

The restructured website was finalised and launched in October 2014. Positive feedback has been received and more time will be set aside for developing content.

1. This is a new national civil society process aiming to link and mobilise civil society in South Africa. Awethu! was launched in 2013.

The following materials were produced between March 2014 and February 2015:

- Two Biowatch Bulletin newsletters (June and December).
- Agro-ecology training materials in English and isiZulu on:
 1. SEED: Selecting the best performing plants, harvesting and drying – healthy plants produce good seeds / IMBEWU: Ukukhetha izitshalo ezikhiqiza kakhulu, ukuvuna kanye nokuyomisallzitshalo eziphile kahle zikhiqiza imbewu enhle.
 2. SEED: Shelling, winnowing and storage – saving seeds for future food security / IMBEWU: Ukuyigumuza, ukuyela kanye nokuyigcina – Ukugcina imbewu ukuze kube nekusasa elingenandlala.
- A poster on Sophiwe Dlamini's household seed bank (see page 1).
- Several PowerPoint presentations (listed on page 11).
- An information brochure on the Seed and Knowledge Initiative (SKI).

Research

Biowatch and the University of Cape Town (UCT) are collaborating on a study on household seed banks with farmers in northern KwaZulu-Natal. The purpose of this is to develop a deeper understanding of seed keeping at a household level, as well as the motivation and challenges of seed keepers.

The study will also inform our understanding of the importance of seed security at household level, which in turn will inform policy discussions. The field work was undertaken with farmers from Ingwavuma and Pongola in July 2014.



Interviews were conducted with 24 farmers at Ingwavuma and 16 farmers at Pongola. These farmers were “seed champions”, identified by other farmers because of quality and sustainability of their household seed banks and the fact that they are saving a minimum of 10 traditional varieties.

We were interviewed by two researchers: Britt Baatjies of the Nelson Mandela Institute for Education and Rural Development at the University of Fort Hare for her paper “Pockets of resistance, action, learning and hope outside of formal institutions”; and Thierry Luescher-Mamashela of Institutional Research at the University of the Free State, for his paper “One bangle cannot jingle: community-university research partnerships in South Africa”.

Promoting agro-ecology and working with farmers in rural South Africa

Biowatch’s advocacy work on agro-ecology at national level is detailed earlier. What follows is our work in promoting agro-ecology at five project sites, and the spreading of our work through exchanges with partner organisations.

During the year under review, there was a strong emphasis on seed work, farmer exchanges, seed festivals and

Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS), as well as engagements with government for support to farmers.

Agro-ecological training at five project sites

Biowatch’s project sites are in northern KwaZulu-Natal at Pongola, Ingwavuma, KwaNgwanase, Tshaneni and KwaHhohho. Between March 2014 and February 2015 a total of 25 training sessions were held at these five project sites.

Training centred on water harvesting, soil improvement techniques and eco-mapping. A specific seed training programme was developed for the year which included seed storage and protection, seed volumes and seed multiplication and land preparation. Seed training handouts were developed, drawing on a process of collecting farmers’ knowledge in the five project sites.

A poster illustrating the inspiring household seed bank of Sophiwe Dlamini, a Biowatch-supported farmer in Pongola, was also developed and showcased at the 14th Congress of the International Society for Ethnobiology in Bhutan in June (see page 23).

Eco-mapping training began a process to reveal ancestral knowledge, which we anticipate will be key to strengthening communities’ control over their livelihoods in the future.

Household seed banks – seed diversity and volumes

Support to farmers to maintain sufficient seed stores for food security, in terms of both quantity and diversity, was an important focus this year. This support also emphasised the importance of selecting farmer varieties for hardiness, drought tolerance, storage qualities and taste. Sufficient volumes of seed for food, planting, exchanging and possibly selling are needed.

As a first step, Biowatch needed to establish a baseline for current levels of retention and availability, both in terms of diversity and quantity of seed holdings (household seed banks).

Biowatch-supported farmer groups from Ingwavuma, Pongola, Tshaneni, KwaHhohho and KwaNgwanase were consulted about the feasibility of collecting seed volume data for the traditional crop species they bank. Farmers were asked to consider how they would record this data, and various approaches were discussed, including the use of bottles, photographs and drawings. Farmers across the five groups agreed to adopt the “three bottle system” – using three sizes of containers to store and count a range of differently sized seeds. In response, Biowatch designed a data sheet, *Inqolobane yami yesmbewu*, which farmers completed in July/August.

There were a few challenges around this approach, but it has deeply engaged the participating farmers, helped focus attention on seed volumes, and will lead into work in 2015 to secure sufficient volumes of seed to ensure household food security.

Farmers’ exchanges and seed rituals

Farmers’ exchanges and annual seed rituals took place at all five project sites. These were inspiring, community-building and learning events. This was epitomised by the words of Richard Mthembu of the Msebe Project who, at the Ingwavuma Seed Blessing ceremony, said:

“When someone has seeds we share so that everyone can have them.”

These events are also opportunities to demonstrate the work and needs of community farmers to local government departments. Representatives came from provincial government departments, such as Agriculture, Environmental Affairs and Health, as well as from district and local municipalities.

Participatory Guarantee Systems

Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) are an alternative to the expensive and lengthy route of getting vegetables organically certified, and is a way for small-holder farmers

to have their agro-ecological produce accorded the value it deserves. PGS also assures the consumer of the quality of the produce. “Participatory” is the key element, as farmers decide together who gets certified and who does not, according to agreed principles.

We have supported one of the projects we work with (Zimele at KwaHhohho) to develop their own PGS standard and for farmers at other project sites to have an understanding of the PGS system and to be able to take it forward if they wish. All the participating farmers saw the PGS system as an important mechanism both to certify farmers’ produce and to support each other in improving their farming methods.

The eight agro-ecological principles that the Zimele farmers agreed to and which will form the standard for the PGS system are:

1. No synthetic fertilisers
2. No synthetic pesticides, insecticides or herbicides
3. No hybrids or GMOs
4. Composting
5. Fertility beds
6. Use of grey water
7. Mulching
8. Saving seed of at least 14 traditional varieties

We have linked with Siyavuna, a rural organic farmer support organisation based in Ugu District, KwaZulu-Natal, who are already implementing the PGS. We also participated in the PGS(SA) AGM held in George to meet organisers and learn more about PGS.

Community planning process for seed work in 2015-2018

In November, Biowatch held a reflection and planning workshop with 20 elected representatives from Biowatch-supported projects in northern KwaZulu-Natal. The purpose of the workshop was to inform participants of the new four-year Seed and Knowledge Initiative (SKI), to confirm each project’s willingness to participate, to gather views on the activities to focus on, to discuss the impact that they would expect the project to achieve and to explore initial ideas on the type of information to monitor.

The impacts that farmers believed could be achieved within their communities, over the long term, included:

1. Food security.
2. Healthier communities; healthier food.
3. Independence – “standing on our own two feet”.
4. Income generation through marketing.

Specific standards for seed diversity, agro-ecological practices and seed sharing were also discussed.

Exchanges with partner organisations

Biowatch has links with many partners in this work, including NGOs, farmers' organisations, women's clubs, faith-based organisations and municipalities. Biowatch participated in the Eastern Cape Agricultural Research Project (ECARP) Food Sovereignty Dialogue, held in Cape Town; the Surplus People Project (SPP) national workshop "Agroecology: towards food and seed sovereignty", in Cape Town; the Tshintsha Amakhaya Indaba, also in Cape Town; the Feminist Table, held in Johannesburg; and in the National Right to Food Dialogue held in Johannesburg (from which the South African Food Sovereignty Campaign emerged).

Biowatch hosted and participated in the inaugural meeting and follow-up of the KZN Environmental Network – a network of environmental NGOs in KwaZulu-Natal.

Biowatch hosted a seed sovereignty and agro-ecology workshop titled "Our right to seed, seed sovereignty and agro-ecology". Held in Pongola, KwaZulu-Natal, the event was a highlight of our year. The workshop was attended by 51 people from 23 organisations, including farmer groupings, civil society and government.

A key message coming through was the importance of farmers' varieties and having control over those farmer varieties by resisting genetically modified seed.





“Our right to agro-ecology and to good, nutritious food.”

Engaging with government

Biowatch has supported the farmer advocacy group that formed in February 2014 to engage with government. This 10-member group includes farmers from each of the five areas in KwaZulu-Natal where Biowatch currently works. The group focused, in particular, on the March Against Monsanto (described page 13) and engaging with government.

Biowatch organised for representatives from the five project sites to meet with the Department of Water Affairs in Durban in June regarding water tanks, and also made arrangements for the farmer meeting with the national government delegation in July. The meeting with the national Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries took place in Pongola, with officials coming from Pretoria. This meeting ultimately led to the provincial Department of Water Affairs and Sanitation making available 50 water tanks to Biowatch-supported farmers.

The allocation of these tanks was a potentially fraught process as there were more than 600 farmers on the list sent to government. However, Biowatch facilitated a process with representatives from each of the five areas and criteria for selection of the first ten people in each of the five sites were developed.

The Department of Water Affairs and Sanitation has committed to roll out a plan, over a period of time, that will see each farmer who works with Biowatch having a water tank. The intention is to also to secure fencing, milling machines and tools for farmers. The process is being documented so it can be of use to other farmers and NGOs.

Biowatch held several meetings with local government – eThekweni Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (Jozini and Pietermaritzburg) – to promote agro-ecology and to challenge the planting and promoting of GMOs in the area.

Regional and international experience sharing

Key events during the reporting period included: two visits to Brazil; participation in the 14th Congress of the International Society for Ethnobiology (ISE) in Bhutan; a farmer exchange visit to Zimbabwe; a Seed and Knowledge Initiative (SKI) seminar in South Africa; and the World Committee on Food Security (CFS) in Italy. Both the trip to Bhutan and the visit to Zimbabwe were part of SKI, a regional initiative with the University of Cape Town and the Mupo Foundation.

We continued to link with the African Biodiversity Network (ABN) and the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA) on policy issues.

Brazil

Biowatch was fortunate to be part of two visits to Brazil during 2014, a country with a long history of applying agro-ecology. The first visit was to Brazil's 3rd National Agro-Ecology Meeting (III ENA) in Juazeiro, Bahia in May. This was a large event with over 2 000 people participating – from farmers to CSOs to government. It was a wonderful opportunity to expand and deepen our understanding of agro-ecology, and to experience agro-ecology as informing a jubilant and vibrant social movement across a country as vast as Brazil.

Key lessons from this experience included:

- a. Government (all levels), NGOs, universities and business need to work together in order to strengthen agro-ecology as a practice.
- b. Government needs to provide incentives.
- c. It is very difficult or impossible for agro-ecology to coexist with agri-business.
- d. The farmers have to be part of the process, design the process and help facilitate the process.

- e. National caravans, consisting of the different stakeholders who travelled to different parts of Brazil, were helpful in getting buy-in and commitment from stakeholders.

The second visit to Brazil was to an international agro-ecology learning exchange in Goiás, in August. This was hosted by IDEX and Grassroots International with participants from ASHA (Nepal), DESMI (Mexico), UNOSJO (Mexico), The Women's Collective (India), Yakshi (India) and Biowatch (South Africa). It commenced with participation in the popular peasant movement Movimento Camponês Popular's International Seminar on Biodiversity and Creole Seeds, followed by a Creole Seeds Festival and Market.

Sessions at the seminar were topical and important and included: "Analysis of global control of seeds by multinationals and their impacts on biodiversity"; "The defence of biodiversity, its importance, and how GMOs and pesticides affect nature"; "The role of the peasants' affirmation as a guarantee for agro-biodiversity and creole seeds"; and "Public policies for agriculture in favour or against the native seeds". After this there were site visits to MCP's Creole Seeds Project where there has been great success in the rescue and production of local seeds.

Both visits helped to deepen our understanding of agro-ecology and seed sovereignty, and has enhanced the agro-ecological training that we do.

Bhutan

In June Biowatch, with the University of Cape Town and the Mupo Foundation, participated at the 14th Congress of the International Society for Ethnobiology (ISE) in Bhutan. We did this collectively under the Seed and Knowledge Initiative (SKI). It was a most significant and dramatic trip with an emergency landing in Kolkata, India, on the way home! There were 485 participants from 57 countries.

The congress is one of the few forums where it is possible for scientists, activists and indigenous people to engage in a meaningful way and to shift the paradigms and assumptions necessary to bring about change. Our session was titled “Reviving agricultural traditional knowledge systems to support diversity and resilience”. The main objective was to deepen understanding of the extent to which traditional agricultural knowledge and agro-biodiversity enhance the resilience of farming communities, and provide options to mitigate against environmental impacts such as climate change.

The session consisted of four presentations and discussions following each input. The four presentations were on “Seed and knowledge systems in Southern Africa: a story of undermining, loss and revival” (SKI Co-ordinator);





“Reviving and adapting traditional agricultural knowledge.”

“Reviving and adapting traditional agricultural knowledge in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa” (Biowatch); “Eco-mapping as a tool to revive knowledge, sacred sites” (Mupo Foundation) and “Beyond the Ivory Tower: Policy and community engagement to revive and strengthen traditional knowledge and agro-biodiversity” (University of Cape Town).

Visit to Zimbabwe

In August 2014 an exchange visit and joint training was organised to the Chikukwa Ecological Land Use Community Trust (CELUCT) in the Chikukwa valley in eastern Zimbabwe. This exchange was a valuable opportunity to build relationships for future co-operation between the Zimbabwe Organic Farmers’ Federation (ZIMSOFF), Biowatch, CELUCT and the Mupo Foundation.

The purpose of this exchange visit was:

- To train visiting farmers on CELUCT’s approach to permaculture, innovative farming methods, food forests, landscape regeneration, and to enhance understanding.
- To facilitate the interaction between farmers with the aim of building knowledge, confidence and relationships.
- To provide a platform for farmers to exchange seeds and to discuss how best to build community seed and knowledge systems.

- To allow farmers and staff members of visiting organisations to learn from CELUCT on how to set up a training space where farmers are teaching others.

SKI seed seminar, South Africa

In September 2014, an international policy and research seminar was organised by SKI in Stellenbosch titled “Strengthening Support for Small Farmer-led Seed Systems: Knowledge Exchange, Collaboration and Innovation between Formal and Informal Seed Systems”. The seminar brought together genebank managers, government officials, researchers, NGOs and farmer-based organisations from the United Kingdom, Zimbabwe, Kenya, South Africa, Zambia and Ethiopia.

The overarching aim of the seminar was to explore the way formal institutions can support local, more informal systems of innovation, and the potential of approaches such as participatory plant breeding.

The keynote speakers were Dr Melaku Worede, who pioneered the first African gene bank, and Patrick Mulvaney, a leading voice in the food sovereignty movement. It was the first in a series of proposed annual seminars that address key policy and research issues.

The World Committee on Food Security, Rome

In October, Biowatch participated in the two-day Civil Society Mechanism (CSM) meeting in Rome to develop a civil society position to take to the week-long World Committee on Food Security (CFS) meeting. The CFS meeting, with delegations from the 127 member countries of the United Nations UN), was hosted by the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO).

The CSM is the mechanism by which civil society participates in the United Nations CFS. There were more than 150 people at the CSM from NGOs, farmer organisations, La Via Campesina, pastoralists, fisher groups, farmworker unions, and representatives from all the continents. With the CSM in place, the five-day CFS is an important intervention space. The CFS is a space where the local can meet the global, where civil society can experience the realities of government, the UN, FAO and the power of the multinationals, and the Gates Foundation, and where civil society can consolidate.

It is, however, a contested space with civil society being in a challenging position – the stakes are high, but without civil society contribution it is clear that industrialised food systems and industrial agriculture will take precedence.

These varied exchanges and engagements at regional and international level have deepened our practice and strengthened our partnerships. They also help support networking and solidarity, both critical in the face of unrelenting pressures that undermine biodiversity, food sovereignty and social justice.

Financial Statements

Biowatch Trust

for the year ended 28 February 2015
(extract)



Bringing you peace of mind
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Independent Auditors' Report

To the Trustees of Biowatch Trust

We have audited the annual financial statements of Biowatch Trust, as set out on pages 7 to 14, which comprise the statement of financial position as at 28 February 2015, and the statement of comprehensive income, statement of changes in equity and statement of cash flows for the year then ended, and the notes, comprising a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory information.

Trustees' Responsibility for the Annual Financial Statements

The trustees are responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of these annual financial statements in accordance with the International Financial Reporting Standard for Small and Medium-sized Entities and for such internal control as the trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of annual financial statements that are free from material misstatements, whether due to fraud or error.

Auditors' Responsibility

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on these annual financial statements based on our audit. We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing. Those standards require that we comply with ethical requirements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance whether the annual financial statements are free from material misstatement.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the annual financial statements. The procedures selected depend on the auditors' judgement, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the annual financial statements, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, the auditors consider internal control relevant to the entity's preparation and fair presentation of the annual financial statements in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the annual financial statements.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our qualified audit opinion.

Basis for Qualified Opinion

In common with similar organisations, it is not feasible for the organisation to institute controls over cash collections from donations prior to the initial entry of the collections in the accounting records. Accordingly, it was impractical for us to extend our examination beyond the receipts actually recorded.

Qualified Opinion

In our opinion, except for the possible effects of the matter described in the Basis for Qualified Opinion paragraph, the annual financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of Biowatch Trust as at 28 February 2015, and its financial performance and cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with the International Financial Reporting Standard for Small and Medium-sized Entities.

Other matter

Without qualifying our opinion, we draw attention to the fact that supplementary information set out on pages 15 to 16 does not form part of the annual financial statements and is presented as additional information. We have not audited this information and accordingly do not express an opinion thereon.

C&S Chartered Accountants Inc
Per: DC Saville
Registered Auditors

23 June 2015

Suite 9
3 Warwick Place
Pinetown

Biowatch Trust

(Registration number IT4212/99)

Financial Statements for the year ended 28 February 2015

Statement of Financial Position

Figures in Rand	Note(s)	2015	2014
Assets			
Non-Current Assets			
Property, plant and equipment	2	825 302	796 791
Current Assets			
Trade and other receivables	3	542 536	–
Cash and cash equivalents	4	5 251 973	1 156 457
		5 794 509	1 156 457
Total Assets		6 619 811	1 953 248
Equity and Liabilities			
Equity			
Trust Capital		100	100
Accumulated surplus		463 441	578 783
		463 541	578 883
Liabilities			
Non-Current Liabilities			
Other financial liabilities		577 377	309 072
Current Liabilities			
Trade and other payables	5	231 597	15 623
Income received in advance	9	5 347 296	1 049 670
		5 578 893	1 065 293
Total Liabilities		6 156 279	1 374 365
Total Equity and Liabilities		6 619 811	1 953 248

Biowatch Trust

(Registration number IT4212/99)

Financial Statements for the year ended 28 February 2015

Detailed Statement of Comprehensive Income

Figures in Rand	Note(s)	2015	2014
Revenue			
Baumann Trust		–	100 000
Comic Relief		–	1 191 429
Foundation for Human Rights		317 347	101 226
International Development Exchange		104 711	154 746
National Lotteries Board		518 273	356 740
Oxfam Australia		718 878	274 314
Rosa Luxemburg Foundation		199 802	–
Swiss Development and Cooperation		2 893 034	899 920
		4 752 045	3 078 375
Other income			
Other income		87 567	96 810
Interest received	6	45 190	32 821
		132 757	129 631

(continued on next page)

Biowatch Trust

(Registration number IT4212/99)

Financial Statements for the year ended 28 February 2015

Detailed Statement of Comprehensive Income *(continued)*

Figures in Rand	Note(s)	2015	2014
Operating expenses			
Accounting fees		(86 573)	(111 932)
Auditors remuneration	7	(33 582)	(29 686)
Bank charges		(20 013)	(20 692)
Computer expenses		(32 043)	(37 587)
Consulting fees		(285 741)	(260 310)
Depreciation		(20 884)	(10 364)
Employee costs		(1 611 876)	(1 030 459)
Insurance		(9 491)	(7 650)
Loss of sale of assets		(3 301)	–
Postage		–	(27 762)
Printing and stationery		(62 313)	(99 700)
Project costs		(2 618 619)	(1 936 322)
Rental		(38 292)	(68 880)
Repairs and maintenance		(6 583)	–
Stationery and office supplies		(93 824)	(67 206)
Subscriptions		(1 788)	–
Telephone and fax		(43 966)	(50 998)
		(4 968 889)	(3 759 548)
Operating loss		(84 087)	(551 542)
Finance costs		(31 255)	(31 562)
Loss for the year		(115 342)	(583 104)



biowatch

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