MUAST Advances Indigenous Food Systems, Nutrition and Value Addition in Mudzi District
Mudzi District, Zimbabwe | 21–23 October 2026



Marondera University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology (MUAST), in collaboration with the Community Technology Development Organisation (CTDO), successfully conducted community Seed and Food Fairs and initiated field activities under the UNICEF-supported First Foods Research Project in Mudzi District from 21 to 23 October 2026. The complementary initiatives demonstrate MUAST's commitment to promoting indigenous food systems, improving child nutrition, strengthening climate resilience and translating research into community-based innovations and enterprise opportunities.

Promoting Indigenous Crops, Seed Conservation and Value Addition

Under the Markets and Seeds Access Project (MASAP), with complementary activities from the Research for Agroecology Network Southern Africa (RAENS) Project, MUAST and CTDO organised two Seed and Food Fairs in Wards 3 and 15 on 22 and 23 October 2026. The fairs attracted 144 participants, who showcased an impressive diversity of traditional grains, legumes, African indigenous vegetables, locally maintained seed varieties and traditional food products. The exhibitions provided opportunities for farmer-to-farmer knowledge exchange on seed conservation, agroecological production, food processing, food safety, nutrition and value addition. They also highlighted opportunities to improve traditional food products and develop marketable products from locally available agricultural commodities. The activities reinforced the important role of farmers as custodians of indigenous knowledge and agricultural biodiversity, while demonstrating the potential of traditional crops to support food security, sustainable livelihoods and rural entrepreneurship.

Documenting Indigenous First Foods to Improve Child Nutrition

During the same period, MUAST initiated district-level field activities under its UNICEF-supported First Foods Research Project, which focuses on developing and testing locally available complementary food ingredient options for children aged 6-23 months. The activities commenced with stakeholder consultations involving government ministries, departments and the District Food and Nutrition Security Committee (DFNSC). This was followed by focus group discussions with caregivers and Care Groups in three communities to document indigenous complementary foods, locally developed recipes, ingredients and preparation practices. The consultations revealed a remarkable wealth of indigenous food knowledge, developed across generations and strengthened through years of community nutrition education and support from health workers and development partners. One particularly memorable experience was

the discovery of *maoresa*, a traditional porridge described by caregivers as nutrient-dense. Community members prepared the porridge during the field visit, allowing the research team to observe its preparation and taste the product. The experience highlighted an important lesson: *communities already possess considerable knowledge and many of the foundations for addressing local food and nutrition challenges*.



From Indigenous Knowledge to Innovation and Community Enterprise

Building on these engagements, MUAST will support the scientific documentation, nutritional evaluation and refinement of promising indigenous foods, while exploring new complementary food formulations using other locally available crops and ingredients. The University will also investigate opportunities for scaling up community-based food processing, strengthening food safety and creating sustainable enterprises, particularly for women and young people. Through partnerships with communities, government institutions, Ministry of Health and Child Care, Food and Nutrition Council, UNICEF, and other development partners, MUAST continues to advance an integrated approach connecting indigenous knowledge, agricultural biodiversity, food science, nutrition, innovation and industrialisation. These initiatives underscore the University's commitment to ensuring that research delivers practical solutions that improve community livelihoods, strengthen local food systems and contribute to sustainable development in Zimbabwe.