

Sharing knowledge

Isaac Phiri is an Agronomist. **Chanyanya Smallholders Cooperative Society** employs him to share his agricultural knowledge with members.

“My role is to advise farmers on where to get seed and what fertilisers to apply. When I came, there were 120 irrigated market garden plots, but few people were gardening. With my support, more people are coming to grow vegetables here. Many of those who come are women.”

Cooperative members can choose to farm their own plots or can rent them to others who wish to farm. The expansion of the Chanyanya project will see the area under irrigation double to around 30ha.

With irrigation, people can grow food and a variety of cash crops. Isaac says, “Sweet potato leaves are a common crop here now, they are a local vegetable and they fetch a good price in Lusaka. Prices vary but farmers can get 65-70 Kwacha per

50kg bag, harvesting 30 bags in a month from a small plot of 25m².” He says, “They are difficult to plant, but easy to grow. They need few chemicals and can be harvested for some time. We are lucky, with abundant water we can grow sweet potato leaves with a longer shelf life than those grown without irrigation.”

Looking out across the market gardens, Isaac smiles, “I love farming and I like helping people. I am learning from them too. My family were saying ‘why do you want to get dirty in the fields?’ but now they understand that I enjoy what I do. I am guiding people and have helped them to have something for them to survive. They are now better than me, so I am happy for that.”

