



## USAID Helps Cattle Farmers in Zimbabwe Withstand Drought

When El Niño-related drought struck Southern Africa in 2015/2016, Zimbabwe experienced its driest period in more than three decades. Vegetation levels fell to historic lows, leaving cattle and goats without enough to eat. At least 20,000 cattle died during the 2015/2016 lean season in Zimbabwe, devastating small-scale farmers who rely on cattle to plow fields and supplement farming incomes.

Seventy-four-year-old Samson Dube is one such farmer. Prior to the drought, he owned six cattle and nearly 10 acres of land that he plowed with his cattle. As vegetation grew scarcer, Samson's cattle had to travel longer and longer distances to find food, and three of his cattle died of starvation, including the mother of a young calf. With his remaining cattle in poor

condition, Samson knew he needed help to preserve his livelihood.

Fortunately, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), with support from USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA), supplies farmers in Samson's district with discounted livestock feed. This feed, which FAO sells for significantly less than the market price, allows farmers with 10 or fewer cattle to keep their cattle alive and close to home so they can recover their strength and survive the lean season until the grass returns.

Through the program, Samson was able to buy two 110-pound bags of livestock feed for his three remaining cattle. The critical assistance allowed Samson to keep all of his remaining cattle alive, even the orphaned calf. Once the cattle have recovered their strength, they will be able to pull a plow so that Samson can prepare his fields to grow crops to sell and eat, allowing Samson the chance to recover from the drought and fully restore his livelihood.

Samson's livestock feed purchase, and the purchases of other farmers in similar situations, also helped his community. The profits from the discounted feed sales went toward a local committee of livestock owners and farmers, who used the money to replace the windows in the community hall where local farmers store grain, livestock feed, and seed. With the windows replaced, farmers can now store their produce and supplies safely, knowing they are protected from pests.