Hamad Mwitanii starts most days navigating the steep slope of a ravine on the outskirts of his village. This challenging terrain is his farm — a small half- hectare plot that despite its size, is something to marvel at. In the past, this steep hillside was cultivated with a monoculture of cassava by his family.

Over the years, the constant mono-cropping depleted the soil of its nutrients and weakened the terrain. “There are a lot of farmers who face the same challenges,” Hamad explains as we slowly navigate between freshly planted vanilla cuttings.

When Hamad met Community Forests International’s agroforestry and spice experts Ali and Yahya, he found the support and technical assistance he needed to be able to restore and adapt his small farm. Hamad hasn’t looked back since — transforming his land into an incredibly diverse and productive Spice Forest.

By the time we reach the bottom of the ravine, Hamad has identified vanilla, cinnamon, pepper, avocado, mango, cardamom, clove, turmeric, ginger and the list goes on. It’s a cornucopia of tropical fruits, medicinal plants and fragrant spices that Zanzibar is famous for.

It turns out that Hamad is a natural teacher. We now use his inspiring Spice Forest as one of our Farmer Field Schools — outdoor classrooms for farmers that champion local experts like Hamad. Alongside Community Forests’ staff, Hamad now teaches other farmers about climate-smart agriculture and is helping increase awareness and adaptation of agroforestry practices across Pemba island.

Your support allows small-scale farmers like Hamad to transition to growing diverse Spice Forests that benefit people and the planet.