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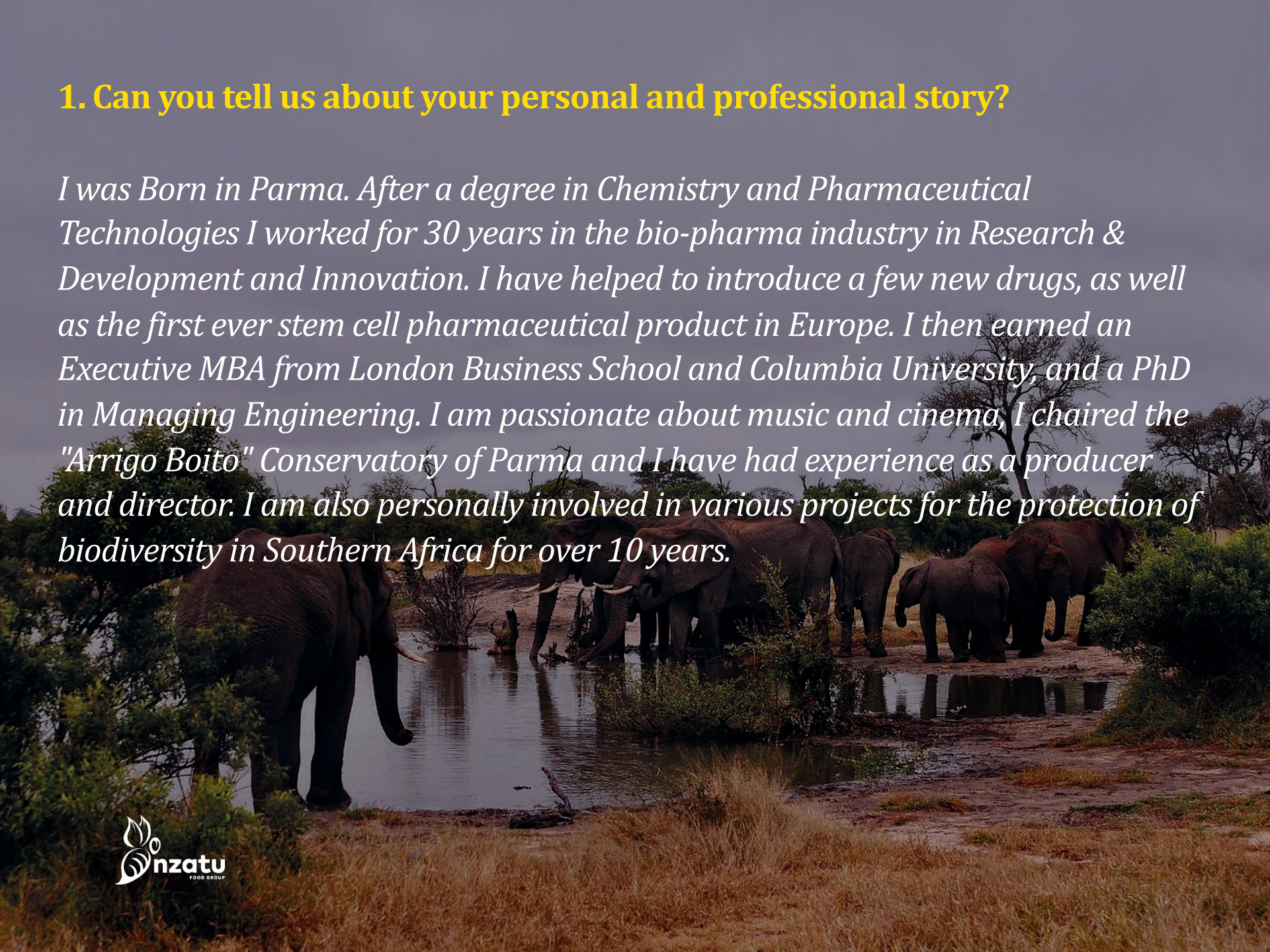
NAMIBIA
SOUTH AFRICA
BOTSWANA
nzatu
FOOD GROUP

1. Can you tell us about your personal and professional story?

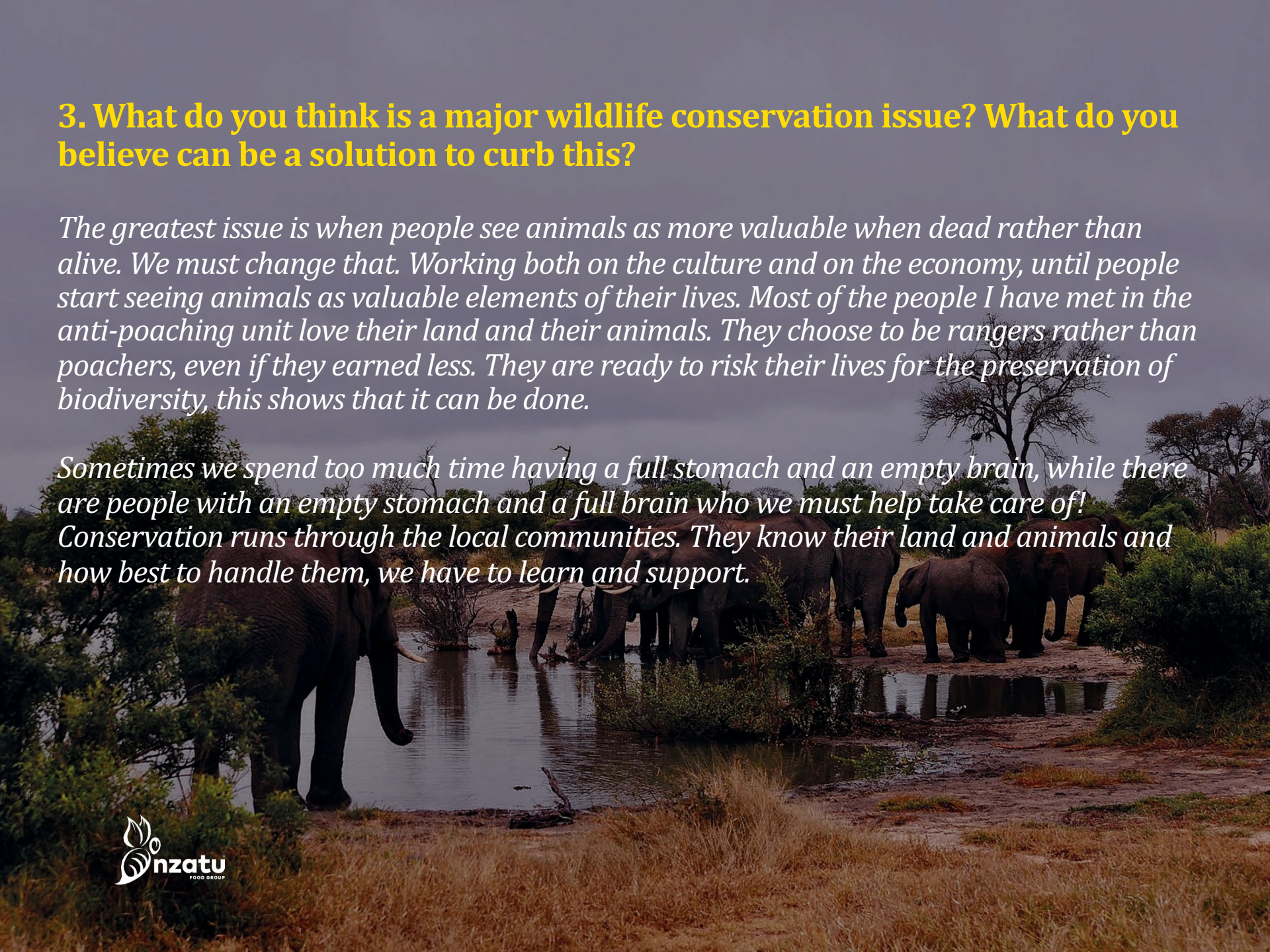
I was Born in Parma. After a degree in Chemistry and Pharmaceutical Technologies I worked for 30 years in the bio-pharma industry in Research & Development and Innovation. I have helped to introduce a few new drugs, as well as the first ever stem cell pharmaceutical product in Europe. I then earned an Executive MBA from London Business School and Columbia University, and a PhD in Managing Engineering. I am passionate about music and cinema, I chaired the "Arrigo Boito" Conservatory of Parma and I have had experience as a producer and director. I am also personally involved in various projects for the protection of biodiversity in Southern Africa for over 10 years.



2. We know that you are an accomplished conservationist. How did this happen? Can you share some stories ?

I was attracted to Africa by my dear friend Davide Bomben, an accomplished field guide and anti-poaching unit trainer. I decided I wanted to personally know the truth of anti-poaching, I therefore performed several eco-missions in Botswana, Kenya, Namibia, South Africa and trained as a ranger in Namibia & Poland.

Sharing time in the bush with people risking their lives to save and protect nature has been a unique bonding experience. Now, it is difficult for me to stay away from that environment. One of the best stories I recall is when we were in Botswana, micro-chipping two baby rhinos, sons of two sisters that were living together as a big family. When we anesthetized the first one, his mother went crazy and started running around us! So, we fenced the baby and did what we had to do it. For the whole time she ran around us, calling out to him until we finished. As soon as we freed the baby, he called her, and she came running back to him. They then reunited and ran away together. When we did the same to the second baby, the mother just ran away, leaving the sleeping baby there! After the job was done, it took us more than an hour to find her and lure her back to her son. Even wild animals have different personalities!



3. What do you think is a major wildlife conservation issue? What do you believe can be a solution to curb this?

The greatest issue is when people see animals as more valuable when dead rather than alive. We must change that. Working both on the culture and on the economy, until people start seeing animals as valuable elements of their lives. Most of the people I have met in the anti-poaching unit love their land and their animals. They choose to be rangers rather than poachers, even if they earned less. They are ready to risk their lives for the preservation of biodiversity, this shows that it can be done.

Sometimes we spend too much time having a full stomach and an empty brain, while there are people with an empty stomach and a full brain who we must help take care of! Conservation runs through the local communities. They know their land and animals and how best to handle them, we have to learn and support.

4. What has motivated you to become a shareholder at Nzatu? How do you think that regenerative agriculture and sustainable local economies can help protect wildlife?

In the last few years, I have been looking for ways to support conservation activities without the need to live off charity. You may have money donated this year, but nothing the year after. It means that you can never make long term plans, it simply won't work! Therefore, we have to create a sustainable path to carry out and support these activities - this is exactly Nzatu's mission. To train people and help provide income for the local communities in a financially sustainable way. This is why we are a company and not a non-profit.

Development goes through culture and the economy. By training farmers on soil science, intercropping and the practices of organic and balanced agriculture, we can help improve the quality of the land and in turn increase biodiversity. Introducing the right species and reducing the possibility of human-wildlife conflict that often arise must be carefully managed. Moreover, providing a potential source of income to women can help improve their condition in some places where there is a need for it.

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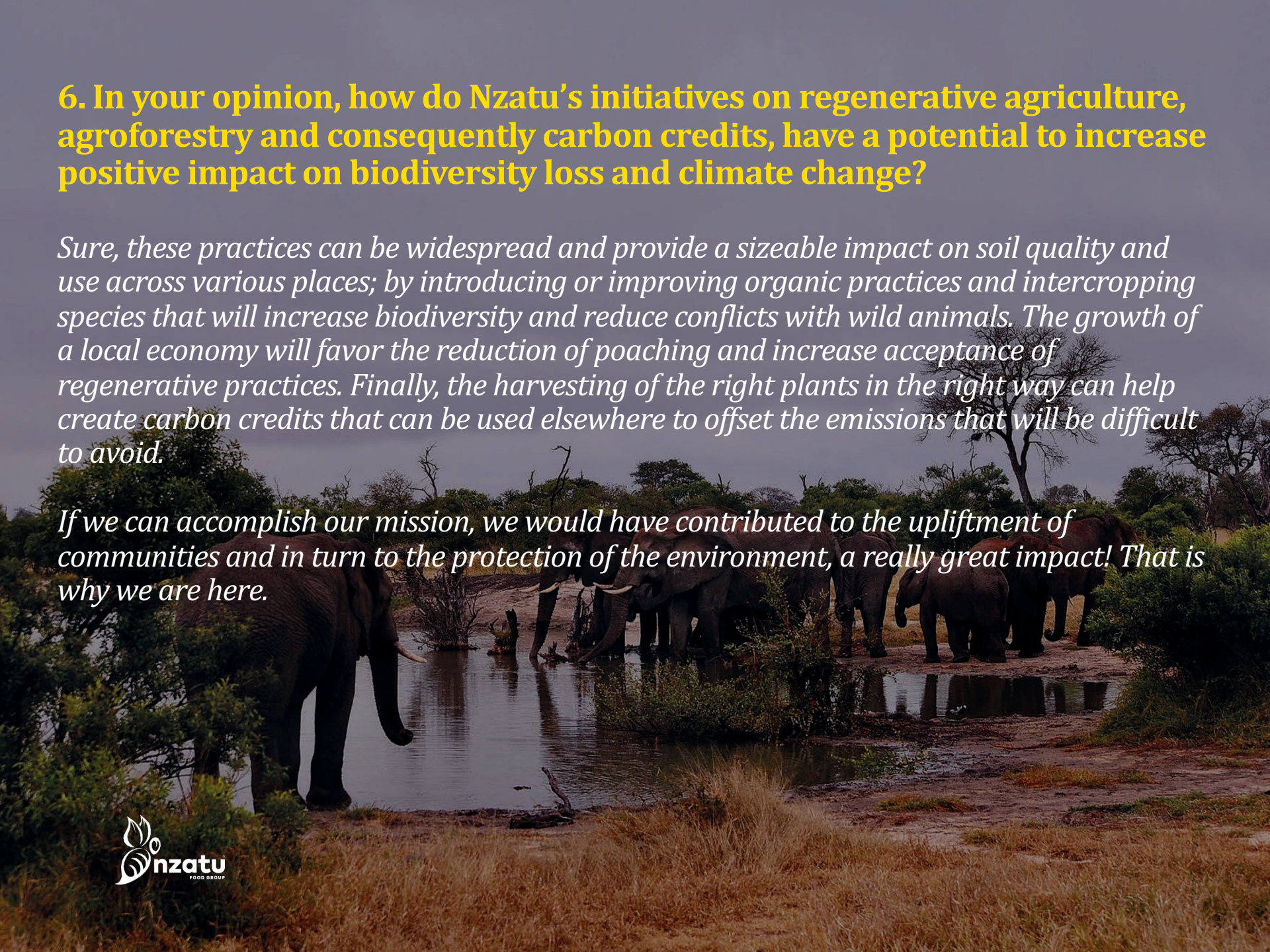
5. As a successful entrepreneur, how do you judge Nzatu's potential in growing and providing sustainable revenues to the local communities?

The dream of our two sisters Gwen and Denise is a sound one. We already have a big network of farmers; we now need to build the bridge with the international markets. I think it can be done once we are able to convey the impact that this project can have on local communities and on the whole world. The secret we think, is partnerships. It is going to be difficult to do everything alone. We think that working together with others having the same goals can be much more productive.

Our projects will also require immense working capital, that is why we are looking for investors. But we also think that we can achieve momentum over time, increasing the revenue stream step by step.



6. In your opinion, how do Nzatu's initiatives on regenerative agriculture, agroforestry and consequently carbon credits, have a potential to increase positive impact on biodiversity loss and climate change?

Sure, these practices can be widespread and provide a sizeable impact on soil quality and use across various places; by introducing or improving organic practices and intercropping species that will increase biodiversity and reduce conflicts with wild animals. The growth of a local economy will favor the reduction of poaching and increase acceptance of regenerative practices. Finally, the harvesting of the right plants in the right way can help create carbon credits that can be used elsewhere to offset the emissions that will be difficult to avoid.

If we can accomplish our mission, we would have contributed to the upliftment of communities and in turn to the protection of the environment, a really great impact! That is why we are here.

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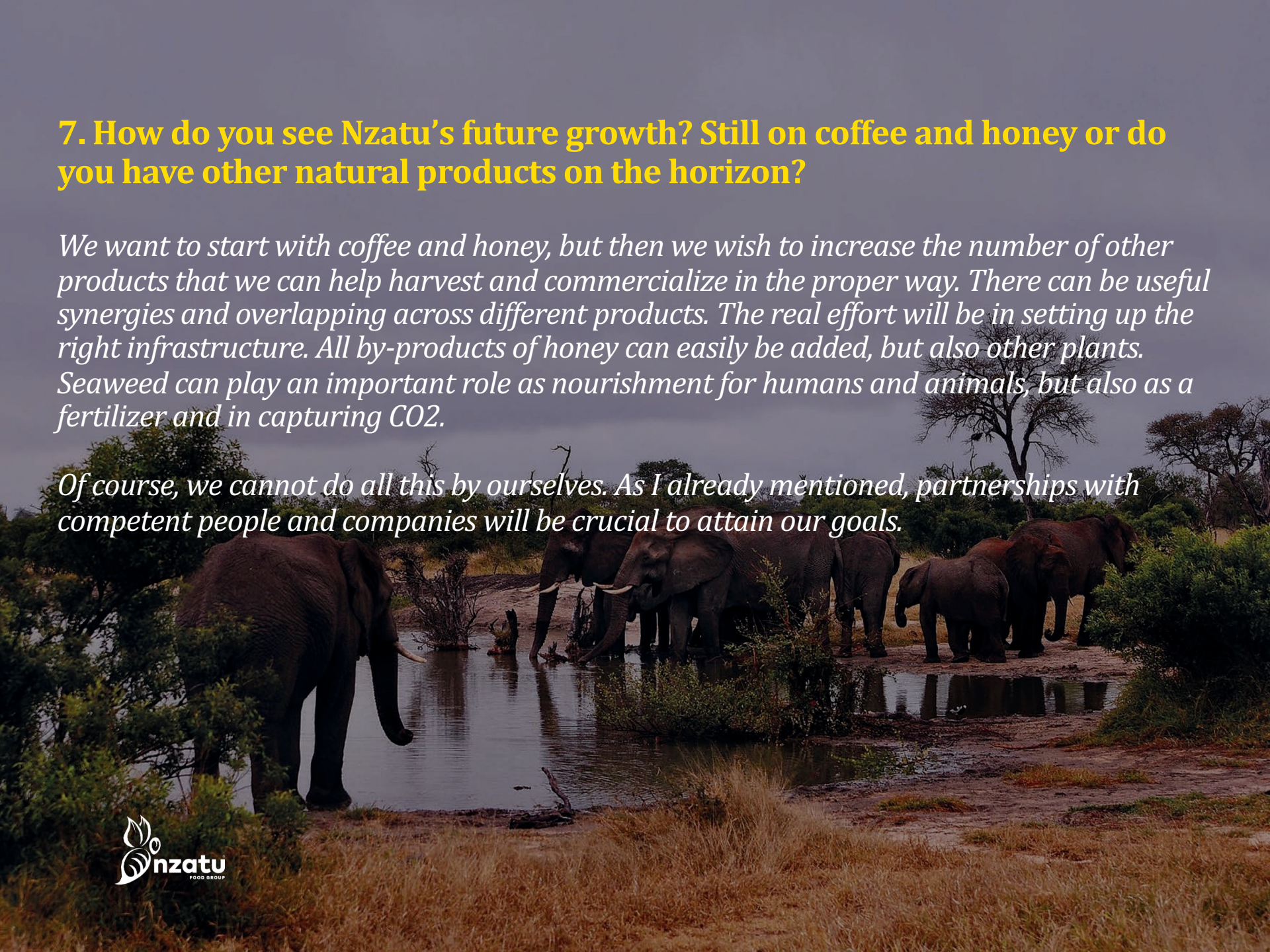
7. How do you see Nzatu's future growth? Still on coffee and honey or do you have other natural products on the horizon?

We want to start with coffee and honey, but then we wish to increase the number of other products that we can help harvest and commercialize in the proper way. There can be useful synergies and overlapping across different products. The real effort will be in setting up the right infrastructure. All by-products of honey can easily be added, but also other plants. Seaweed can play an important role as nourishment for humans and animals, but also as a fertilizer and in capturing CO2.

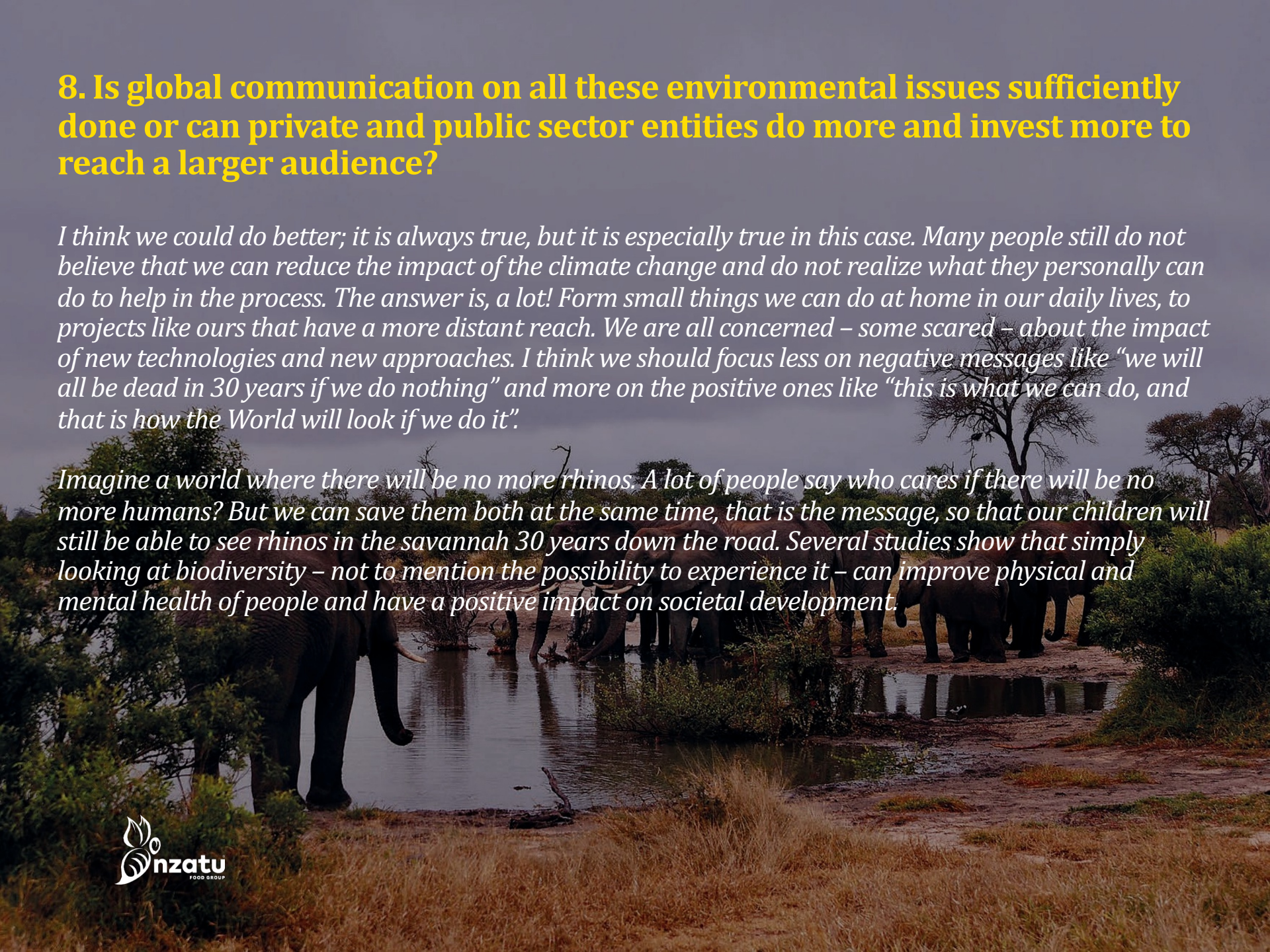
Of course, we cannot do all this by ourselves. As I already mentioned, partnerships with competent people and companies will be crucial to attain our goals.



8. Is global communication on all these environmental issues sufficiently done or can private and public sector entities do more and invest more to reach a larger audience?

I think we could do better; it is always true, but it is especially true in this case. Many people still do not believe that we can reduce the impact of the climate change and do not realize what they personally can do to help in the process. The answer is, a lot! Form small things we can do at home in our daily lives, to projects like ours that have a more distant reach. We are all concerned – some scared – about the impact of new technologies and new approaches. I think we should focus less on negative messages like "we will all be dead in 30 years if we do nothing" and more on the positive ones like "this is what we can do, and that is how the World will look if we do it".

Imagine a world where there will be no more rhinos. A lot of people say who cares if there will be no more humans? But we can save them both at the same time, that is the message, so that our children will still be able to see rhinos in the savannah 30 years down the road. Several studies show that simply looking at biodiversity – not to mention the possibility to experience it – can improve physical and mental health of people and have a positive impact on societal development.



9. What do you think about the annual UN COP meetings? Are these effective or it is a gathering with little impact? What should be done in your opinion?

Of course, COP meetings are important - I would say critical - for the coordination of the global efforts. But I think that fear is keeping us from having the whole impact we could have. Our governments tend to favor the immediate, local interests of small communities, rather than thinking in the big picture. This we are definitively lacking: the courage of rising our eyes and looking at the whole picture. We must realize that we are all intertwined, interdependent. Until we will not be able to see and accept this, there will always be wars, either economic or military, and we will come shorthanded in tackling these issues.

It is a very sad period in history, after 70 years of peace we have finally come the point where this seems unsustainable anymore. Why is it? Fear is the answer: fear of not counting enough, fear of losing importance, power. It is becoming clearer everyday, that we run the risk of losing our entire lives if we continue down this path. We must start to embrace diversity, instead of fearing it. And to do that we must open and not close our borders and our minds.

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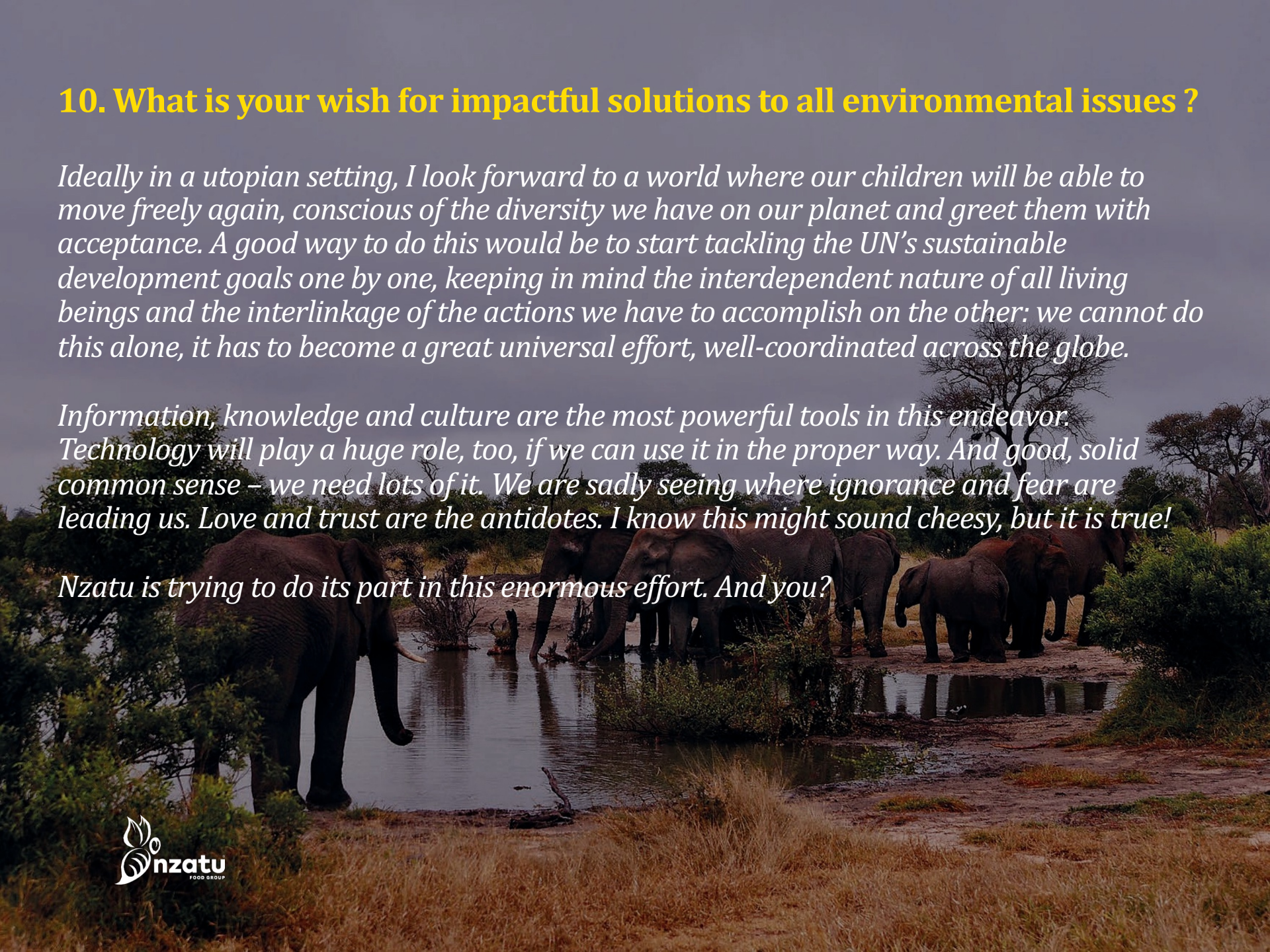
10. What is your wish for impactful solutions to all environmental issues ?

Ideally in a utopian setting, I look forward to a world where our children will be able to move freely again, conscious of the diversity we have on our planet and greet them with acceptance. A good way to do this would be to start tackling the UN's sustainable development goals one by one, keeping in mind the interdependent nature of all living beings and the interlinkage of the actions we have to accomplish on the other: we cannot do this alone, it has to become a great universal effort, well-coordinated across the globe.

Information, knowledge and culture are the most powerful tools in this endeavor. Technology will play a huge role, too, if we can use it in the proper way. And good, solid common sense – we need lots of it. We are sadly seeing where ignorance and fear are leading us. Love and trust are the antidotes. I know this might sound cheesy, but it is true!

Nzatu is trying to do its part in this enormous effort. And you?

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