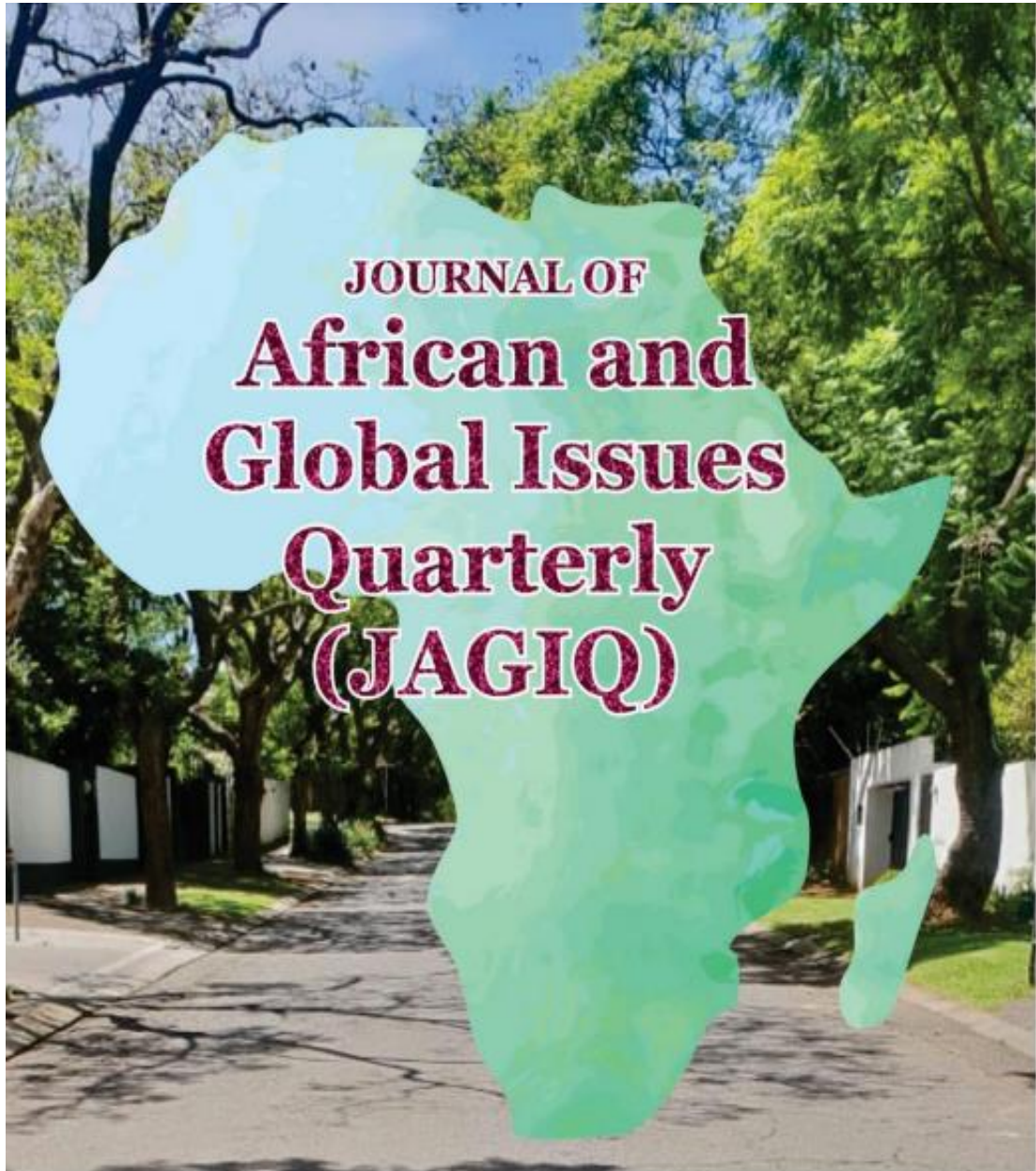




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## **Editorial Note**

### **Indigenous Knowledge, Institutional Capacity, And Africa's Quest For Self-Determination**

Welcome to the October 2026 issue of the African and Global Issues Quarterly. The collection of articles assembled here reflects the journal's enduring commitment to interrogating the multifaceted challenges and opportunities confronting the African continent and its place in the global order. The contributions in this volume share a common thread: a determination to look inward for solutions while engaging critically with external frameworks and legacies.

Several articles in this issue foreground the imperative of harnessing indigenous knowledge and frameworks as vehicles for progress. Nkemakolam and Amaechi propose "Igbozealotism" as an indigenous framework for socio-political and economic advancement, challenging scholars and policymakers to centre African philosophical traditions in contemporary governance discourse. Similarly, Mthethwa, Kolanisi, and Singh explore the repositioning of indigenous knowledge in fostering "studentpreneurship," while Mahlala and colleagues examine indigenous governance systems through a public administration lens. Kilonzo and her co-authors contribute a profile of indigenous banana cultivars, reminding us that agricultural biodiversity and traditional knowledge are integral to food security and rural livelihoods. These contributions collectively affirm that sustainable development in Africa must be rooted in, rather than detached from, local epistemologies and practices.

The issue also engages critically with questions of institutional effectiveness and the delivery of public goods. Lamidi and Hofisi examine the implementation gap in South African public service delivery, highlighting the centrality of bureaucratic capacity. Malope's study of community health worker programmes illuminates the intersection of recruitment, governance, and the democratisation of public administration. These articles underscore that institutional strengthening is not merely a technical exercise but a deeply political one, requiring accountability, inclusivity, and responsiveness to community needs.

On the continental and global stage, Odaudu's analysis of post-Françafrique dynamics in the Sahel offers a penetrating account of shifting dependencies and external realignments in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger, a region of immense strategic significance. Taleat, Lukamba, and Diedericks examine the localisation of the

Sustainable Development Goals, arguing that global agendas must be adapted to local realities if they are to deliver meaningful prosperity. Maeresera's study of strategic communication and nation branding during Zimbabwe's COMESA chairmanship illustrates the role of media in projecting regional leadership.

Finally, the issue addresses pressing social and demographic concerns. Omopo and Pillay investigate the psychological distress associated with food insecurity and housing conditions among school-going children and adolescents, while Ifanayajo, Palamuleni, and Adebawale provide a decomposition analysis of fertility rates among women of reproductive age in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Taken together, these thirteen articles offer a rich and diverse body of scholarship. They challenge us to think deeply about the relationship between indigenous agency and institutional effectiveness, between local realities and global agendas. We trust that this issue will stimulate further research and debate and contribute meaningfully to the advancement of knowledge on African and global affairs.

We thank our authors, reviewers, and readers for their continued support.

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**Table of Content:**

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 1. Proposing Igbozealotism As An Indigenous Framework For Advancing Socio-Political Progress And Economic Development In African Political Landscape<br><i>Somadina Cynthia Nkemakolam, Kingsley Ekene Amaechi</i> | 6   |
| 2. Africa and Sustainable Development Goals: Localization of the Global Agenda towards future prosperity<br><b>Bisiriyu Abiodun TALEAT, Muhlya Tshombe LUKAMBA, Melvin Diedericks</b>                              | 24  |
| 3. Article 33 Of The United Nations Charter And The Peaceful Settlement Of Disputes: An Afrocentric Critique<br><b>Dickiel Kachekenje Mwale Kusainda, Kgothatso Brucely Shai</b>                                   | 42  |
| 4. Repositioning Indigenous Knowledge Utilisation in "Studentpreneurship"<br><b>Mzweleni Fundani Mthethwa, Unathi Kolanisi, and Sue Singh</b>                                                                      | 62  |
| 5. Post-Françafrique in the Sahel: Dependency, Autonomy, and External Realignments in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger<br><b>Joel Odaudu</b>                                                                          | 92  |
| 6. The Persistence and Evolving Role of Traditional Courts within the National Legal Framework of South Africa.<br><b>Sikhumbuzo Sibusiso Khoza, Khulisile Judith Nkuna, Innocent Zitha</b>                        | 123 |
| 7. Bridging the Implementation Gap: Bureaucratic Capacity and Public Service Delivery in South African Context<br><b>Kazeem Oyedele Lamidi, Costa Hofisi</b>                                                       | 142 |
| 8. Recruitment, Governance, And The Democratisation Of Public Administration: Evidence From A Community Health Worker Programme In Sedibeng District, Gauteng<br><b>Nthabeleng Malope</b>                          | 165 |
| 9. Food Insecurity, Housing Conditions and Psychological Distress among School-Going Children and Adolescents Aged 9–19 Years<br><b>Oluwaseun Emmanuel Omopo, and Jace Pillay</b>                                  | 194 |

10. Parity Progression Ratio and Decomposition Analysis of Fertility Rates  
Among Women of Reproductive Age in Sub-Saharan Africa  
**Ifanayajo Oluwafemi, Palamuleni Martin E., Adebawale Ayo S.**  
217
11. Exploring Indigenous Governance Systems And Traditional Practices: A  
Contemporary Public Administration Perspective  
**Sandiso Mahlala, Zwelinzima Ndevu, Phumudzo P. Ramolai, Bright Muronda**  
246
12. A Profile of Indigenous Banana Cultivars in Rural South Africa  
**Beata Kilonzo, John B. Ochanda Ogola, Ishmael Obaeko Iwara**  
271
13. Strategic Communication and Nation Branding: Media Instrumentality in Projecting  
Zimbabwe's Regional Leadership During the COMESA Chairmanship, 2026–2027  
**Sadiki Maeresera**  
286

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## A PROFILE OF INDIGENOUS BANANA CULTIVARS IN RURAL SOUTH AFRICA

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### **Abstract:**

*Like many other African Indigenous knowledge systems and business orientations, indigenous banana cultivars and/or local landraces within local communities still lack comprehensive documentation and representation in contemporary academic discourse. This gap is concerning, particularly given that indigenous bananas play a crucial role in food security, entrepreneurial activities, and broader local economic sustainability. Given the ongoing trends in climate change and globalization, there is a risk that some of this banana knowledge systems may become extinct if not adequately conserved, thereby hindering their fundamental benefits for the designated communities. Using a participatory community-led action research methodology, this study documents existing banana cultivars in selected rural areas of South Africa and the rationale for their preservation. The findings derived from the live experiences of knowledge holders highlighted 12 important cultivars. The banana cultivation motive is anchored in cultural and ancestral heritage, ecology, food security and resilience to external agents and economic factors, such as market niches. This documentation provides essential insights that can inform decisions for sustainable and cost-effective agricultural practices. Further study may explore the cultural uses and economic imperatives of the documented banana cultivars.*

**Keywords:** *Afrocentrism, agro-ecology, Indigenous knowledge systems, banana cultivars, food security, entrepreneurship, rural development,*

## 1. Introduction

Indigenous bananas (*Musa spp.*) represent a pivotal component of agro-biodiversity and cultural heritage in many tropical and subtropical regions across the globe. However, these cultivars confront habitat loss due to climate change and the spread of monoculture plantations. Consequently, comprehensive documentation and community-based conservation efforts are imperative in mitigating these threats. This process is not merely an academic exercise but a fundamental endeavour with profound implications for local economies. This paper distils the significance of profiling indigenous banana cultivars, emphasizing their role in sustainable agriculture, cultural heritage, food security, and income generation within South Africa.

Indigenous banana cultivars are frequently uniquely adapted to local environmental conditions, making them resilient to diseases, pests, and climatic stresses (Heslop-Harrison & Schwarzhacher, 2007). This adaptability reduces costly agrochemical inputs, lowering production costs for smallholder farmers and entrepreneurs (Piedra-Bonilla & Echeverría, 2023). Therefore, by profiling these banana cultivars, communities across the globe can identify and propagate high-yielding and disease-resistant cultivars, enhancing agricultural productivity, profitability, food security and sustainability. In addition, the preservation of Indigenous banana cultivars supports the nurturing of niche markets for traditional and organic produce, which frequently

command premium prices in local and international markets.

Beyond adaptability, empirical evidence indicates that Indigenous banana cultivars are a staple food for millions. In sub-Saharan Africa, particularly in Burundi, Rwanda, and Uganda, bananas—especially cooking varieties like East African Highland bananas—are a dietary cornerstone, providing a significant portion of daily caloric intake (Okonya et al., 2019). Similarly, in Southeast Asia, countries, such as Indonesia and the Philippines rely heavily on bananas, including indigenous cultivars, such as Cardaba and Saba, for food and economic activities (Valmayor et al., 2000; Damarjati, 2000; Ploetz & Evans, 2015). A similar trend has been observed in the Pacific Islands, where bananas are integral to the diets and cultural practices of communities in Fiji and Papua New Guinea (Thaman, 1990; Igua, 2001; Shah, Moroca & Bhat, 2018). In this context, bananas are often cultivated within traditional agroforestry systems. Furthermore, indigenous groups in Latin America, in countries such as Colombia and Ecuador, have historically depended on bananas as primary food sources, integrating them into their agricultural and culinary traditions (Evans, Ballen & Siddiq, 2020; Caro et al., 2023). These regions highlight the global importance of bananas as a vital crop for Indigenous livelihoods. Protecting these indigenous cultivars can enhance local food security and reduce reliance on imported food items, thereby retaining economic value within local economies.

Indeed, Indigenous bananas are deeply connected to the cultural identities of many communities. These cultural values must be protected and sustained for future generations. Thus, comprehensive documentation of these cultivars helps preserve vital traditional knowledge systems, including cultivation methods, culinary uses, and medicinal applications (Hernandez, 2022). This cultural capital can be harnessed for eco-tourism and agro-tourism, creating new revenue streams for local economies—especially in rural areas that are often neglected. For example, festivals and markets centred around Indigenous banana cultivars can attract tourists and generate income for artisans, farmers, and small businesses.

A unique reason for maintaining Indigenous banana cultivars is the cultural and spiritual significance attached to specific varieties. For many Indigenous groups, bananas are not merely a food and source of income but are also central to rituals, ceremonies, and traditional practices. In Uganda, for instance, the East African Highland banana cultivars (*Musa* AAA-EA & *Musa* ABB) are used for Indigenous medicine in traditional healing practices (Mulugo et al., 2024). They also play a key role in cultural events such as births and weddings, symbolising fertility, prosperity, and communal growth (Kilwinger, Rietveld & Almekinders, 2017; Mulugo et al., 2024). Participants often prepare delicious meals and distribute banana bunches. A similar trend is seen in the Philippines and Indonesia, where certain traditional banana landraces are vital in healing practices and

religious offerings, reflecting their embeddedness within the countries' Indigenous philosophical systems and local belief practices (Hapsari et al., 2017). These cultural connections motivate and ensure the ongoing cultivation and preservation of certain banana cultivars, as they are regarded as custodians of ancestral heritage and identity. Although not extensively documented, it is likely that South Africa shares similar practices.

Similar to other cultures, Indigenous crops in South Africa are increasingly being recognised as essential building blocks for healthier communities, sustainable livelihoods, and resilient food systems (United Nations in South Africa, 2026). They play a crucial role in food security, rural livelihoods, cultural heritage, and local economic development, particularly among small-scale farming communities, and communities are rediscovering these values (Takaidza, 2023; United Nations in South Africa, 2026). Banana is no exemption. Beyond its value as a nutritious food source in South Africa, studies reveal that Indigenous knowledge associated with the production and ripening contributes to sustainable agricultural practices that are affordable, locally adapted, and environmentally friendly (Karamura et al., 1998; Daneel et al., 2015; Kilonzo, Ogola & Iwara, 2025). In Limpopo and Mpumalanga provinces, for instance, indigenous banana cultivation practices have been shown to support entrepreneurship, food security, income generation, and household resilience, especially in rural areas (Kilonzo, Ogola & Iwara,

2025). Likewise, the systems help preserve valuable local knowledge while contributing to broader goals of sustainable agriculture, biodiversity conservation, environmental sustainability and community development.

Through participatory research, interactive discussions and community stories, this study interrogates the typology of indigenous banana in selected rural areas in South Africa. It is envisaged that documenting these banana cultivars/landraces farmed by local communities in the country will preserve indigenous knowledge, safeguards valuable genetic resources for future food security, supports cultural heritage, and provides insights into locally adapted agricultural practices that enhance resilience to environmental and climatic challenges.

## **2. Methodology**

This study was conducted in Limpopo and Mpumalanga provinces, selected due to their significant banana cultivation activities, which surpass those of other regions in the country. An exploratory qualitative case study research design was used, employing a participatory action research approach to facilitate in-depth engagement with local farmers and knowledge holders. This approach was resourceful in identifying the prevalent banana cultivars in the area and understanding the rationale driving farmers to cultivate specific cultivars. The essence of participatory community-led action research lies in fostering collaborative knowledge conservation

and transfer through direct involvement with knowledge holders.

To ensure the inclusion of well-informed participants, a purposive sampling technique was followed, targeting key informants and experienced farmers with extensive knowledge of banana cultivation in the study area. Through these initial engagements, additional participants were recruited using a snowball sampling approach until the saturation point was reached—that is, when subsequent information obtained from banana farmers became redundant. At this stage, 144 participants had been actively engaged through 16 focus group discussions (FGDs), each consisting of 9 members. These FGDs were conducted through in-person interactions guided by a semi-structured questionnaire. Additionally, five experienced banana knowledge holders were selected for in-depth, one-on-one interviews, bringing the total number of participants to 149.

Data collection was performed between May 2022 and September 2024, excluding initial preparatory phases, such as community entry. The collected data were transcribed into 21 text documents, corresponding to the focus group discussions. This was analysed using Atlas.ti v8 software through the open coding system - allowing for systematic data organization, content modelling, and pattern recognition. The analytical process enhanced the identification of key thematic insights regarding banana cultivars and farmers' motivations for their cultivation choices.

3. Result and Discussion of Findings

Twelve cultivars/landraces were profiled in the Limpopo and Mpumalanga areas. These include the big banana, China banana, Dwarf

cavendish, Etros banana, Grand nine/nandis, Jokey, Luvhele, Mabonde, Mberegeni, Sweet/home banana, William and Ya Tshivenda (Figure 1).

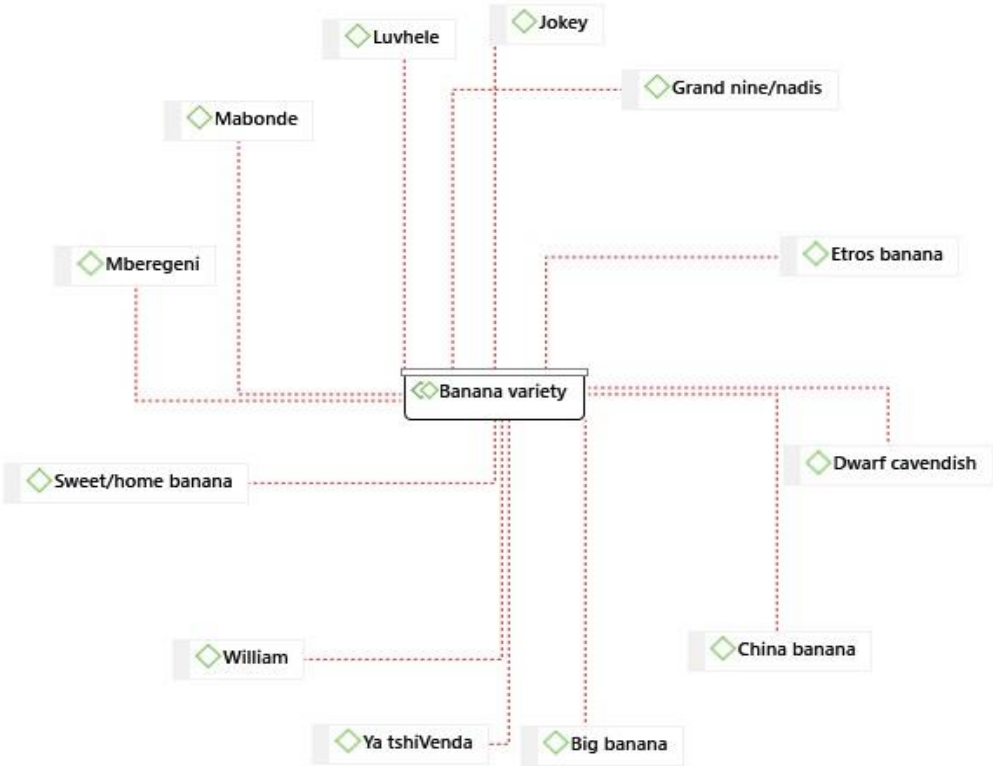


Figure 1. Banana cultivars/landraces existing in the study areas

Out of the 12 banana cultivars/landraces profiled from the study areas, William is common in both locations. Big banana, China banana, Dwarf Cavendish, Etros banana, and Sweet/ home banana were

unique to Mpumalanga province, whereas Grand nine/nandis, Jokey, Luvhele, Mabonde, Mberegeni, and Ya Tshivenda were identified in Limpopo province (Table 1).

Table 1. Banana cultivars/landraces variation across locations

| S/N | Banana species        | Limpopo | Mpumalanga |
|-----|-----------------------|---------|------------|
| 1   | Big banana            |         | *          |
| 2   | China banana          |         | *          |
| 3   | Dwarf Cavendish       |         | *          |
| 4   | Etros banana          |         | *          |
| 5   | Grand nine and Nandis | *       |            |
| 6   | Jokey                 | *****   |            |
| 7   | Luvhele               | ****    |            |
| 8   | Mabonde               | *****   |            |

|    |                    |       |       |
|----|--------------------|-------|-------|
| 9  | Mberegeni          | *     |       |
| 10 | Sweet/ home banana |       | ***** |
| 11 | William            | ***** | ***** |
| 12 | Ya Tshivenda       | *     |       |

**Note: (\*) denotes the presence of the banana cultivar/landrace**

The local farmers' motivation for venturing into banana cultivar/landrace in the study areas hinges on 12 attributes. This includes adaptiveness, availability, cost-effectiveness, household consumption, huge size, inheritance, market demand, multiple yielding, taste preference, and turnover (see Table 2 & Figure 2). The cultivar/landrace William, for instance, meets all the

requirements, except for household consumption. Jokey banana and sweet/home banana cultivars/landraces demonstrate prominence for market demand, multiple yielding and taste preference, while Luvhele, Mabonde and Mberegani are more cost-effective to produce and good for household consumption.

**Table 2. Rationale for selecting banana species**

|                           | Big Banana | Chinabana | Dwarf Cavendish banana | Etros banana | Grand nine/ Nandis banana | Jokey banana | Luvhele banana | Mabonde banana | Mberegani banana | Sweet/home banana | William banana | Ya Tshivenda banana |
|---------------------------|------------|-----------|------------------------|--------------|---------------------------|--------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|-------------------|----------------|---------------------|
| Adaptiveness & resilience |            |           | x                      |              |                           |              | x              | x              | x                | x                 | x              |                     |
| Availability              |            |           |                        |              |                           |              |                |                |                  |                   | x              |                     |
| Cost-effectiveness        |            |           | x                      |              |                           |              | x              | x              | x                | x                 | x              |                     |
| Household consumption     | x          |           |                        |              |                           | x            | x              | x              | x                |                   |                |                     |
| Huge size                 | x          |           |                        |              | x                         | x            |                | x              |                  |                   | x              |                     |
| Inheritance               |            |           |                        |              |                           | x            | x              |                |                  |                   | x              | x                   |
| Market demand             |            |           |                        |              |                           | x            |                |                |                  | x                 | x              |                     |
| Multiple yielding         |            |           | x                      |              |                           | x            | x              | x              | x                | x                 | x              |                     |
| Taste preference          |            | x         |                        |              |                           | x            | x              | x              |                  | x                 | x              |                     |
| Turnover                  |            |           |                        |              | x                         |              |                |                |                  |                   | x              |                     |

**Note: (x) denotes the presence of the banana cultivar/landrace**

As mentioned earlier, the local farmers' motivation for venturing into a specific banana cultivar/landrace hinge on several factors. Adaptiveness, for instance, is reflected in William (see Figure 1). In a focus group discussion with knowledge holders, it was asserted that:

*“...the weather conditions and soil type... allow the bananas to grow in the area”*

**(D 12, Code 12:1, Focus group 2, Marite, Mpumalanga, 21 June 2023). “William is easy to grow”; it is resilient to all kinds of weather conditions in which plants survive. Besides, it requires little effort to produce when compared with other varieties” (D 4, Code 4:2, Focus group 3, Tshidzivhe-**

**Thathe, Limpopo, 17 May 2022).**

The participants' responses suggest that the adoption of William is primarily driven by its perceived agronomic adaptability, resilience, and ease of cultivation. Its ability to grow satisfactorily under prevailing environmental conditions with limited management inputs appears to enhance its attractiveness, thereby contributing to its widespread acceptance among the local farmers. Against the backdrop of recurring water scarcity in South Africa, which contributes to soil desiccation and constrains agricultural productivity, the resilience of the banana variety emerges as a key trait that supports crop establishment and sustained performance under adverse conditions. As it enables agricultural production under resource-constrained conditions while reducing dependence on intensive water inputs, this eco-friendly cultivar contributes to environmental sustainability, biodiversity conservation and sustainable livelihoods. Beyond adaptiveness, the former is accessible. The seeds and banana plants are available and obtainable for propagation:

***“It is sold in retail stores like Shoprite and our local markets, the seeds and offspring can be sourced locally within our communities for production. It is not expensive either... (D 18, Code 18:1, Participant 2, Boiketlo, Mpumalanga, 22 June 2023).***

Four dimensions through which farmers access and propagate

the bananas emerged. Firstly, the transplant of suckers or pups; that is, baby plants that grow at the base of the mature banana, carefully removing and transplanting of Rhizomes that produce pups underground the banana stems; relocation of a cut string of banana spacy which still has at least one bud to well-draining soil to regenerate, and lastly, nursery using the seedlings. Like Willian, Knowledge holders expressed that the production of banana cultivars such as Dwarf Cavendish, Luvhele, Mabonde, Mberegeni, and Sweet/ home banana is relatively cost-effective. Cost in this context is explained by production implications from the specimen used for plantation, farm maintenance, and plant treatment.

Household consumption also determines farmers' choice of banana production. For example, the big banana cultivar/landrace is well appreciated for its size and capacity to conveniently cater to the needs of large households, specifically food demand, in Mpumalanga. The cultivar, based on this perception, is as an important resource for enhancing household food security, reducing vulnerability to food shortages, and poverty-related issues the country is dealing with. Consequently, the banana contributes to food security and household sustainability. A participant emphasized:

***“Big banana is good for household consumption; I know it from the elders. Because it is big, not so much of it is required to make a sizable meal for the family. It can be shared, and it goes round the table during lunch***

***and dinner” (D 20, Code 20:1, Participant 4, Zoeknog, Mpumalanga, 22 June 2023).***

Farmers prioritise big banana preservation for domestic utilisation. Although the banana variety possesses a high production potential, its primary value, according to the participants may extend beyond household consumption. A pertinent question, therefore, is why this banana variety continues to be cultivated primarily for household consumption purposes rather than market sales, despite its capacity to generate abundant yields and potential economic returns. A similar trend was observed with the Jokey and Luvhele cultivars, commonly found in the Limpopo areas:

***“Jokey bananas... for household consumption and they foster relations (D 4: Focus group 3, Tshidzivhe-Thathe, Limpopo, 17 May 2022). Similarly, “Luvhele produces massively, and it helps in maintaining household food security” (D 3, Code 3:4, Focus group 2, Vhutalu, Limpopo, 17 May 2022).***

Size is an essential attribute, which influences farmers’ choice of bananas mainly because of its potential to foster household food security. From the entrepreneurial perspective, participants explain that the banana market's viability strongly hinges on its size. The bigger a banana, the more attractive and competitive it is in the market. Therefore, it is unclear why little is mentioned about business/market demand in terms of the big banana cultivar/landrace.

Emphases were rather made on Jokey, Sweet banana and William, leaving researchers with speculations that the latter possess both size and taste qualities. Big banana cultivars may possess appreciable size attributes; however, they lack taste. For instance, farmers commend:

***“Jokie is sweet and has a lot of sugar” (D 2, Code 2:2, Focus group 10, Lwamondo, Limpopo, 20 May 2022), ...is good to sell as the fruit grows larger” (D 3, Code 3:3, Focus group 2, Vhutalu, Limpopo, 17 May 2022). “William and Jockey are good for business and a growing economy” (D 6, Code 6:1, Focus group 5, Duthuni-Vhutanda, Limpopo, 18 May 2022).***

Besides producing huge bunches like the big banana cultivar, the latter possess other unique traits, strategically positioning in the market, and edging over others. From the excerpts:

***“William produces big extra-large khula and large khula” (D 9, Code 9:2, Focus group 8, Matsika, Limpopo, 19 May 2022), “grow big and produces more bunch” (D 10, Code 10:1, Focus group 9, Lwamondo, Limpopo, 20 May 2022), “multiply fast” (D 13, Code 13:1, Focus group 3, Marite, Mpumalanga, 21 June 2023)***

***“...it produces good fruits and it good quality for business and growing economy” (D 8, Code 8:1, Focus group 7, Matsika, Limpopo, 19 May***

**2022), making it a “type of banana loved by everyone” (D 15, Code 15:1, Focus group 5, Marite, Mpumalanga, 22 June 2023).**

The attributes expressed collectively motivated farmers’ choice of selecting certain banana cultivars/landraces, such as William, for business-related endeavours. Other notable attributes within the nosiness domain centre on turnover and multiple yielding. Turnover in this context refers to the speed at which a banana cultivar ramps up, produces, and ripens for market advantages, while multiple yielding explains the capacity to regenerate, as well as the quantity of production per lifespan in terms of bunches and fruits. Grand nine/Nandis and William cultivars/landraces were credited for swift production:

**“William grows taller, and the fruit is good for selling” (D 7, Code 7:1, Focus group 6, Duthuni-Vhutanda, Limpopo, 18 May 2022). “We harvest within 18 months of planting; this is smart when compared to other species found locally” (D 9, Codeb 9:1, Focus group 8, Matsika, Limpopo, 19 May 2022).**

**“...it grows big bunches of fruits in huge sizes that are marketable, and importantly, it multiplies very fast” (D 13, Code 13:1, Focus group 3, Marite, Mpumalanga, 21 June 2023). “William grows big and produces more bunches (D 10, Code 10:1, Focus group 9, Lwamondo, Limpopo, 20 May 2022),**

**...and ripens fast (D 2, Code 2:1, Focus group 10, Lwamondo, Limpopo, 20 May 2022).**

Accordingly, farmers maintained that, as it is with the William banana cultivar/landrace in terms of turnover, so does the Grand nine/nandis cultivar:

**“We harvest Grand nine/nandis banana fruits within 18 months of initiation” (D 9, Code 9:1, Focus group 8, Matsika, Limpopo, 19 May 2022). “Nandis produces a medium and large bunch of bananas, which makes it good for business” (D 9, Code 9:3, Focus group 8, Matsika, Limpopo, 19 May 2022).**

Seven (Dwarf Cavendish, Jokey, Luvhele, Mabonde, Mberegeni, Sweet/Home, and Willian) out of the 12 banana cultivars/landraces received credit for multiple yields. These cultivars/landraces are prominent in their respective designated locations, competing amongst themselves to dominate the banana fruit markets. Farmers’ choice of banana cultivars extends to culture. Some cultivars/landraces were inherited from the ancestors, while others have Indigenous medicinal value, hence, critically imperative for their tradition:

**“William banana cultivar is an indigenous type that is mostly left by our forefathers (D 15, Code 15:2, Focus group 5, Marite, Mpumalanga, 22 June 2023). “William and Jokey bananas**

***are as old as our ancestors in this land. These are traditional bananas that were grown before colonizers settled. Hence, we conserved it through continuous propagation as it is a true reflection of our ancestors' efforts and a resource, we, the offspring, inherited without cost. Beyond business, it is also a traditional medicine to us"* (D 1, Code 1:1, Focus group 1, Vhutalu, Limpopo, 17 May 2022).**

The findings suggest that the cultivation of William, Jokey and Luvhele varieties is underpinned by a complex interplay of agronomic and socio-cultural considerations. They

have been inherited, passed down through family lineages, and preserved across generations by the farmers because of their important place in ancestral heritage. Their utilisation in traditional medicine, festivals and ritual activities highlights their role as a repository of cultural heritage, thereby reinforcing continued relevance within local farming and livelihood systems despite the availability of alternative commercial banana varieties. In other words, cultivating certain banana cultivars/landraces in the localities extends beyond agricultural production, commercialisation and food security to encompass the safeguarding of cultural heritage, traditional memory, indigenous knowledge, and communal identity.

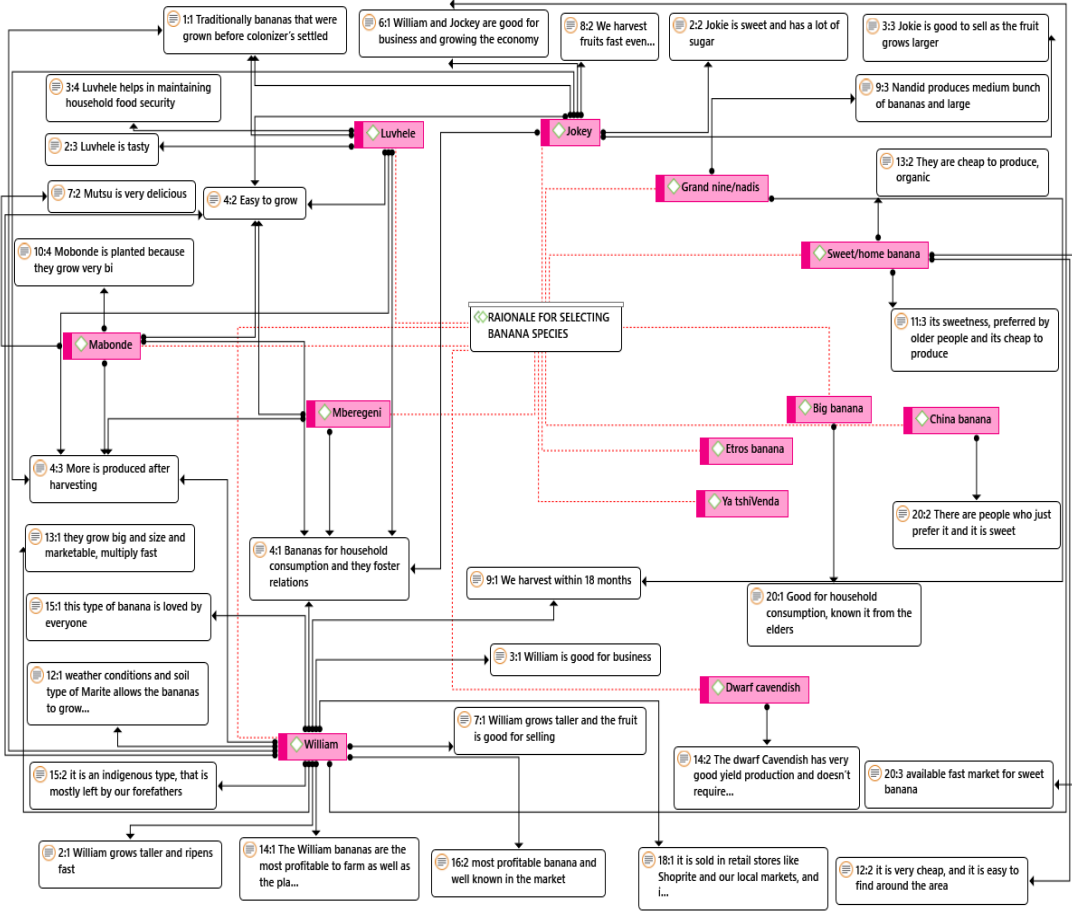


**Figure 2. A pictorial representation of the rationale for selecting banana cultivars with participants' excerpts.**

Indigenous communities in South Africa often prioritise farming and preserving specific banana cultivars/landraces for reasons deeply rooted in their cultural heritage and ecological and socio-economic contexts. For instance, Jokey, Luvhele, and William cultivars/landraces were ancestral, inherited from the forefathers and conserved for generations, thus ensuring heritage longevity. Although the specific cultural significance of the banana cultivars is not well articulated, the local farmers believe that the cultivars are a reminder of their ancestral struggles and a continuous celebration of their cultural heritage. This finding

is consistent with evidence from Ugandan Indigenous communities, where a specific banana cultivar called the East African Highland banana is specifically grown for cultural events such as weddings and births, a symbolic representation of fertility and prosperity (Mulugo et al., 2024). It also reflects Hapsaru et al. (2017)'s summation of Indonesia and the Philippines, where certain Indigenous banana cultivars are critical for traditional healing practices and religious offerings. These cultural ties in various contexts ensure the cultivation of specific banana varieties, as they are considered

custodians of ancestral heritage and cultural identity.

Another vital reason for cultivating certain Indigenous banana cultivars/landraces lies in their unique adaptation to local environmental and atmospheric conditions. Indigenous banana cultivars/landraces such as Dwarf Cavendish, Luvhele, Mabonde, Mberegeni, Sweet/ home and William frequently exhibit resilience to pests, diseases, and climatic stresses, making them cost-effective, economically viable and invaluable for sustainable agriculture in the region. Heslop-Similarly, Harrison and Schwarzacher (2007) observed that certain banana cultivars are grown in traditional agroforestry systems, where they thrive alongside other crops, enhancing biodiversity and soil health. These cultivars/landraces are frequently cultivated and preserved because they require little manpower and fewer external inputs, including fertilisers and pesticides, minimising production costs and environmental impact.

Comprehensive documentation of these unique locally adapted banana varieties would fundamentally inform sustainable agriculture as farmers can adopt cost-effective and resilient cultivars in the face of economic, climate change and other environmental challenges.

Socio-economic factors are crucial determinants for cultivating certain Indigenous banana cultivars/landraces. Many communities rely on specific banana varieties for income through local and niche markets. For example, Jokey, Luvhele, Mabonde, Mberegeni, Sweet/home, and William featured prominently in this category, credited for their taste, multiple yields and market demand. These inherent

attributes together influence business turnover. Like these species, Indigenous communities in Ecuador highly value the Barraganete banana variety (Musa AAB) for its unique flavour and texture, fetching premium prices in local markets (Evans et al., 2020; Caro et al., 2023). In India, the Nendran banana (Musa AAB) is an integral ingredient in traditional dishes and snacks, significantly driving its demand, which in turn supports small-scale farmers in the country, venturing into the banana variety (Pillay et al., 2004). Certain banana varieties enable Indigenous communities to safeguard their livelihoods and promote agro-biodiversity, which is pivotal for long-term economic resilience.

#### **4. Conclusion and Recommendation**

In South Africa, farmers cultivate a wide variety of Indigenous banana cultivars and/or landraces. The motivation behind banana cultivation is multifaceted, spanning cultural, ecological, and economic domains. Jokey, Luvhele, and Willan banana varieties are primarily grown for cultural reasons. These varieties are ancestral, inherited from forefathers and conserved across generations, thus ensuring heritage longevity. The cultivation of Dwarf Cavendish, Luvhele, Mabonde, Mberegeni, Sweet/Home, and William cultivars/landraces is driven by their resilience to pests, diseases, and climatic stresses, making them cost-effective, economically viable, and essential for sustainable agriculture in the regions. Similarly, Jokey, Luvhele, Mabonde, Mberegeni, Sweet/Home, and William are valued for their savoury taste and multiple yielding attributes, which significantly

influence their demand and establish them as a niche market. Documenting these important banana cultivars can help conserve cultural heritage and promote sustainable agriculture by providing insights into cost-effective and resilient cultivars for adoption.

While participants emphasised that Jokey, Luvhele, and William are inherited ancestral cultivars, the available data provide limited insight into the specific ways in which they have been integrated into traditional ceremonies, rituals, or everyday socio-cultural practices. In other words, although their cultural significance is frequently asserted, the underlying cultural meanings, symbolic roles, and contextual uses remain insufficiently substantiated, representing an important knowledge gap and highlights the need for further ethnographic research.

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#### **Institutional Review Board**

**Statement:** “The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki and approved by the Institutional Review Board (or Ethics Committee) of the University of Venda.”

**Data Availability Statement:** Data is unavailable publicly due to privacy or ethical restrictions; however, it is obtainable through the University management.

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Abbreviations.

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