



NURTURING A PASSION FOR TREES AMONG MOZAMBIQUE'S TOBACCO FARMERS



The protection of the environment is central to Universal's approach in Africa and trees are recognized as one of the most important resources to safeguard

MLT trains farmers on how to grow trees and regenerate natural forest. Now all contracted Burley tobacco growers have adopted the technique of live barns, using the trunks of live trees as the pillars supporting the curing barns.



Nurturing a passion for trees among Mozambique's tobacco farmers

Trees are an essential resource in sub-Saharan Africa, where they are used to provide fuel for cooking, heating, and industrial processes, and also as a building material. In 2012, after an extensive evaluation of its previous afforestation activities by two independent professional organisations, Mozambique Leaf Tobacco Limitada (MLT) initiated a new programme to ensure a strong tree culture in the provinces where tobacco is grown.

Developed in collaboration with Working on Fire, a South African organisation that specialises in firefighting and tree management, MLT's programme has three parts: the planting of trees by individual farmers, the creation of communal woodlots, and the protection and regeneration of miombo forests. It works in seven-year cycles, based on the amount of time it takes for a tree to reach maturity. For the forest regeneration, 19 000 hectares of miombo woodland was demarcated and assessed to determine its inventory of fuelwood. Working on Fire trained MLT forestry technicians, now a group of 45 experts, who in turn train farmers on the regeneration management of the forest for areas of flue-cured Virginia (FCV) tobacco. Miombo species have a great capacity for resprouting, and the correct management of the trees will restore and even improve the natural forests in a sustainable way.

In Mozambique, nearly 90% of the tobacco is burley. This type of tobacco is air-cured in simple sheds, just wooden poles and a thatched roof, that do not use much wood to be built. The remaining tobacco is almost entirely FCV, which needs more wood to fuel the furnaces of the curing barns. Initially, all contracted burley farmers were provided with seedlings to be transplanted to their woodlots at a rate of 180 trees per hectare of tobacco planted each year. In 2015, the programme evolved, asking farmers to plant some of their seedlings in a specific layout so that as they grew their trunks would become the pillars of a 'live barn'.

The construction of a live barn large enough for a typical smallholder farmer with one hectare requires the planting of 338 trees. The bulk of the live barn planting phase will end in 2018. In addition, bamboo seedlings were provided so that farmers will be able to use bamboo poles for the live barn tiers and skeleton. Once all contracted burley farmers have live barns in place, MLT will only provide seedlings to new farmers or top-up trees for existing farmers who need to fill a spacing gap.



1 BARN = 338 TREES



THE BULK OF THE LIVE BARN PLANTING PHASE WILL END IN 2018

Until 2015, flue-cured tobacco farmers were requested to plant 550 trees per hectare of tobacco grown each year, but in 2016, this was dropped to 150 trees. To support their need for wood for the curing barn furnaces, MLT has set up communal commercial forests, and for three years the company will plant and manage 250 trees per hectare of FCV tobacco produced. Thus far, 780 hectares of communal forest has been planted. Thinnings sourced from commercial forests provided farmers with 7 000m³ in 2016. This number is expected to increase threefold next year. Intercropping with food crops often takes place in these communal forests, allowing for a better use of the land as well as the production of additional food crops.



MLT has set up communal commercial forests, and for 3 years the company will plant & manage 250 trees per hectare of FCV tobacco produced.