Managing maize storage weevils with Tephrosia

Recognize the problem
Maize weevils (known as Sumpwa sumpwa in Nyanja language) cause large losses in maize grains. Their larvae hatch from eggs laid on to grains by weevils. The larvae cause damage by boring into the grain, making holes and grinding it to a fine powder. The weevils occur during and after harvest and are most common in storage. The grinded powder and bored grains are not fit for human consumption. Maize weevils are different from another insect that affects maize called the larger grain borer. The maize weevils are smaller in length (about 1 cm) with a long pointed mouth piece.

Background
*Tephrosia* (known as Ububa in Bemba language) is a plant that can repel and kill maize weevils. This plant grows to a height of about 1.5 m to 2.0 m with small leaves and purple flowers. Its parts are poisonous to eat so precaution has to be observed when handling the plant. Because of its insect-killing effects, this plant can replace chemicals that are currently used in the management of maize weevils in storage. The seeds of the plant can be sourced from all Agricultural extension offices or from Kasisi Agricultural Training Centre.

Management
- Pound dry *Tephrosia* leaves in a mortar to a fine powder
- Wear gloves when handling the powder
- To every 50 Kg bag of maize grains, add 100 g (2 handfuls) of *Tephrosia* powder and mix very well
- Put the grains in storage
- After finishing the whole process, wash your hands
- The grains should not be eaten within 2 months of the treatment