



MUAST
MARONDERA UNIVERSITY
OF AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES AND TECHNOLOGY

MUAST PARTICIPATED IN THE REGIONAL PLANNING WORKSHOP FOR THE RAENS PROJECT.



Dr W. Kozanayi contributing a point during a panel discussion on farmer-led research

Dr. Witness Kozanayi, Principal Investigator for the Research for Agroecology Southern Africa Network (RAENS) and Executive Dean of the Faculty of Earth and Environmental Sciences at Marondera University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology (MUAST), participated in the annual RAENS planning workshop held in Lusaka, Zambia, from 2 to 6 February 2026.

The workshop convened project implementers from the eight RAENS partner institutions: University of Cape Town (UCT, consortium lead), MUAST (Zimbabwe), Sokoine University of Agriculture (Tanzania), Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR, Malawi), Zambia Agricultural Research Institute (ZARI, Zambia), Young Professionals for Agricultural Development (YPARD), Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL, Switzerland).



The participants at the RAENS workshop in Lusaka, Zambia

The Centre for Coordination of Agricultural Research and Development for Southern Africa (CCARDESA), under SADC, which oversees the overall management of the project, was also represented. This marked the second planning meeting of the Project Implementation Committee since the project's inception in 2025.

Participants reviewed progress achieved in 2025 and outlined activities for 2026. Given that the project commenced midway through 2025, progress was modest but encouraging. Discussions highlighted fundamental challenges facing food systems, particularly under the growing pressures of climate change. Universities were recognised as playing a pivotal role in co-generating knowledge and solutions. The RAENS project strongly aligns with MUAŠT's mandate in agricultural sciences. Beyond its core responsibilities, MUAŠT leads two Communities of Practice: African Vegetables (through the Institute of African Indigenous Vegetables) and Climate Change (through the Climate Change and Food Security Institute).

The meeting followed MUAŠT's successful hosting of the second Zimbabwe Agroecology Knowledge Network (ZimAEKN) in September 2025. ZimAEKN brings together academic institutions, researchers, government departments, and farmer organisations committed to advancing agroecology. With membership spanning more than 10 national universities, the network provides a rich base of expertise and collaboration in Zimbabwe.

The RAENS project offers a unique platform for farmers, youth, academic institutions, and policymakers to jointly transform the agricultural landscape of Southern Africa. Funded by the European Union, RAENS seeks to establish a robust, innovative, and sustainable multi-actor, transdisciplinary agroecology research and knowledge network. Its objectives include: strengthening existing initiatives, showcasing the scalability and potential of agroecology, facilitating shifts in

agricultural training and research toward agroecological and regenerative practices, informing policy to create an enabling environment for agroecology uptake, research, and training.