



Promoting sustainable farming practices and alternative livelihood strategies in important ecosystems

- **PORTFOLIO:** AWF Conservation Bonds
- **COUNTRIES:** Zambia
- **INVESTMENT DATE:** 2013
- **TRANSACTION:** \$400k Senior Debt
- **CAPITAL USE:** CAPEX facility focusing on the consolidation and automation of its food processing plants, a replacement of its transport fleet and improving the functionality of its Lusaka based HQ.
- **REVENUE: (Entry):** \$US 2.63mn (2012/13)
- **REVENUE (2018):** \$US 2.97mn (2018)
- **INVESTOR VALUE-ADD:** commercial finance to a hybrid corporate structure that incorporates both development and commercial divisions.

Context

Modern Africa has experienced rapid economic growth over the past decades yet the rural poverty levels remain stubbornly high.

Rural communities rely on agricultural, wild landscapes and wildlife as their main source of income. Most farmers rely on traditional unsustainable farming practices that exacerbate environmental and land degradation. This results in vicious cycle of poor soil health leading to low yields and ultimately food insecurity.

Decreasing yields creates an ever-increasing need for more agricultural land at the expense of wild landscapes and the resulting poverty fuels unsustainable livelihood activities such as charcoal production and poaching. As a result, rural communities remain poor and at risk to rising climate change and resource scarcity meanwhile, the wildlife and wildlands that support their livelihoods are declining rapidly.

Strategy

COMACO is a conservation enterprise that promotes food security through conservation farming practices that support ecosystem health, improved yields and biodiversity conservation in Eastern Zambia. The company engages locals who are involved in illegal poaching-promoting alternative sources of earning a livelihood and providing training sustainable agricultural practices such as climate smart agriculture that restores soil health in turn increasing yields.

Through the 'Its Wild' brand, it processes raw commodities bought from farmers into a range of value-added branded products that target fast growing local and regional urban-based markets. This purchasing power gives COMACO the leverage to drive better conservation practices.



Empowering Women



Women constitute the majority of the labour force in small scale, subsistence farming. Women and children are also the poorest and most vulnerable to poverty, hunger and malnutrition.

COMACO believes that women are leaders in their households that instigate lasting and meaningful change. Today, 52% of its farmers and half of cooperative leaders are women, figures that would have been unimaginable in 20 years ago.

COMACO provides women with training and inputs, enabling them to earn surplus income. The company has a dedicated gender program that runs 182 village savings and loans groups for women across it's operational area, teaching small-business skills and supporting women in their entrepreneurial ventures.



179K COMMUNITY

COMACO provides access to markets for the farmers at a higher price. The company works with over 179,000 registered farmers in Eastern Zambia majority of whom are women.

Impact



19M CLIMATE

Across an area of 19Mn acres, more than 500,000 have increased and/or diversified their income- decreasing their vulnerability to climate shocks.

CONSERVATION 760

760 individuals have completed the program, converting poachers into farmers. To date more than 6100 wire snares and 1467 guns have been turned in by reformed poachers.

COMMERCIAL 219%

Household incomes have increased by 219%, a sizeable increase in earnings for subsistence farmers in the region.