



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

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Farmers with a Head for Business—and Bananas—Form the Backbone of Zimbabwe Project

For 63-year-old widow Selina Tsanga, life had been full of hard work and daily challenges. She used to rise at 5 a.m. every day to work on her small farm, growing maize without access to irrigation. “We had to earn our living through sweating,” she says.

Tsanga lives in Mutema, a rural village in Chipinge district in Zimbabwe’s southern Manicaland province. Farmers in Chipinge live in one of the country’s harshest climates, where seasonal rainfall is less than 500 millimeters (19 inches), making meaningful production of field crops nearly impossible without irrigation. Average temperatures in the region have been on the rise with erratic rainfall, further exacerbating drought-like conditions. As a result, the district is regularly hit by devastating food and nutrition crises.

Feeding three orphaned grandchildren and two children still living at home was a daily challenge for Tsanga.

“Due to the harsh climate, crop farming was like gambling with nature,” she said. “Relying on the government’s relief food was only a temporary solution that did not solve our larger issues.”

To address this all-too-familiar situation, USAID began working with a commercial banana company, Matanuska, to develop 60 new hectares of banana production for small-scale farmers in Mutema. [Zimbabwe Agricultural Income and Employment Development](#) (Zim-AIED), a five-year, \$36 million program, helps farmers like Tsanga rethink their livelihoods as a business. The program contributes to efforts throughout the region to reduce poverty and undernutrition, which are key objectives of [Feed the Future](#), the U.S. Government’s global hunger and food security initiative.

Tsanga says her 0.05 hectare demonstration plot (roughly 5,000 square feet) has changed her life. So far this season, she has harvested and sold 2,300 kilograms of bananas earning her more than \$500 in net income, compared to her previous average income of \$200 per season. She has another, larger plot of bananas on which she is employing good agricultural practices she learned from Zim-AIED. With her cumulative harvests, she expects to earn an income of more than \$3,000 from her banana crop this year.

With this kind of income, Tsanga can feed her entire family and buy clothes, medicine and school supplies for her grandchildren.

[Continue reading this article](#) in the May/June 2013 edition of USAID FrontLines.