



## Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

Online Version: <https://www.feedthefuture.gov/article/how-low-and-no-cost-technologies-are-saving-cattle-zimbabwe>

## How Low- and No-Cost Technologies are Saving Cattle in Zimbabwe



Fintrac Inc.

Innovative supplementary feed mixtures that make use of resources locally available to smallholder farmers help safeguard livestock, especially during critical periods.

Every year between August and December, Zimbabwe's climate turns hot and dry. Under these conditions, farmers struggle to grow enough grass to graze their cattle. Unless they are able to secure supplementary feed, their cattle grow ill from nutrient deficiencies and may even starve to death. The 2015-2016 agricultural season was especially hard: An El Niño-induced drought resulted in massive crop failures and cattle losses.

The situation is not without hope, however. As it turns out, materials for alternative livestock feed are available in the localities of many smallholder livestock farmers—they just don't know it.

To help Zimbabwean farmers, the Feed the Future Zimbabwe Livestock Development Program is introducing low- to no-cost feed technologies containing local ingredients such as molasses, cacti, and crop residues. The program works with farmers to develop innovative feed formulas that can sustain their cattle during dry periods.

"I lost two cattle to drought due to lack of knowledge last year, but the local bushes are full of cacti," said farmer Angeline Garwe, who participates in the program. "I want to have my own cactus garden, and I am also going to utilize cacti from the mountains to feed my six cattle."

Ledson Mubonesi, another project participant, is a lead farmer who hosts a center of excellence where the Feed the Future Zimbabwe Livestock Development Program teaches good animal husbandry practices to more than 100 farmers.

To improve the utilization of crop residue in supplementary fodder, the program also helped a group of nine dairy farmers get a loan to purchase a diesel-powered chaff cutter, which they are now using to chop abundant maize stover (stalks and leaves of maize plants). The multi-functional chaff cutter enables the farmers not only to chop stover and crush grains for livestock

feed but also to grind maize grain into flour. The farmers can earn additional income by using the machine to provide these services to other farmers. Additionally, the program promotes the application of urea-treated crop residue, which increases the protein content and improves the digestibility of wheat straw and tough grasses, among other plant materials.

By supporting the affordability and availability of supplementary feed options that make use of drought-tolerant resources, the Feed the Future Zimbabwe Livestock Development Program is helping farmers keep their animals in good health during droughts and other critical periods.

These efforts are paying off for farmers like Mubonesi. Through training and technical support, he has established nearly 100 cactus plants for his seven cows. He now prepares supplementary feed using cactus, molasses, maize stover and urea. Each cow requires five kilograms of the total mixed ration to maintain body condition in the lean months. Since introducing this new feed formula, Mubonesi has increased his milk yields from half a liter to two liters per cow per day, and one of his cows is now in reasonable condition for rebreeding.