

Zambia: "A labour of love" for accidental tomato farmer



People often experience life-changing moments. They may arise from meeting an inspiring person, or from taking on a new challenge. You are going to read the article about a thirty-four-year old woman named Maria Zaloumis.

Warm-up

- ◆ Read the title of the article and the first paragraph. Discuss the following questions in groups of twos or threes.
 - (1) Where did Maria live before she returned to Zambia? How did she make a living?
 - (2) Why did she return to Zambia?
 - (3) How does she make a living in Zambia?



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Listening

- ◆ Let's watch the video for few times. Discuss what you see in the video with your classmates. Do you see any differences between this farm in Zambia and farms in Japan? What other differences do you see?

script

1 From nurse in Australia to successful farmer in Zambia, thirty-four-year-old Maria Zaloumis describes her unlikely change in occupation as an accident. She moved back to her home country after 12 years abroad due to her father's dementia*.

Maria couldn't find nursing work in Zambia because she was overqualified*, so six months later decided to take over the reigns of her family farm.

2 Maria Zaloumis, Tuzini Farm director says:

"It's a very busy life. Today I woke up at 5 AM, we have been harvesting since 5:30 this morning. Basically I have no time for anything else but the farming but it is my passion, it is something that I love to do so I don't look at it as a job, I look at it as a way of life. So for me this is what I love."

3 Maria took over the farm in 2016. It's called Tuzini-an acronym* of her and her siblings' names. The 40 hectare farm is located about 25km north of central Lusaka and produces predominantly tomatoes. It makes around 7,500 US dollars a year-most of which is plowed back* into the farm. Maria is looking to grow her business, but remains focused on helping her community through literacy and building projects.

Maria says:

"I like to help the less privileged and I think that's one thing that really pushed me into farming was helping people who haven't been to school, giving them jobs, reducing poverty, and then giving them a future."

The farm employs over 70 people from local communities, including farm manager Thomas Taulo, who has been with Tuzini for about five years.

4 Thomas Taulo, farm manager says:

"When you are working, you need to make sure that you lift up the family and as of that Tuzini Farm has really helped me to get an income and to help the family. You know, things are tough these days but at least, they've been able to help me that way. "

5 Senzeni Ndebele is a mother of three and a casual worker at Tuzini farm. Because of her work she has been able to send all of her children to school. Senzeni Ndebele, Tuzini farm worker says:

"Now we get paid, I pay schools fees and my children can go to school. I keep paying every month and I have no problems."

6 Maria doesn't regret the career change, because for her, farming is a labour of love.

***dementia**: a serious mental disorder caused by brain disease or injury that affects the ability to think, remember, and behave normally

***overqualified**: having more experience or training than is necessary for a particular job, so that people do not want to employ you

***acronym**: a word formed from the first letters of the words that make up the name of something, for example AIDS is an acronym for 'acquired immune deficiency syndrome'

***plow back**: to put money made as profit back into a business in order to improve it

Discussion

1 Maria took over her family business in Zambia and became a farm owner. Describe her company.

- Company name
- Location
- Land area (hectares)
- Product
- Annual income

2 What does Maria aim to achieve through her work? Write your idea starting with the following sentence, then share your ideas with your classmates.

- Through her work, Maria aims to...

Reading

► Comprehension check 1:

The following words and phrases come from the interviews with Maria and other farm workers. Match each of them with its definition. First, look for the words in the text and try to guess their meanings in context. Then, use a dictionary to check the meaning.

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|-------------------------|---|---|
| (1) overqualified | • | • take charge of an organization, team, etc. |
| (2) take over the reins | • | • having more experience or training than is necessary for a particular job, so that people do not want to employ you |
| (3) harvest | • | • having less money and fewer opportunities than other people in society |
| (4) predominantly | • | • the act of cutting and gathering crops |
| (5) the less privileged | • | • mostly; mainly |

► Comprehension Check 2:

Choose an answer which accurately describes Senzeni Ndebele, one of the workers on Maria's farm.

- a. She is working at the farm so that she can pay for her own tuition fees.
- b. Thanks to her getting the opportunity to work at the farm, her children have been able to receive an education.
- c. Her income helps her send her children to school, but sometimes she has to postpone her payments.

► Comprehension Check 3:

What can you infer from the context of the video?

- a. Regardless of the big career change she made, Maria believes that she can expand her farming business to contribute to the development of her community.
- b. Although Maria has succeeded in her business, she has not given up her hope to find a new position at her former workplace.
- c. As Maria is busy with managing the company, she hires many local workers to plant and harvest tomatoes.