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FEBRUARY 2022

ZFU 81st Annual Congress

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**Adeva Machiso
Gwenzi**

Success in agriculture requires strategic planning. Contrary to what some may think, agriculture is not just work that people do because they do not have any other important

things to invest their time in. Agriculture is a business. Thriving business people usually surround themselves with like-minded persons or people who are doing better than them so they can draw inspiration as well as learn a thing or two. Creating a good network or belonging to one is necessary if a farmer is going to realise growth in their business,

“Networking allows you access to opportunities you might not be able to find on your own, effective networking can also save you time, effort and stress”

Agriculture is a broad sector consisting of quite a number of different value chains, from livestock, crops, poultry to mention but a few. A farmer might not necessarily be a part of all the value chains but interacting with other farmers within the different value chains will help in identifying opportunities that might exist and also in decision making. The Zimbabwe Farmers’ Union is a good networking platform for farmers as the Union’s membership cuts across all the agricultural value chains. Farmers can also take advantage of

different commodity associations within the Union structures so that they can interact with people in the same line of business that they are in. This magazine edition features stories of those farmers who have managed to utilise the services and existence of the Union to their advantage. If you are a member of ZFU, find out how best you can benefit from the Union by ensuring that you are a part of the provincial farmer structures. If you are not yet a member of ZFU you, can register through our provincial offices or the head office, you can find the addresses below. Apart from networking benefits, ZFU members can also enjoy discounts from different agro-dealers and service providers. Information of the discount facilities will also be featured in this issue.

We hope you will find the contents of this issue helpful. For feedback kindly email us at info@zfu.org.zw



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ZFU President Retired Major Abdul Credit Nyathi

Let me start by extending my heartfelt appreciation to ZFU Leadership, members and stakeholders for sparing time, and attending our 81st Anniversary Congress. On behalf of the Zimbabwe Farmers Union and myself, I would like to thank you for your support. Your participation and contributions have added value to the Congress which ran under the theme

“Making markets make sense”

The theme was inspired by outcomes of our engagements with farmers and key stakeholders in the sector through

Policy Dialogue platforms.

One of the major findings has been the need to close the policy, technical and information gaps (as they relate to agricultural markets) that for many years have negatively impacted on the growth of commercial agriculture.

The past Congress interrogated among other things, agriculture marketing constraints faced by farmers and their stakeholders. The key message from the Congress speaks to the need to transform our markets to become more favourable to the farmer, if ever we hope to increase production and productivity.

I was extremely delighted to see a number of players in agricultural markets engaging on innovating ways of transforming and improving access to agricultural markets, both local and international. It takes all of us; farmers, government, private sector players, development partners and academia to achieve this huge task for the future. Improved market performance and access to both local and international markets can yield tangible benefits in terms of growth of the agricultural

sector and overall economic growth.

With joint and collaborative efforts, we can have real impact on making agriculture sustainable and it is in that direction that we can ensure the agricultural sector significantly contributes to the national vision of making Zimbabwe a middle-income country by the year 2030

ZFU will continue to advocate for a conducive environment for agricultural markets to benefit all actors from the producer to the final consumer. The key messages from the 2021 congress will inform development of position papers for further engagement with the relevant authorities to ensure that we have an enabling policy environment that will facilitate the transformation of agricultural markets.

As we move into the year 2022, the Union is confident that we can deepen and strengthen our relationships, working together to build a roadmap for transforming and widening our agricultural markets as we move towards making Zimbabwe a middle-income country by 2030

Fellow farmers, I thank you!!

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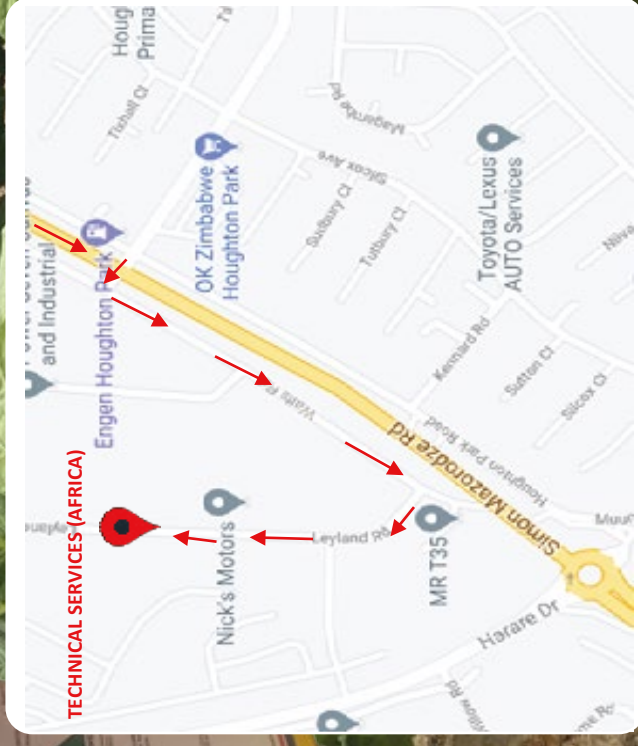
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AgriTalk with the Secretary General Mr Paul Zakariya

On the back of solid facts that agriculture drives the Zimbabwean economy and that every success is hinged on the performance of agriculture and all its sub-sectors, it is acknowledged that 60 - 70 per cent of the Zimbabwean population is directly and indirectly employed in agriculture. Agriculture continues to provide over 60 per cent of the manufacturing industry's raw materials. Overall, agriculture's contribution to the country's GDP is a little upwards of 20 per cent. Growth in the sector over the last decade has shown that, for the foreseeable future, agriculture has the potential to effectively address and provide solutions to most of the country's challenges.

The above observation draws attention to the need to ensure that agricultural primary production is enhanced. Behind this, are the committed women, men and young farmers who have put in time, effort and life savings onto the land, with the intention to reap handsome rewards. These are entrepreneurs that should be running successful agricultural business ventures. The Zimbabwe Farmers' Union (ZFU) has, as its primary role, the mandate to protect and safeguard the interests of all primary producers and value chain actors in Zimbabwe. This is done through effective farmer representation at all levels and it implies that farmers in this space, speak

with one voice as they engage key stakeholders in agriculture.

The operating environment continues to be dogged by a number of factors. Chief among them, the rising costs of production, runaway inflation, instability of the exchange rate, depressed markets, disruptions caused by Covid-19 and the negative effects of climate change and climate variability.

Over the last two seasons, we have witnessed prices of inputs rising to levels beyond many farmers' means. Suppliers of inputs have indexed their prices to the US Dollar and in most cases using higher exchange rates meant to hedge and ensure restocking. As a result, farmers have had to make business decisions to downsize or shift to different but perceived to be cheaper enterprises. A significant number of farmers have thus resorted to contract farming arrangements facilitated by government and private sector players.

The instability of the exchange rate, in a way, is attributed to the runaway inflation and further erosion of value to farmers as markets have continued to be depressed. Most commodities are paid for in the local currency which is subjected to a lot of pressure.

Over the last two seasons, Covid-19 disrupted many farming operations. In some extreme cases, farmers lost their investments and had to start afresh. The scourge is still persisting, and farmers are learning to go around some of the challenges in order to remain in business.

Climate change and its negative effects on primary production continues to take quite a toll on agricultural growth plans as well as the economy in general. Based on rainfall trends and seasonal performance, it can be safely concluded that farmers cannot continue to rely on rain fed agriculture. Investment must be channelled towards water harvesting and irrigation

development. Smallholder farmers will need to be equipped with micro irrigation kits to supplement during long dry spells as well as produce all year round. Other climate-proofing strategies must be adopted in order to effectively mitigate the effects and impacts of climate change and persistent droughts.

The Zimbabwe Farmers Union, in response to the changing operating environment, has deliberately put together a strategic framework that places emphasis on the Union's transformation, farming business development and innovation. The strategy focusses on the following pillars; institutional capacity development, advocacy and stakeholder engagement, integration of ICTs, business links and service provision, and cross-cutting issues such as gender, public health threats and the environment.

The strategic framework for 2022 – 2026, is in sync with the National Development Strategy 1, that seeks to increase food self-sufficiency from about 45 per cent in 2021 to 100 per cent by the end of 2025. ZFU will ensure increased productivity per commodity through deliberate coordination of technical farmer training, market linkages, business development and value addition. Focus will thus be placed on formation and strengthening of the capacities of commodity associations which will be the drivers of sector wide business ventures.

The ZFU leadership and staff structures are going through vigorous adjustments in order to meet the felt-needs of the farming communities throughout Zimbabwe.

The Zimbabwe Farmers' Union invites all stakeholders to engage in transforming Zimbabwe's agriculture for a successful future!

ZFU 81st Annual Congress

By Adeva Machiso Gwenzi

The Zimbabwe Farmers' Union held its 81st Annual Congress on the 12th of November at the Village Lodge in Gweru. The Congress ran under the theme

“Making Markets Make Sense”.

institutions to review on these interventions with a view to further strengthen and make them more responsive to the farmers' and stakeholder needs.

This 81st edition of this very important annual event was attended by the highest level of ZFU leadership from all the provinces of the country.

This edition of the magazine will feature thoughts expressed by farmers and questions asked during a live question and answer session with Honourable Minister Dr Anxious Jongwe Masuka.



The Congress also witnessed a Transforming Zimbabwe's Dairy Value Chain (TranZ DVC) project's joint policy conference on issues around the role of extension and factors affecting producer price in the dairy sector. A position paper derived from the conference will be featured in this issue as well.

Below left: Hon. Lawrence Mavhima, Minister of State for Provincial Affairs, Midlands, addresses delegates

Below right: Hon. Minister of Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Rural Development, Dr Anxious Masuka answering questions from the floor

The theme was inspired by the opportunities created by Government through various schemes to address the agricultural finance gap and provide reliable markets for various agricultural commodities.

Farmers have expressed appreciation for the government interventions including the Pfumvudza/Intwasa Conservation Scheme, Presidential Input Scheme, National Enhanced Agriculture Productivity Scheme (Command Agriculture), Irrigation Development, Livestock Growth Plan, Farm Mechanisation, and the Presidential Cotton Free Inputs Scheme.

The congress provided a platform for farmer support and implementing





ZFU 81st Annual Congress Question and Answer with Hon AJ Masuka

Zimbabwe Farmers' Union as a brand in farmer representation, seeks to enhance the bargaining power of farmers as well as providing a platform for them to lobby and raise issues to relevant authorities. The ZFU Annual Congress is one such platform and the 81st edition presented an opportunity for farmers to ask questions directly to the Honourable Minister of Lands, Agriculture Water, Climate and Rural Development, Dr Anxious Jongwe Masuka, who was the guest of honour at the event.

Here are some of the questions and issues raised in the question and answer session.

Q1: "What is the Ministry doing about the ever-rising producer prices as well as electricity. For example, in my area It has been two weeks without electricity and production has halted?"

Hon A.J Masuka: "About input prices, we were actually discussing this with the President and Vice president, and we are all very alarmed, but I am glad that the input suppliers are here. Seed has gone up from 6000 to 17 000 and fertilizers have equally gone up and there is another threat to increase fertilizer prizes again. At this stage, we can only appeal to input suppliers to please see the fundamentals and not price using the black-market rate. We hope that there will be an increase in stability. The government is putting in place mechanisms to make sure that we localise the production of fertilisers, and we have a 3 year roadmap to ensure that all our fertilizers will be made locally. As for seed, we are in discussions with Government controlled seed houses to increase their production capacity"

As for electricity, all the southern Africa's grid is inter-connected and a week ago there was a fault which affected 3 southern African countries, but we have largely restored all or supplies from Kariba. However, government has invested in power generation. By 2023 Zimbabwe will be exporting electricity

Q2: "My issue is on cotton farming. As Cotton farmers we were promised to be paid in instalments but so far only one instalment has been paid, also there is no information regarding the delays or whether we'll be paid at all. Right now it's hard being a cotton farmer"

Hon A.J Masuka: The Company in charge of cotton production is Cottco. It was facing financial challenges and could not pay the farmers, so the government stepped in to pay the difference, that is why the money is being paid in instalments. The first \$34usd you already received. The rollout of the second payment has already began so ZFU will help us in locating the farmers who have not received their payment yet. In the following week we will have the rest of the money from the National Treasury to pay the cotton farmers"

Q3: "We have tea farmers in Honde valley who used to sell their tea to Katiyo factory, but the factory was shut down. We spoke to the relevant authorities, and they relayed that they were looking for a partner. Right now, there is Eastern Highlands which is giving ZWL 9 per Kg which is very low and tea farmers gave up on production. My question is, since now there is a partner for Katiyo factory, when will it open?"

ARDA: "We are in the process of resuscitating our tea estate. There is Rumbizi Estate sitting on 152 hectares, and this is going to be a hub and we are actually in the process of aggregating

out-growers to re-engineer the tea as well. We have been given a six-month ultimatum by our board to secure a tea processing and packing machine, so we are very confident that this is the first process to resuscitate the estate."

Q4: "I am a coffee farmer and my issue is that when coffee farmers are paid, it takes too long for the money to be disbursed into farmers' accounts. Another issue is that farmers are paid USD20 per every USD100 in charges, but now it was raised to USD40 per every USD100, farmers are actually thinking of giving up on exporting and sell locally. My request is, can you please revise the fees back to USD20 since 40 per cent is high"

Hon A.J Masuka: "A decision was made that for all export markets, the surrender would be 40% in all commodities and this has really assisted government to ensure that we procure enough vaccines and build enough health facilities. So this is a moving target, and I'm sure that the Reserve Bank Governor will be able to review that.

Q5: "Why is Government not contracting or supporting horticulture?"

Hon A.J Masuka: "Currently there are 7 presidential schemes. Many only know of Pfumvudza but there is also Blistigris, poultry scheme and the presidential goat scheme just to name a few. There is also a presidential rural scheme in which the Government is going to drill a borehole in each village. 35,000 boreholes in 35,000 villages, and each village will have a garden to do horticulture. The President will be launching it very soon. The Government is also putting a USD 20 million revolving fund facility for horticulture. So, the Government has a horticulture development plan which clearly indicates the Government's support in horticulture"

Zimbabwe Farmers Union position on role of extension in dairy production and marketing



Introduction

This paper derives from a study (hereinafter referred to as “the study”) commissioned by the Zimbabwe Farmers Union (ZFU) under the European Union-funded project “Transforming Zimbabwe’s Dairy Value Chain (TranZDVC)” under the Zimbabwe Agriculture Growth Programme (ZAGP). A consortium consisting of We Effect, the lead agency, ZFU, ZIDT and ZADF, is implementing the Dairy project. The study focused on the role of extension in dairy production and marketing in Zimbabwe.

Notwithstanding that several reasons have been identified to limit optimum milk production among smallholder farmers, weak extension support has been singled out as among the main drivers of the challenges smallholder dairy farmers are facing. Thus, a value chain approach for modern extension is key as it can be used for inclusion of vulnerable farmers who are seeking basic market linkages with a local

informal buyer up to sophisticated value chain players seeking penetration into export markets.

Key Issues

Extension service providers in the Zimbabwe dairy value chain.

According to information obtained from key informants, both the public and private extension service providers play a critical role in the dairy value chain as they play a complementary role. The public extension service providers are the major service providers.

Thus, adopting a value chain approach to modern extension service provision is key since it can be used for inclusion of vulnerable farmers who are seeking basic market linkages with local buyers up to sophisticated large-scale producers seeking linkages with export markets.

Demand for and supply of specialised dairy extension services in Zimbabwe

Some key informants indicated that there might be growing demand for

specialised dairy production and marketing given the continued low milk productivity from farmers and in particular the small-scale farmers (old resettlement communal, A1) but there is however inadequate provision of dairy specialised extension both from government and private sector. Some farmers indicated during FGDs that they are now relying on researching on internet about dairy production and marketing from world renowned countries such as New Zealand and Canada.

ZFU recommends that extension officers are given additional trainings in marketing and business development skills to assist farmers with capacities for improved productivity and viability of dairy farming. It would be very beneficial also if all agriculture colleges given offer dairy short courses to farmers or lead farmers at an affordable cost.

Appropriateness of extension training curriculum

In terms of adequacy, relevance, appropriateness and effectiveness of the college and in-service extension training curriculum for specialised dairy production and marketing, key informants at institutions of higher learning such as agriculture colleges have indicated that they have teaching and learning modules that cover dairy production and marketing issues. However, they concur that there is general lack of specialised dairy extension training programmes in these tertiary institutions of higher learning. Some level of specialisation begins at postgraduate level.

Also noted during the study is that the Government of Zimbabwe, through support from the EU-funded Zimbabwe Agriculture Knowledge and Information Services (ZAKIS) project, has undertaken a comprehensive curriculum review for agriculture colleges.

ZFU recommends that the Ministry of

Higher and Tertiary Education together with the department of AGRITEX develop the dairy departments of the colleges in terms of infrastructure to ensure effective training of the extension officers with adequate exposure to current technologies.

Research-extension-farmer linkages in smallholder dairy value chain

Adoption of scale-appropriate dairy technologies has remained low due to limited involvement of the smallholder dairy farmers in research prioritisation, implementation, and evaluation.

According to key informants, there are no well pronounced research-extension-farmer linkages in support of the dairy value chain.

The recommendation by these key informants is for the dairy farmers to make concerted efforts through their farmer representative organisations and extension agents to reach out to research DRSS institutions for vital knowledge and technologies, particularly on low-cost feed formulation and processing options as well as accessing improved dairy genetics.

ZFU is advocating that dairy-focused research units within the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Rural Development (MLAFWRD) should incorporate farmers' concerns and prioritise dairy marketing, value addition and product development. Thus, the Government of Zimbabwe should also adequately support and fully equip these units like the Dairy Services with relevant laboratory and processing equipment to enable them to generate demanded appropriate technologies.

Adequacy of national budget allocations for extension services.

The Government of Zimbabwe allocated 19 per cent and 12 per cent of the National Budgets to the agriculture sector for the 2020 and 2021 respectively (GoZ, 2021). This is commendable given that Zimbabwe is a signatory to the Maputo and Malabo

declarations which advocate for at least 10 per cent of the national budget to be allocated to agriculture. However, a closer look at expenditure of the agriculture sector allocated budget shows that the proportion eventually allocated towards extension, advisory services has continued to significantly drop over the years from a peak of 15 per cent in 2013 to two per cent in 2017 of the total agriculture budgets (World Bank, 2019).

ZFU is advocating for an increase in the budget allocation towards enhancing access to extension service especially for dairy farmers.

Policy Recommendations

The following specific recommendations can be drawn from the findings:

- ✓ The MLAFWRD should consider reviewing upwards the allocation of agricultural spending on extension aimed at capacitating field-based extension personnel with mobility and other capacities for effective delivery of extension and advisory services. Increased expenditure on extension will have spill-over effects on the dairy sub-sector.
- ✓ AGRITEX Extension officers who provide advice to dairy farmers should regularly receive specialised refresher trainings and relevant resources so that their capacity is built to strengthen the farmers along the value chain.
- ✓ Department of Agricultural Education and Farmer Training need to come up with training programs and manuals for capacitating dairy farmers with relevant knowledge and skills competitive milk production and marketing
- ✓ Department of Agricultural Engineering, Mechanisation and Soil Conservation should come up with appropriate designs and prototypes for appropriate-scale mechanisation equipment such as hay balers, mobile milking machines, cans, etc. for use in smallholder dairy production and marketing.
- ✓ Department of Agricultural Research, Innovation and Development need to design and promote participatory R&D collaborative implementation with farmers eg, on-farm demonstration of least-cost feed formulation, product development, value addition, etc.
- ✓ Department of Strategic Policy Planning and Business Development should roll out tailor-made business development programs aimed at capacitating smallholder dairy farmers' entrepreneurial skills, particularly in business planning, financial literacy for inclusion and market linkages.
- ✓ Dairy Services and Aglabs need to increase efforts towards research-extension-farmer linkages in the dairy value chain through conducting research and supporting farmers and extension personnel with information on modern dairy production and marketing technologies.
- ✓ Institutions of higher learning in agriculture should design and offer specialised dairy programs at certificate, diploma, and degree levels coupled with installation of infrastructure to ensure availability of well-trained dairy development cadres
- ✓ There is huge scope for private sector-driven extension service delivery system aimed at ensuring increased and consistent milk supply in Zimbabwe. Private milk processing companies need to put in place extension programs that help the farmers to overcome the many challenges inherent in smallholder milk production.

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HIGH FERTILISER PRICES, RISING FARMER CONCERN!

By Nyasha Taderera, ZFU Economist



Background

There has been a significant rise in agricultural input prices especially fertilisers and to be more specific, nitrogenous fertilisers. This has greatly increased the cost of production of most agricultural enterprises, if not all. Persistent rains

Contribution of fertilisers to the cost of production of maize

INPUT CATEGORY	% Contribution large-scale	% Contribution Small-scale
Average yield	5MT/ha	1.39MT/ha
Fertilisers	49.7952059	36.23876
Total Variable Costs	164 335.64	101 289.4
Agrochemicals	6.295321182	1.605207
Labour	13.5805107	51.68279
Machinery use	17.14162239	10.21495
Other costs	13.18733983	24.57961

the country is currently experiencing even increases the requirements of nitrogenous fertilisers as leaching increases.

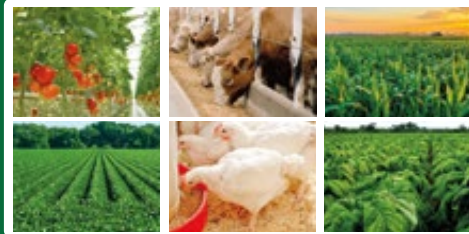
As can be seen from the table, fertilisers contribute a significant percentage towards the cost of production especially for large scale farmers. Fertilisers comprise about 50 per cent of the cost of production on large scale farms. This implies that any increase in fertiliser prices significantly affects the farmers income. For small-scale farmers, the percentage contribution of fertilisers towards the cost of production is less than that of large-scale farmer (36.24 per cent) but is still significant. The low contribution for small-scale farmers could also be due to the high cost of fertilisers and this greatly affects their yields and returns.

In conclusion, the high fertiliser prices reduce farmers' income nonetheless; either by increasing the cost of production or reducing the yields. Therefore, fertiliser prices are of major concern in crop production especially heavy-feeding crops such as maize and tobacco.

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Analysis of the effect of inflation on the controlled maize producer prices

with ZFU Chief Economist, Dr Prince Kuipa

Cereal grains are considered strategic crops in Zimbabwe because of their centrality as a reference for the country's food security status. Adequate supply of cereal grains is essential to food security. Whilst there is potential for adequate supplies in normal rainfall years, the increased frequency of extreme weather events like droughts and floods results in increased frequency of periods of shortages and food insecurity. Most of the cereal grain production is rainfed (except wheat) and the annual production is correlated to the rainy season quality causing variability in the annual aggregate cereal grain output.

The Grain Marketing Board has maintained a de jure monopoly on maize and traditional grain procurement, sales, and exports. Pre-planting prices are announced to influence the decision of farmers to grow maize and traditional grains. A final producer price is announced at the beginning of the marketing season. In 2021 the pre-planting price announced at the beginning of the 2020/21 growing season was maintained as the final producer price for the 2021 marketing season.

In 2019 The monetary authorities maintained a 1:1 exchange rate between the Zimbabwean RTGS and the United States Dollar. This policy was abandoned to move to an auction determined exchange rate system. Figure 1 shows the trend of final producer prices announced at the start of the marketing season converted to their USD value at the Auction rate and at the parallel market rate.

The parallel exchange rate is an important variable when analysing farm profitability. Input suppliers and other agricultural service providers

index their ZWL\$ prices to the USD using the parallel market rate (which is illegal but prevalent). In some cases, retailers refuse payment for equipment or spare parts in ZWL\$, preferring instead USDs. Their argument is that they are not able to obtain the USD on the RBZ auction system hence the need for customers to pay for inputs in USD. Most of these inputs are imports that

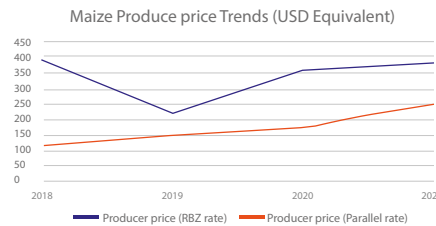


Figure 1, Maize producer price trends
Source: Author Computations, RBZ

require foreign currency. The parallel market rate has always maintained a significant premium over the official rate. As such, farmers who are paid in ZWL\$ must convert their money to USD at the parallel market rate thereby losing value in the process. Figure 1 illustrates the argument. As shown in the trends, the real value at the parallel market rate is far much lower than when the producer price is converted at the official auction rate. Whilst it may appear that farmers are getting good prices at the official rate, the rate that they face on the input market is the parallel exchange rate which in effect pushes their earnings far below the import parity price.

Further analysis shows that farmers also lose value within a single marketing season. For the 2020/21 marketing season, a maize producer price was announced in local currency at ZWL\$32,000 per ton. At the time of announcing this price it was equivalent to USD378.00/ton using the prevailing



official exchange rate of ZWL\$85.00 to the USD. The producer price was maintained over the marketing season. In December 2021, the official auction rate was ZWL\$109 to the USD. At this rate the USD equivalent of the producer price was USD293.00. This was a loss in value of 22% in the same marketing season.

In view of the challenges chronicled above, it is recommended as follows.

- The government should consider indexing the ZWL\$ denominated producer price to the stable USD to maintain value in the current inflationary environment.
- The monetary authorities should find a lasting solution to the widening gap between the official and parallel foreign exchange rates.
- There is need for policy consistency regarding the procurement of grains. The government gone full cycle over the years, from controls to liberalization and back to controls, thereby crowding out private players in grain production and marketing.
- If government maintains ZWL\$ producer prices and the inflationary environment persists, farmers are encouraged to deliver their grain early in the marketing season to avoid losing out the value of their produce.

Former pilot now flying high in dairy



Dairy production in Zimbabwe currently meets just over half of local consumption demands (raw milk production per month sits around seven million litres or 82 million litres annually), according to data shared by Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Rural Development in August 2021. Domestic monthly requirements amount to 10 million litres (120 million litres annually). The deficit in the domestic consumption needs is being met through the importation of milk powder. This uses liquidity and an increase in local production would mean less reliance on that resource. The industry has long been in need of an overhaul and our farmers are more than able to rise to the challenges of matching requirements given the right operating environment.

According to figures from the government's Second Round Crop and Livestock Assessment Report 2020/2021 season, the current dairy herd stands at 39,000 head with 19,000 of those being milking animals. The national target for milking cows to meet and exceed requirements is 32,000. The average production per cow per day was 13 litres and the small holder dairy sector contributes four per cent of national milk production. The industry is also massively underperforming. Low productivity is due to a number of factors including high cost of breeding stock, stock feed and veterinary drugs.

There is a huge production gap in the market and this presents a wealth of opportunities for youth in agriculture in order to create a sustainable industry. Efforts are being made to revive the dairy industry, and notably, the TranZDVC project (part of the ZAGP, a four-year project, funded and initiated by the EU in 2019) is one such drive that is already seeing results.

The TranZDVC project, looking at the transformation of Zimbabwe's

dairy value chain, is addressing the root causes of underperformance in the dairy value chain, by strengthening the linkages between production, processing and financing. It aims to facilitate the development of dairy cow management and develop capacity and competence of farmers as well as sharing knowledge and training on developing on-farm feeds and other cost effective feed options such as silage and fresh fodder.

One young farmer who has benefited from the programme and is playing his part in revitalising the domestic dairy industry is Cyprian Kunaka (*left*) from Bela Vista farm, Ruwa. He shares his story with us and this inspiration hopefully will show readers that there is a place for the young farmer in this farming sector.

His dairy herd over a short period of time, has grown and currently, Cyprian milks 70 cows and produces 1,700 litres of milk daily and his total Holstein dairy herd stands at 170 head. He aims to be milking 100 cows by June this year and 150 by the end of the year, as his cows calve down.

Cyprian Kunaka, aged 33, explains how he was a beneficiary of the TranZDVC project by receiving five head of cattle and a grant to buy a milking machine. He heard about this matching grant facility being offered by TranZDVC through the Zimbabwe Association of Dairy Farmers (ZADF) members group.

“I went through the process, I saw it was a good deal where you pay a portion of the things you need to be supported with and the other portion is paid by the programme.”

As it was a matching grant facility he matched this, putting in five in-calf heifers.

The milking machine has impacted positively in terms of his efficiency as he can now milk his cows faster. Previously it took three hours to milk his cows and now it takes only an hour. Not only has it reduced the time, but has simultaneously improved the cleanliness and quality of the milk as the milk flows directly from the cows to the tank (the previous hand milking bucket system had meant double handling of the raw milk). A new milking parlour has also been built to house the milking machine and goes a long way towards improving the hygiene standards Cyprian has set for achieving a high quality raw product.

Cyprian dismisses the myth of dairy not being profitable. "If you manage to get the highest quality milk so that you can get the highest price on the market, it really helps. This programme has allowed me to get an opportunity to

get the best quality milk because of the cleanliness of the system where there is no double handling of milk anymore."

Cyprian is a pilot by profession and when asked what made him undergo such a drastic career change, he answers that he liked the idea of being his own boss. And why become a dairy farmer? He identified a gap in the market and researched its viability, deciding to take the plunge. He has not looked back. Part of his farming operation includes producing own feed on-farm (maize silage and Lucerne and mixing concentrates on-farm), significantly reducing an input component which would typically comprise the majority of production costs. Furthermore, feed is also sold to fellow dairy farmers. It is this kind of enterprise that will drive the revitalisation of the Zimbabwean dairy.

Cyprian pays tribute to those who believed in him and set him on the path to success and specially mentions his late father for the

support, encouragement and for the life lessons he taught Cyprian. He also mentions Pro Dairy managing director Calum Philp who has also believed in him and assisted him in many ways, contributing to where he is today.

Cyprian believes that we have a huge opportunity to supply our own markets. We can create our own raw milk production, supply the local market and also generate an export product.

"I'd like to encourage all young farmers out there to get into dairy. There is huge opportunity in dairy, there is a shortage of milk in Zimbabwe and there is good money to be made."



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2.	FarmShop	2.5% on NTS Seed and 1% discount on agrochemicals and hardware	National	Mr. Gatsi
3.	Orgfert	5% Discount on organic enriched fertilisers	Harare & Chitungwiza	Mr. Muranda 0772 928 766
4.	Money Maker Pumps	10% discount on Money Maker Products	Harare	Mr. Vhera 0772 878 631
5.	AfroDripTech	5% discount on drip kits, installations and tuta traps	Harare	admin@afrodripte.com noziphomoyo@afrodripte.com 0779 818 621
6.	Bio-Organic Hunger Solutions P/L	5% discount on Biofertilizers	Harare	0772 664 373
7.	Hagadol Enterprise	10% discount on Biofertilizers	Harare	0774 407 712
8.	Launtop Zimbabwe	5% discount for water pumps, generators, welding machines, solar Geysers and Gas Stoves. Special Swift transportation	Harare	0777271322 sales1@launtopzim.com
9.	Epic Solution	5% discounts on solar products	Harare	263772441552 kuda@epicits.com
10.	Glenwood Agricultural Equipment	Provision of tractors and implements at concessionary rates	Harare	jmahachi@glenwoodagri.com
11.	Greenfield seedlings	5% discount on all seedlings	Harare	Mr. Machiwana 263772 442 311
12.	Zimbabwe Bearings	Negotiated prices for roller bearings, electrical spares, oils and greases, protective clothing and chemicals.	Harare	
13.	Simfresh International	Discounted price for Horticulture Trainings and Market Linkages	National	Mr. Chibanda 0771674345
14.	Farmers Hub Pvt Ltd	3% discount on inputs and implements	Bindura & Shamva	0773195634 Nmuwomba1@gmail.com
15.	Station Farm Services	3-5% discount on inputs	Mazowe (Glendale)	0772697277 ptlgumuny@yahoo.co.uk
16.	Pinewood Hardware	3 -5% on inputs and building material	Mazowe (Glendale)	0773529158. bdchams@gmail.com
17.	Match Chem	3% Agric inputs, implements and equipment	Bindura	
18.	Big Catch Construction	3% Agric inputs, implements and hardware	Bindura, Shamva and Manhenga	
19.	Mega builds	5% discount on building materials, seed, livestock feed	Gwanda	0772264611 sebatadumi@gmail.com
20.	VET CHEM	3% discount for all ZFU members	Gwanda	0719208023
21.	XELOP Animal Health	4% discount cash and 3% other forms for veterinary supplies	Gwanda	0719208023
22.	Chamwadoro Hardware	5% discount on hardware and implements	Chivi	0776 399 068
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24.	Feed Mix	3% on Stock Feeds 2tones and above	Masvingo Town	
25.	Megalink agro-dealers	2.5% discounts on all farming inputs	Gutu	
26.	Farm and City Centre – Hauna	transport provision to bulk purchase	Hauna	0774 928 519
27.	Mutare farm Suppliers	Discount on bulk purchase, Transport	Mutare, Mutasa	0776 890 127
28.	Central hard ware	Discount on bulk purchase	Hauna	0775 698 154
29.	Mutare Farm Biz	2-5% discount on inputs	Mutare	0716 504 404
30.	Farmers Choice	2.5% on sales above \$50	Hauna	0773 936 170 / 0713 433 150
31.	Financial Inclusive Services	negotiated for financial loan scheme for producer groups	Gweru	
32.	PSMAS	negotiated for cheaper psmas medical aids for farmers (max \$10 package)	Gweru	
33.	CBZ	Financial loan schemes	Midlands	
34.	Thy Name	5% discount on Seedlings	Gweru	0784 419676

	COMPANY	PARTNERSHIP	GEOGRAPHICAL SPREAD	CONTACT
35.	Farm Choice	5% discount – Agrochemicals	Kwekwe, Gweru Zvishavane	
36.	Farm Bizz	5% discount Seeds & Chemicals	Gweru	
37.	Manakat	2% Irrigation Facilities & Seeds	Gweru	0777 352952
38.	Zimbabwe Super Seeds	negotiated for demonstrations	Midlands & Masvingo	
39.	Charter Seeds	negotiated for demonstrations	Midlands & Masvingo	
40.	Darshley Hardware	5% discount on Agrochemicals	Mberengwa	
41.	Barmlo Hardware	2% discount on all hardware deals	Mberengwa & Zvishavane	
42.	Langwani Mavesere General dealer	2.5% discount on Seed maize & furniture	Mberengwa	
43.	Passion Poultry	10% discount on poultry equipment	National	passionpoultry@gmail.com 0775435227
44.	Alley Capital Group	Discount on drone spraying services	National	0774692425 piwai@acg.co.zw
45.	Asterex PVT LTD	10% discount for aluminum irrigation pipes repairs	National	0779640319 asterespvtltd@gmail.com
46.	Drops Tech Irrigation – Irrigation and borehole drilling services- Systems designs and installation	20% discount on labour services and 10% discount on locally produced materials	National	0776193888 dropstech42@gmail.com
47.	Green Marine (Shipping Company T/a Green Energy Solutions)	2.5 % discount on all solar kits (Germany solar panels, inverters, batteries solar lights), solar borehole pumps and water pumps to paid up ZFU members	National	0773 239 997 sales@greenmarineshipping.com
48.	Wakanda Solar	5% discount on Solar Products	Harare	0242788225 info@wakandasolar.co.zw
49.	Hi Pak Packaging	Discount on grain and horticultural packaging	Harare	0773 283 283
50.	Nets and Ropes Tanzi	10% discount on Nets and Ropes	Harare	+263772689057 salie@tanzionline.com
51.	Barrowland Africa	5% discount on agrochemical chemicals	Harare	0776 980 920
52.	FBC	Low cost personalised bank card	National	0772 773 837
53.	Zimbabwe Women Microfinance Bank	Provision of loans to women in the agricultural sector	National	+263773 377 625 +263 4796097
54.	Best Farms	Provision of Biopesticides to ZFU members	National	+263774 135 246
55.	Suttem Trading	5% discount on protective clothing	Harare	0774 259 901
56.	Clamore Solar	10% Discount on Solar Products	National	0773 977 170
57.	Sable Chemicals	Bulk AN purchase at factory price for ZFU group purchases	National	0772303096
58.	Coopers Zimbabwe	Animal health products at wholesale prices for ZFU group purchases	National	0773 724 088
59.	Nyaradzo Funeral Services	Discounted premium rates for ZFU Members	National	0773 238 479
60.	Agrimed	Discounted premium rates for ZFU Members	National	0779557337
61.	Farmhut	Market Linkages, Market Intelligence and Technical information to ZFU Members at discounted rates	National	0773442311
62.	Kurima Mari	Mobile based technical and market information to ZFU members	National	0772682870
63.	Syngenta	Discounted prices on seed for ZFU group purchases	National	0773928514
64.	Acol Chemical Holdings	Discounted wholesale price of USD2 for 200g Actellic Gold dust for individual and group purchases	National	0712605651
65.	Interest Research Bureau	Bank Loans repayments recalculations	National	
66.	Kurima Machinery	2-5% discount on Kurima Machinery		
67.	MediaServ Advertising & Marketing	Sourcing of Magazine and Newsletter advertisements and producing the two publications	Harare	0772 295 191 / 0772 623 780
68.	Farmers' Pride	2% discount on Agricultural Inputs	Mash Central	0773 178 846

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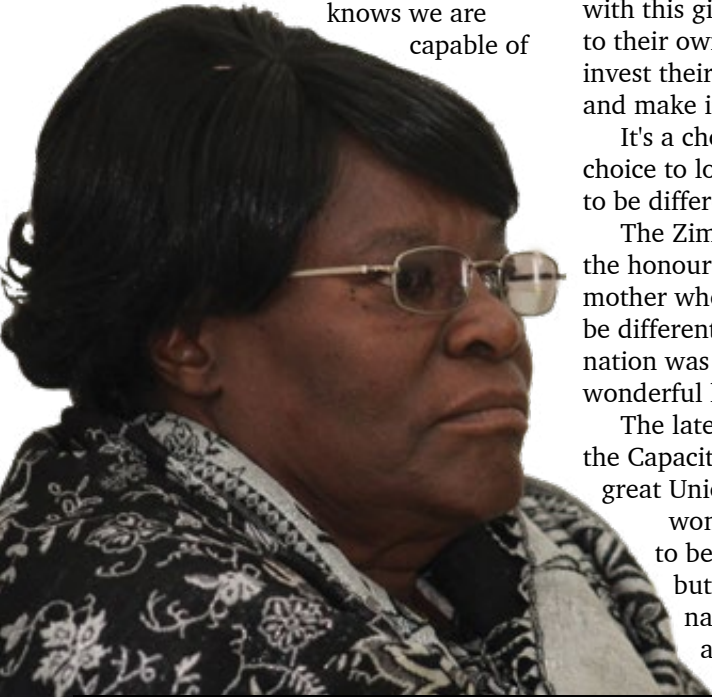
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A life well lived

by Tadiwanashe Grand

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It's a choice that one makes really, a choice to love, a choice to care, a choice to be different.

The Zimbabwe Farmers' Union had the honour of having an exceptional mother who chose to love, care and be different. On October 17, 2021, the nation was robbed of a great teacher, a wonderful leader full of wisdom.

The late Mrs. Violet Mandishona, the Capacity Building Manager of this great Union, a woman with a dream not just to benefit herself and her family but a dream to benefit the nation's farming community as a whole.

What a life well-lived!

A life to be envied, a life worth emulating, a life of substance worth celebrating. Someone once said "You are not a success until and unless you reproduce yourself in other people" You planted the seed of your lessons in us and the wisdom will not die.

Being the good idealist that you were, you had already gone into the future and taken a picture, brought it back, and shown it to us. We hold that picture in our hearts and we are running with the ideologies.

Mama, Fambai zvakanaka, remembering you is easy but missing you is painful.

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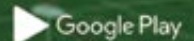


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Fit For Life Beneficiary now exporting

In 2015, a young man by the name Brighton Chomurema, pictured below, after finding himself in a predicament of not being able to continue with his secondary education because of limited funds got to know about the Fit for life program.

The UNICEF funded, in collaboration with MOPSE and implemented by ZFU, Kushinga Phikelela National Farmer Training Centre, Cotton Training Centre and Foundations For Farming, Fit For life Project aimed at providing a second chance education opportunity to children who did not manage to complete their education. The project targeted to improve the livelihoods of at least 30.000 rural children by providing literacy/numeracy module followed by an agriculture-based technical education.

Brighton Chomurema pictured below is one of those 30 000 beneficiaries of the project, having been introduced to Fit for life in 2015, he enrolled in a young farmers' club class at Dimbe Primary School in Marondera district.

At Dimbe primary school, Brighton went through some basic literacy and numeracy training

aligned to the main four primary school subjects (English, Maths, Shona/ Ndebele, General Paper).

After completion of these, the young man proceeded to Kushinga Phikelela where he received some agriculture-based technical education. This training was meant to enable beneficiaries to increase agricultural productivity and thereby improve food self-sustainability, income generation and employability.

"At Kushinga Phikelela, I learnt a lot about agriculture and how to manage my business, we were taught on Financial literacy, Business management, Marketing strategies and many other helpful courses," said Brighton.

After Fit for life, Brighton stayed in touch with the Union and attended most of ZFU's youth designed programs. It was after attending an Agritalks where ZFU planned a farm visit to another beneficiary of the same project, Isaiah Bowani that Brighton decided to go back and implement all that he learnt during Fit for life, register and formalise his business.

"After the AgriTalks, I was encouraged to go and improve my business even with the little resources that I had. On the small piece of land that I got from my father, I got serious with my horticulture projects that I had started," he said.

In his small business, Brighton applied the financial literacy and business management skills he attained at Fit for life, keeping clear records of his investments and profits.

The young man's passion and determination to succeed in agriculture was evident to all who interacted with him such that he was one of the few young farmers who benefited a net house, sponsored by the First Capital Bank under phase two of the Fit For life project.

Brighton also learnt the importance of networking with other farmers and in 2021, through his farmer contacts, he got an opportunity to export his produce to the international market.

"I Started exporting on the 21st of July, taking my green beans and sugar snap peas to the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. We are hoping that after winter we will start to export chilies as well," said Brighton.

"I am happy that through my agriculture projects, I have been able to buy a car, a commercial stand in Marondera town to put a large cold room and packhouse, I also have a 15-tonne truck on its way from overseas," he added.

Brighton's story is a clear testimony of how one can change their life by affiliating with the right organisations, acquiring knowledge, having a vision, and working hard to achieve it.





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How to make it in agriculture: The story of Ruramiso Mashumba

By Adeva Machiso Gwenzi

Often, we see success stories of farmers on different platforms, and it appears as though agriculture is rosy and many of us quickly want to jump into it. If we decide to venture into agriculture, it is encouraged that we try and follow the footsteps or at least learn from the experiences of those who have walked the path before us.

The other side of agriculture, you also get people who have tried to make it in the sector and failed dismally. The existence of these two groups of people is reason enough for someone who wants to venture into agriculture to find out what the first group is doing right.

During an interview with the ZFU youth Chairperson, Ruramiso Mashumba, on the launch of her solar farm, insights were shared pertaining the subject of discussion here, that is: How to successfully make it in agriculture, how to graduate from one level to another.

With all the other successes attributed to her name, including many agricultural related awards locally and internationally, as well as being given leadership responsibilities at a local, regional and global scale, Ruramiso recently launched a 220-panel solar farm.

Asked how she does it, Ruramiso highlighted that it was through networking, she noted

that capitalising on her social capital has made it possible for her to get subsidised equipment and favourable instalments for her projects.

Ruramiso also hinted that good negotiation skills are also important when aiming to get discounts.

"I couldn't really afford the solar equipment, but I was fortunate enough to get a huge discount because I managed to negotiate otherwise I wouldn't have been able to afford it. It was really through networking that I was able to get my subsidised amount," she said

"This is how I have also been able to grow, trying to find partners and being able to negotiate."

Negotiating is one of the things we learn at the World Farmers' Organisation's Gymnasia which I am part of through ZFU nomination," she added.

After reading the above text, were big names like that of the World Farmers' Organisation (WFO) have been thrown in, one might ask, "How do I get there, what should be my entry point?"

We asked Ruramiso the same question and this was her response, "For me, entry was being a member of Zimbabwe Farmers' Union (ZFU) and learning to network with their contacts as well as sharing my story with them and their stakeholders,".

Giving a comment on how being a part of a farmers' organisation can be beneficial to



a farmer, the ZFU Secretary General, Mr Paul Zakariya said, "Indeed being a member of a farmer organisation like the ZFU will help farmers in their agriculture enterprises as the Union will provide a platform for them to interact with other farmers and relevant stakeholders. The Union has also negotiated for discounts for its members from various agro-dealers and service providers".

It is often said that, success in life is not an accident, one must plan for it.

Success in agriculture is no different, acquiring knowledge about the industry and doing case-studies on those farmers who have made it in the sector is part of the planning one can do.

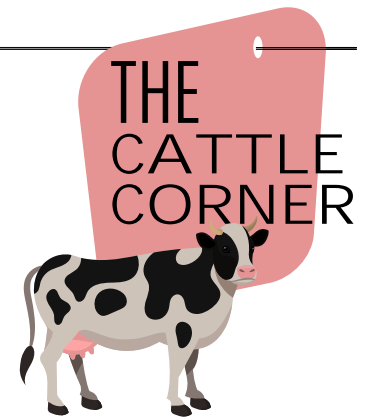


Zimbabwe Farmers Union



Managing beef and dairy cattle during rainy and wet conditions

By Eunah & Nathaniel Makoni, ABSTCM (Pvt) Ltd 4 Bannockburn Close, Mt. Pleasant Harare.



Rain and persistent wet conditions enable abundant pasture growth, prolonging grazing periods thus, lowering cost of production by sparing conserved fodder. Whilst this is good news to farmers, there is a dichotomy of joy as severe wet conditions can negatively impact cattle productivity and ultimately profitability. High moisture levels in pastures result in less dry matter intake for a given quantity of forage reducing cattle nutrient intake versus their needs. Consequently, cows will calve in poor body condition, will not rebreed on time, and calves will not meet target weight gains. Too much rain can also affect fodder harvesting and conservation for both hay and silage. This results in shortage of conserved forage and thus, high prices of the same and reduced profitability. Furthermore, persistent wet weather will have negative impact on cattle welfare and thus, productivity.

Therefore, best practice requires proper care and protection of cattle from unpleasant inclement weather. Cattle need shelter to protect them from heavy rainfall, winds and hailstorms. Some of the common problems faced by the livestock farmers in rainy and persistent wet weather; and solutions to the same will be discussed.

• Parasites infestations

Persistent wet weather is conducive to parasites infestation and growth. The

parasites include liver flukes, intestinal worms and ticks, all of which cause costly health problems in livestock.

Worm infestations increase during the wet weather. Farmers should stock a wide range of de-wormers in the rainy season. If intestinal worms are not identified and treated timely they will affect the animals' general performance and productivity. De-worming should be carried out at the onset of the rain season and continued throughout the season.

Ticks spread rapidly in the rainy season leading to death due to tick-borne diseases such as "January disease" or east coast fever. Some flies such as tsetse flies are known for spreading Nagana disease in cattle, which is deadly, and leads to death of animals if left untreated.

• Hoof diseases

Run away water from heavy rains and persistent wet weather - erode fine top soil, wash cover materials exposing stones and sharp gravel along animal track routes. As a result

cattle suffer a range of health challenges including bruised and blistered feet from the rough, uneven ground. In addition to softening of the claws, the skin between and around the foot macerates, leaving the skin more prone to infections including foot rot. Extreme wetness causes the hoof to soften, making bruising, penetration injuries and white-line disease common. High bacterial load present in the wet muddy environments add to the infection problem and a majority of cattle suffer lameness. Rotational grazing under pasture production systems and not so sloppy concreting of high traffic areas, e.g., feeding and watering points, is recommended wherever possible to help with this problem. Injured and lame cattle can be costly in terms of veterinary bills,

reduced cow fertility and lost productivity. The estimated cost of an individual case of lameness can be in the range ZWL 60,000 to ZWL150,000 (approximately USD 507 to USD 1,267 @ ZWL : USD mid-rate 118.3997 (RB, 2022) as at February 8,2022 and hence the cost can be significant across the herd. For dairy cattle kept in barns during wet weather care must be taken to avoid slippery floors, manure build up, pot holes and floors with pebbles which can injure cows as the stones can get lodged between the cattle hooves. However, it is worth noting that housing cattle has challenges of high costs of building the barns, labour to remove manure and lay new bedding; fly control and manure disposal especially under persistent wet weather.

• Pasture damage

Cattle hoof trampling is noticeable during persistent wet weather in areas where cattle congregate such as shades or near water and feeding areas. The damage expands to new areas as hay or feeding areas are moved. Trampling creates muddy pastures thus, reducing the availability of grazing forage. Correct stocking rates have to be maintained as high stocking rates increase pasture damage. This often occurs within a relatively short period of time. Use of feeding pads, lanes for moving cattle, rotational grazing and correct stocking rates can help limit pasture damage.

• Mastitis in dairy cows

Dairy cows are prone to mastitis at an increased risk, a major udder disease, and probably the most costly of dairy cow diseases under persistent wet weather. For housed dairy cows, unclean or dirty sheds especially during

persistent wet weather, are good breeding ground for mastitis causing pathogens.

While antibiotic treatment, and good general cow management can help farmers fight mastitis, cows kept in persistent wet weather will benefit from good milking practices including use of appropriate udder protection such as teat dips.

• Other Risks/Factors

Grass that grows in the rainy season has lots of water and fibre. This causes animals to pass watery dung. Wet weather can also reduce the forage quality, a combination of low protein and high indigestible fibre, due to rapid growth, with a consequence of reducing feed intake and negatively impacting cattle growth and milk production. Poor forage quality results in low milk production because cows fill up on less digestible fibre. To make up for the shortage of protein in the poor-quality forage beef and dairy farmers can supplement grain to their rations. Providing hay to these cattle can improve dry matter intake. Hay will also decrease the diarrhoea thus, allowing cattle to perform better than otherwise on pastures. However, when feeding hay on pastures a lot of it can be lost and wasted through cattle trampling to the mud.

Cattle on pasture are in the open and risk being struck by lightning and at times they get stuck in mud holes. Mud can affect feeding behaviour and create a suction effect on the legs and hooves of cattle. This makes it hard for cattle to move around feeders, and instead they stand still. Four to eight inches of mud can decrease feed intake by four to eight per cent and slow weight gains by up to 14 per cent. Deep mud can reduce intake by 30 per cent. It is important to control mud accumulation to avert effects on feeding behaviour.

Cattle may drink from muddy pools of surface water that harbour infectious pathogens. To mitigate this temporary fencing to keep cattle out of low-lying areas is useful.

Leakage of rain water from broken barn roof can wet stored feeds which is conducive to growth of moulds. Moulds produce aflatoxins, poisonous mycotoxins, which when consumed might adversely affect cattle performance. Aflatoxins effects are difficult to identify thus, requiring experienced nutritionists or veterinary consultants for detection/diagnosis, an additional cost/expense. If such mouldy feed is fed to animals it can cause cancer, resulting from genotoxicity/

damage of DNA by aflatoxins. Excess aflatoxins can be excreted in meat and milk and if consumed will result in public health challenges. Feed additives or toxin binders that reduce the effect of the toxins can be used as a solution.

Prudent management and best practices must be adopted to protect cattle from inclement weather conditions and ensure maximum cow comfort, prevention of stress or disease, thus, maximising productivity and economic benefits. These include:

- Gradually letting out cattle to young pasture to avoid prussic acid poisoning and diarrhoea. Immature grass can also be wilted if possible to improve dry matter intake



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- De-worming cattle prior to wet season and throughout the season as worms multiply at a high rate during the wet weather
 - Strategic dipping/spraying of cattle to ensure removal of ticks and ectoparasites to prevent diseases like January disease.
 - Ensure biosafety of the entire farm by regular sanitising and use of disinfectants
 - Building barns or sheds wherever possible to shield cattle from extreme wet weather.
 - Keep the roofs of animal sheds clean and leak-proof
- Store hay and grain feeds in sheds/ a dry place away from the rains.



Above: Veronica receiving her award for best student in farm extension from MIAFWRD Minister Hon Dr Anxious Masuka, at Kushinga Phikelela

Breaking free from poverty through education

situation at home meant this income was diverted to the household in the family's struggle to meet their basic needs.

Fit for Life programme officers identified Veronica (left) as someone who would benefit from the programme and offered her the opportunity to attend Kushinga Phikelela National Farmer Training Centre in Marondera for a one-year vocational training course. "During this period my eyes opened and I started to see many positive things around me. That is when I sat down and I thought deeply about my future. I worked really hard to make ZFU and my family happy with my results."

Any pocket money disbursed from the programme was carefully set aside and saved for further secondary studies. When Veronica graduated in 2014, she received some more and she used it to find a private tutor and she resumed her secondary education. In two years (2015 and 2016), Veronica sat for and passed five O-levels including English, maths and science.

In 2017 Veronica met the man who was to later become her husband, Liberty Marwodzi. She shared with Liberty her vision of becoming a commercial farmer by the year 2020 and he offered financial help for Veronica to attain her diploma in commercial farming. She returned to Kushinga Phikelela to study for a three-year diploma. Her confidence was growing and with it, her belief in herself and with hard work and dedication, Veronica passed all 60 modules. Sadly, due to spiralling inflation, her husband's salary devalued and once again, Veronica found herself victim of circumstances beyond her control. Going back to the ZFU with cap in hand, Veronica explained her



financial difficulties. Bridget Masikati, ZFU's Youth and Gender officer personally stepped in and cleared Veronica's fees balance at the college, enabling Veronica to sit for her final examinations.

In her final year of diploma studies, she also attained a certificate in artificial insemination for Cattle from the Bargrove Veterinary Group in 2020 and is proud of the fact that she was the only student who managed to attain both certificates in the same year. At the graduation ceremony for diplomas, she won the award for best student in farm extension. Future plans include furthering her agricultural education with a university degree.

Today, Veronica is doing small agricultural projects in her homestead's yard and sells the vegetables (onions, tomatoes, green mealies and more), supporting her family including her elderly mother, from this income. She dreams of more land and working capital to exercise her hard won skills and knowledge. Furthermore, Veronica wants pay it forward by sharing her experience with others who are as disadvantaged as she once was. "My big

wish is to use the knowledge and skills I have attained the hard way to help disadvantaged children all over the country. When I am financially stable, I wish to contribute to sponsoring disadvantaged youth. That is the least I can do in recognition of the help that I received.”

Veronica is a determined individual who has had fight hard to escape indescribable poverty and becomes very emotional when she recounts her story as she realises that if it were not for ZFU’s Fit for Life programme, her life could have taken a very different path.

“I am not disadvantaged any more,” she says.

The ZFU Fit for Life Programme is an agricultural programme aimed at giving out of school youth who have not been successful in following an academic path - or who were not able to continue with their schooling due to poverty or other social circumstances - a second chance at skills development. The programme is aimed at young people between 16 and 30 and, during the year, selected groups undergo training at schools in rural districts throughout the

country. The programme’s curriculum includes numeracy, literacy, financial and farming as business modules and is delivered with the assistance of implementing partners.

After training, qualifying candidates are encouraged to set up young farmers clubs. They are also given the opportunity to apply for start-up funding to start an agricultural enterprise of their own in order to earn a livelihood and provide employment for others. Over 30,000 young people have benefitted from this programme since it’s inception.

Cotton commercial demonstration plots for women and youth

By Shadreck Hungwe, project officer

Zimbabwe Farmers Union, in partnership with WE Effect financed the establishment of 120 demonstration plots in 40 wards in the four participating districts under its SC4WAY project. The Sustainable Cotton for Women and Youth Empowerment in Southern Africa project (SC4WAY) is under implementation in Gokwe South, Kadoma, Chiredzi and Chipinge district as a pilot. All the four districts have 10 wards of operation under the project. In each ward, three beneficiaries were selected.

In line with the objective to increase the volume of seed cotton/lint from smallholder farmers,

demonstration plots are a useful extension method which coaches farmers by seeing peer performance. The beneficiaries selected include 90 women and 30 male youths and were selected on merit and their previous history in the growing of cotton. Unlike standard demonstration plots, the project embarked on commercial demonstration plots of 50X50 metres or 0.25 ha. A farmer grows to sell the yield and not only for agronomic learning. Indeed, the plots are used for coaching other farmers on all agronomy from planting to harvest, but the benefitting farmer will sell the seed cotton for income.

Beneficiaries got 50kg compound L, 25 kg Ammonium Nitrate, 5 kg seed and this translates to 200kg Compound L and 100kg Ammonium Nitrate per hectare. The expected yield on 0.25ha is 600 kg which also translates to 2400 kg per hectare. The average yield from the baseline survey carried before the project intervention was 500 kg per hectare. These farmers have the technical backing of 4 district field officers employed by ZFU. In each ward there is a ward facilitator who is also engaged by ZFU as a volunteer for community mobilisation and coordination of all training programs in the ward.



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'Adopt conservation agriculture'

By Tendai Gukutikwa, Manica Post Correspondent

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OUNG farmers have been urged to adopt conservation agriculture and agricultural solutions

amid the climate change phenomenon. Citing the success of the Pfumvudza/Intwasa climate smart farming in the previous farming season, Zimbabwe Farmers Union (ZFU) secretary general, Paul Zakariya, said there was need to enhance the participation of young farmers in coming up with digital solutions as they embrace the digital revolution in agriculture. He said this would reduce climate change challenges and climate smart farming would ensure that the country's agriculture recovery projects become successful. Zakariya aired these sentiments while officiating at a recently held youth summit hosted by ZFU for young farmers at a local hotel.

He said Manicaland Province shares the glory with Mashonaland East as it did exceptionally well in adopting conservation agriculture last season amid climate change challenges. "We conducted conservation agriculture projects in certain provinces of the country and I am glad to announce that Manicaland and Mashonaland East provinces performed exceptionally well in adopting this form of agriculture which helps in combating climate change effects.

"The projects were conducted through young farmers' clubs, showing us that they have the know-how to curtail climate change challenges and should teach their senior counterparts," he said. Zakariya said this shows that if everyone adopts conservation

agriculture, the country's harvest would hit record heights, and ensure food security at household level as envisaged in the National Development Strategy (NDS1).

He added that climate change was one of the major challenges hindering agriculture in the country before the adoption of climate smart agriculture like the Pfumvudza/Intwasa Programme.

"Even though we are still to see the figures, there has been a remarkable improvement in our harvest from before we adopted Pfumvudza as a way of farming," he said.

Zakariya urged young farmers to be involved in the fight against climate change. "Particularly on climate change and climate variability, as young people you should be seated on the table, and not be left on the sidelines as has been the norm. You are stakeholders in the climate change action and, therefore, you need to be involved in this. fight," he said.

He further urged the young farmers to create employment at local level and not wait for employers from elsewhere to rope them in.

W *Employment is about ideas. Take advantage of climate change and conservation farming, and create employment for yourselves and your peers while showing older farmers who were used to traditional farming ways the way forward. As young people, this is not the time to be laying the blame on anyone*

for not doing what you are supposed to do. Network with fellow young farmers who are thriving even under difficult conditions and get ideas on how they are managing and making it.

"If you think that the world owes you anything, you should adjust that kind of thinking. The world does not owe you anything, you need to start working as young farmers,

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said Mr Zakariya. The purpose of the summit was to create a networking platform for young farmers as they shared success stories and open up opportunities for each other in agriculture, while increasing their involvement in decision-making positions at national level. The summit ran under the theme "Climate Action: Nothing for us Without us".



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