



Eating Worms And Protecting Parks

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THE concept of sustainable development seems to be taking root among some Namibians, including traditional authorities.

In an effort to ensure that mopane worms in the Uukwaluudhi Conservancy are not over-harvested but utilised in a sustainable manner, the Uukwaluudhi Traditional Authority (UTA) has set up regulations governing the harvesting of mopane worms in their forests.

Before people start harvesting mopane worms (*Imbrassia belina*), says the Headman of Iikokola District in Uukwaluudhi area Veikko Iishila, a meeting is held to inform the people that mopane worms are mature and can be harvested.

Each harvester has to get written permission from the UTA or from other relevant authorities at a fee.

Mopane harvesting time, Iishila says, is usually from March to April.

This helps to make sure that forests are not over-harvested and that immature worms are not collected.

Iishila said money levied from mopane collectors is put into the Omugulu gwOmbashe gwOmagungu Trust Fund of the Uukwaluudhi Traditional Authority under the chairmanship of King Taapopi.

Recently, the fund gave N\$20 000 to the Omusati Education and Training Trust, which grants study bursaries to students from the Omusati Region.

"Our conservancy is there to benefit our people," King Taapopi told *The Namibian* this week.

Mopane worms are large caterpillars that feed on the leaves of the mopane tree in southern Africa.

The worms are high in fat and protein, have a gritty texture and slightly meaty taste when fried and are considered a delicacy by many people in Namibia, Zimbabwe, Botswana and South Africa.

King Taapopi said they also have game species such gemsbok, zebra and the rare red-faced black impala in their conservancy.

He believes that reintroducing wildlife helps bring tourists to the area.

King Taapopi said the community also benefits from wildlife by selling some of the animals and depositing the proceeds into the community fund, which is used in solving community problems.

The Uukwaluudhi Conservancy was established through the Community-Based Natural Resource Management programme of the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, which enables people to manage and benefit from the natural resources in their environment in a sustainable way.
