

SILVERLANDS RANCHING IS RECOGNISED AS “BEST INNOVATION IN RURAL AGRICULTURAL MARKETING” BY THE IAPRI AND MUSIKA

Silverlands Ranching, a cattle ranch and out-grower business in Zambia, has been awarded the “Best Innovation in Rural Agricultural Marketing” by the Indaba Agricultural Policy Research Institute (IAPRI) and Musika, an independent Zambian non-profit company which supports private investment in the agricultural market, with a particular focus on the smallholder and emerging farmer sectors.

The award, which was set up to recognize and honour individuals and organisations that made an outstanding contribution to agricultural development in Zambia, was presented to Silverlands Ranching in Lusaka on 8th September 2021.

After attracting investment in 2014 from SilverStreet Capital, Silverlands Ranching began the Silverlands Livelihood Improvement Community programme, affectionately known locally as “SLIC”, to assist smallholder cattle farmers in the area. In 2020 the project positively impacted 12,100 smallholder livestock and cropping farmers, who’s annual incomes increased by an average of \$224 per person each year.

The success of the project has been achieved by its continued innovation and expansion in collaboration with the community, as partners.

From a standing start in 2014, SLIC has refurbished and built dip stations for 34 communities, sustained and managed by the communities in self-elected committees. The company buys community cattle to stock its feedlot – providing a market for smallholder farmers. Before the SLIC programme started, tick-borne diseases were rife in the Zimba district resulting in high livestock mortality and low calving rates due to the lack of operational dip stations that help to get rid of livestock ticks monthly.

The programme later identified unique challenges for women smallholder livestock farmers, who typically keep goats or sheep. In response to these challenges, Silverlands constructed the first ever goat and sheep dip station in the area. The dip station is managed by an all-female committee and is accessed by an estimated 2,000 goats monthly, owned by over 77 female farmers.

“The success of the project can be attributed to our approach. We operate by invitation only. Only when we are asked to engage with communities do we come forward and provide extension services for better animal husbandry and improved farming practices,” SRL Senior Livestock Technician, Lewis Mutinta explained.

In 2018, SLIC expanded and established crop demonstration plots and field days to assist smallholder cropping farmers. Since then, the project now manages 50 demonstration plots and held 62 field days for 800 smallholder farmers in 2020. This is complimented by the publication of Silverlands’ Conservation Agriculture Cropping Manual.

Building on this relationship with surrounding smallholder cropping farmers, Silverlands partnered with Zambian Breweries to distribute sorghum seed to 1,200 farmers (35% women) in 2019 and 2,240 farmers (19% women) in 2020. Silverlands provides technical training on sorghum production via field days and lead farmers and then purchases the sorghum from the farmers for delivery to Zambian Breweries. To facilitate transparent payment, Silverlands linked farmers using the block chain software platform, BanQu, to enable them to easily send, receive and save money via mobile phones.

