



PRESIDENT'S COUNCIL'S REPORT TO CONGRESS 2010

List of Councillors

President	–	G S Theron
Vice President	–	C Taffs
Vice President	–	L Fick
Zimbabwe Crops Producers Association (Crops)	–	C Cloete
Coffee Growers Association (CGA)	–	C Taffs
National Association of Dairy Farmers (NADF)	–	A Kirk
Cattle Producers' Association (CPA)	–	A Kirk
Commercial Cotton Growers' Association (CCGA)	–	D Kenniard
Manicaland Regional Representative	–	R Finaughty
Mashonaland Central Regional Representative	–	A Bruk-Jackson
Mashonaland East Regional Representative	–	P Grinham
Mashonaland West South Regional Representative	–	B Lenton
Mashonaland West North Regional Representative	–	Vacant
Masvingo Regional Representative	–	M Clark
Midlands Regional Representative	–	B Pearce
Matabeleland Regional Representative	–	Vacant
Agriculture Recovery & Compensation (ARAC)	–	P Steyl

Secretariat

Chief Executive Officer	–	H W Olivier
Minute Taker	–	L O'Connor

Introduction

The 67th Council of the Commercial Farmers' Union of Zimbabwe met on twenty nine (29) occasions in the past year. The number of meetings held at different levels were:

- Regional and Commodity Council
- Financial and Audit Committee
- Management Meetings

Every year going back on historical data we start off by saying that it was once again an extremely difficult year. There is no exception this year and regrettably this has been an extremely difficult year for the Union, commercial farmers and agriculture in general. Although the rains started late in some areas, with the exception of region 5, overall the rainfall cannot be blamed for crop failures. Tobacco yields are up from last year as well as the deliveries of maize.

Throughout the country dams are full but regrettably the anticipated wheat production for this season is even going to be lower than the last season.

The severity of problems facing members and the Union necessitated regular meetings of Council. The following points are a resume of discussions held at Regional and Commodity Council meetings.

1. Membership

Council once again focused on the needs of membership. Disturbingly the member's moral has been at an all time low. Viability of farmers has also been of concern. With farmers now operating under a multi currency system and the majority predominantly operating in USD we have noted serious viability concerns across the board. Lack of collateral has played a significant role and farmers have been forced to either use up their little savings or put down their houses or flats in town as some form of security towards the banks.

Council looked seriously at every class of membership including non operating farmers. Regular contact with the membership is necessary and regular meetings are being conducted with all farmers across the board. One of the objectives of the Stabex 95 Capacity Building Programme was to enhance the Union's membership.

Today I am happy to report to Congress that we are way up on our figures of last year. CFU membership currently comprises farming members, displaced or dispossessed farmers (known as Extended Members), any business or organisation wishing to be associated with the Union (known as Associated Members) and project centres for small-scale farmers in the dairy industry. These are Umzingwane, Tzonzozo, Rusiki, Guruwe, Sangano, Marirangwe and Gokwe.

Membership of small-scale coffee farmers from Chimanimani, Burma Valley, Honde Valley and Chipinge also exist.

Honorary life membership can be bestowed on any individual or business who has contributed significantly to commercial agriculture.

2. Unity

Unity amongst all farmers is essential if we are to achieve our objectives. The formation of the ARAC office has gone a long way in bringing unity amongst farmers. The Union has worked tirelessly to bring farmers and farming organisations together.

3. Inputs and Finance

With the assistance of the European Union, the Union managed to provide a service to its membership in securing fertilizer. Negotiations are underway to facilitate a similar service for the forthcoming summer crop. The Union is very grateful that the European Union has continued supporting farmers on the ground. The Union looks forward to negotiations that will facilitate the possibility of supplying essential inputs within the stock-feed industry.

The country has come through its hiccups with providing fuel and every farmer now has access to fuel. The Union is in consultation with a major importer of fuel to facilitate discounted bulk fuel deliveries to farmers on the ground.

Electricity has also been a major concern and has seriously affected the farmer.

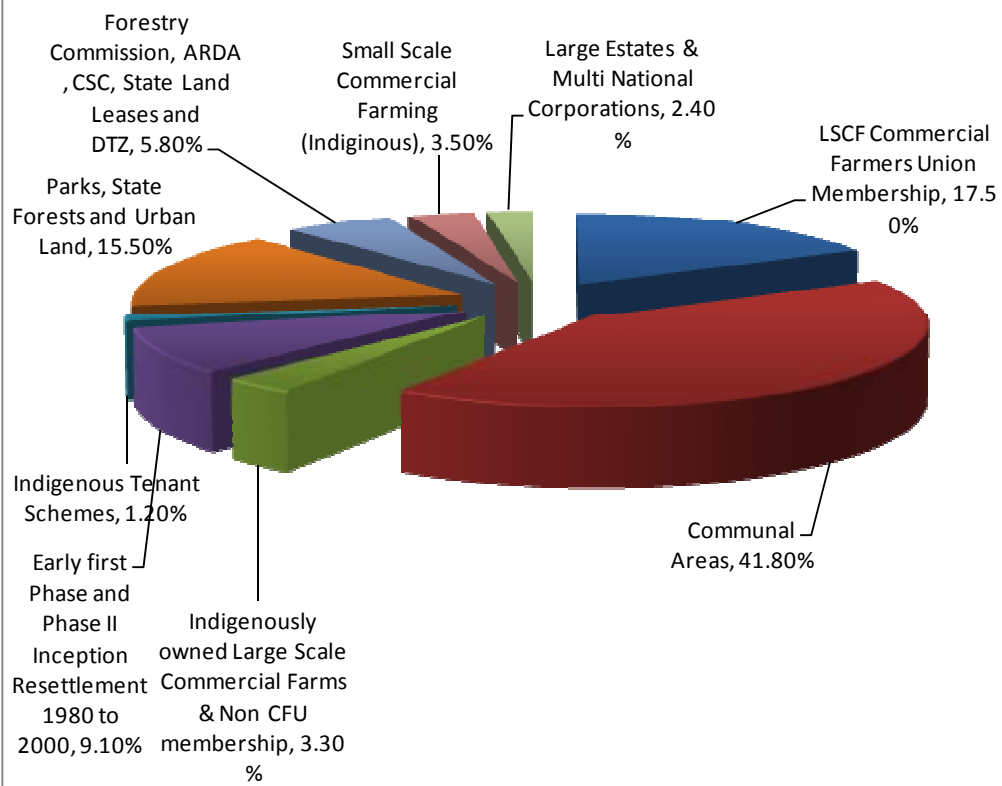
Both Zinwa and Zesa have not played their part and have unilaterally increased tariffs to uneconomic levels. Of concern is the inability of farmers to access finance, especially low interest finance. The Union is in consultation with various stakeholders to try and rectify this problem.

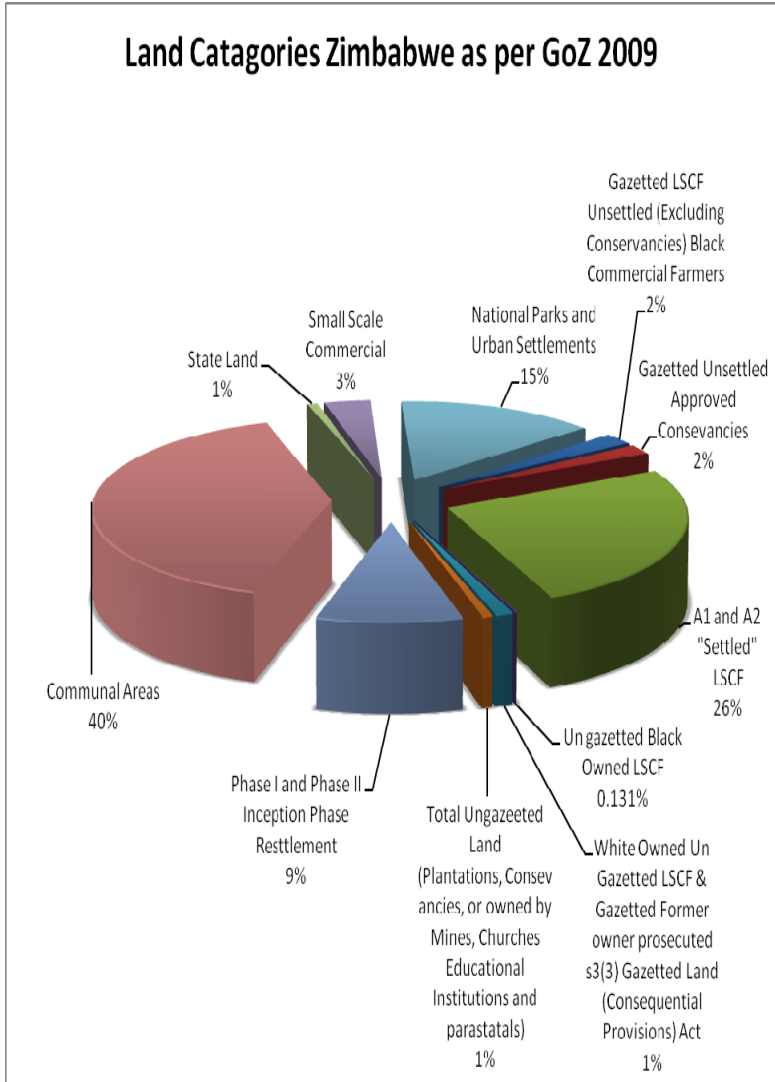
4. Land Reform Programme

It would be wrong of me not to mention that this is probably a standing agenda item at every Council meeting for the last eleven years. Government still continues to acquire more land and prosecute farmers. Farm disruptions and evictions continue. Where in the world can you take away somebody's household contents, machinery, equipment, personal items and years of hard work on the farms without being fairly compensated within a reasonable time? Some have not been so fortunate and have been given a few hours to vacate their properties.

There has been no respect for most court judgments passed in favour of the farmer. There has been selective law and order applied on the farms and in many cases it has been a free for all. Regrettably in Zimbabwe there are certain sections of the community that cannot access any support from the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) and that is the commercial farmer of Zimbabwe. The Land Reform Programme started on a farm in Masvingo on the 17th February 1980. For convenience I show the land holdings then compared to now as there is still a perception that commercial farmers possessed the most land.

Zimbabwe - Land Catagories April 2000 (39.6 million Ha)





Source: Ministry of Lands & Rural Resettlement: Memorandum to Cabinet by the Minister of Lands and Rural Resettlement Hon. H. M. Murerwa (M.P.) on the Update on Land Reform & Resettlement Programme – 27th of August, 2009

5. Diplomatic and International Community

Once again I need to pay tribute to our friends in the diplomatic and international community. The Union offices remain an important port of call by the diplomatic corp. Accountability and trustworthiness remain important criteria for them and we have obviously passed the test of time. This just proves that we are accountable and trustworthy. The support that we have received from the diplomatic and international community towards this Union and its membership has been overwhelming.

I would wish to pay special tribute to the European Union for their support in the last two years towards agriculture in Zimbabwe. To the outgoing Ambassador, Ambassador Xavier Marchal, the Union salutes you for having the courage to try and bring back stability in the agriculture sector as well as at the same time capacitating all three Unions to provide a better service to its membership. With the continued demise of the Unions membership it would not have been possible to be where we are today without their support of this Union and its staff.

6. Government

Last year at Congress my predecessor reported on the Government of National Unity and that every citizen of Zimbabwe hoped and expected things to change to normal. Regrettably this has not happened. The Government of National Unity has not fulfilled expectations. The Union has still and will continue to be very active in engaging the Government of the day to find solutions for our farmers.

The Union has also engaged all three parties within the Government structures in trying to find a lasting solution for the farmer's plight but also to be involved in a recovery programme for the whole of Zimbabwe. Regrettably not all players within Government want recovery and until we find common ground conflict will remain and recovery delayed.

7. Legal Issues

A comprehensive report is tabled by our in-house lawyer, Marc Carrie-Wilson. I will therefore not go into too much detail other than to mention that this is another standing item on the agenda.

I wish however, to pay tribute to a couple of people who have provided enormous support to the farmers in this country and at some times to their own costs.

Dave Drury of Gollop and Blank. You have been an awesome support towards farmers and their families out there. Your role in the SADC Tribunal and the results that we have achieved in the SADC Tribunal speak for themselves and the Union pays tribute to you.

Alex Masterson of Coghlan, Welsh and Guest. It has been a difficult year for Alex and despite the passing on of his wife Rose, Alex as the Union's lawyer has always been a phone call away and willing to attend to any matter.

Kevin Arnott of K J Arnott Legal Practitioner. Kevin has come on board with Coghlan, Welsh & Guest and between him, Alex and Dave have become an awesome team in providing the best service and advice to our farmers out there.

I would also like to commend Advocates de Bourbon, Gauntlett and Frank Pelser for the sound advice that they give, but not only that but their availability to represent the Union in important matters either in Pretoria, Windhoek or Harare.

Both Willie Spies and Kallie Kriel from Afriforum South Africa who have during the course of the year provided advice, support and representation to farmers in general as well as representing farmers in the Pretoria High Court in cases which set precedence for the rest of the farming community. Their support at huge costs to themselves has been of huge assistance to this Union and the Union is indebted to their support and sacrifice.

As can be noted from the above the Union has a dynamic legal team in place and we have left no stone unturned to find the best legal brains both locally and internationally in support of our farmers. To the other local firms who we interact with from time to time we also convey our thanks for your commitment to our farmers.

8. Projects

The European Commission has engaged both the Union and NADF in four (4) projects. They are:

- Stabex 95 Capacity Building
- Stabex 95 Fertiliser Project
- Stabex 95 Essential Vaccines Programme
- Stabex 95 Marketing Programme

These programmes have played a significant role in supporting both the Union and NADF. My sincere appreciation towards the European Commission and in particular the Ambassador who has in many ways demonstrated his support towards agriculture in Zimbabwe.

It is clear that the Union at this current stage will not be able to sustain itself entirely on licence fees and levies. It is therefore imperative that the Union continues to engage the international community, possible donors and NGO's in other projects for the forthcoming year. The Director has put a projects team together bringing in the support of all relevant staff under the AISD Department to pursue and find suitable projects. This Union is different to the other Unions and we have highlighted this to the European Union in that there continues to be an onslaught on our membership and therefore we have appealed for a gradual phase out or withdrawal of funding taking us into the middle parts of 2011.

9. Finances

This is once again a topic of discussion around Council table at every Council meeting. We certainly are aware of both the viability of farmers and the Union. The support from the European Commission has benefitted the Union. It is now our role to find mechanisms to put us on a stable financial footing. As with everything in life if you want something you have to pay for it. The Union as part of the strategy will be going down this route to provide services but at a cost to a farmer should he not be a member of the Union. Gone are the days where we can just hand out free information to anybody out there on agriculture related issues. The Union will have to re-look and possibly restructure within itself to become more commercially operating so as to overcome financial difficulties in the long run.

10. Acknowledgements

Being elected onto Council or in the position as President and Vice President's come with a sacrifice. Usually their own business interests pave the way for CFU business. I would

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therefore like to take this opportunity to thank all my Councillors for their dedication and service towards firstly the membership and secondly this Union.

To Vice President Taffs who has pioneered a recovery programme for the whole of Zimbabwe in the last eight months. This programme has widely been accepted and he has engaged the Zimbabwean Government as well as the International Community and is receiving a favourable response. However he has stuck with his plan and I thank him for his dedication towards the recovery.

Vice President Fick who initiated the South African initiative. I am happy to report that we have over 500 South African farmers registered with the Union. Despite also being evicted off his home farm during this period Louis has spent endless hours negotiating on behalf of the South African farmers with the local South African Embassy, as well as the South African Government in litigation. This has set precedence and future litigation is on the cards. This precedence set will also benefit Zimbabwean farmers and therefore all farmers of Zimbabwe as well as South African farmers are hugely indebted to his work. The possibility of even some pension assistance to South African farmers is hugely welcomed by the farmers and this will enable them to live in a more dignified manner than previously.

To both the Union's Trustees, Richard Winkfield and John Meikle who have kept a watchful eye on the Union and have frequently participated and shared their views at Council meetings I thank you for your concern and dedication in looking after the Union's assets. As both of you have requested to stand down, I would like to present you with a certificate of our appreciation.

Paul Grinham, Lennox Bruce and Mark Whitaker who have been the "watchdogs" of the Union's finances on Audit Committee I also extend my appreciation to you. This is a very important job and I know that there is no remuneration involved and I sincerely thank you for your monthly meetings.

To Jean Simon who also served for many years on the Audit Committee, my deepest gratitude for your very active involvement. We have not acknowledged your invaluable input publicly and I now do so by also awarding you a certificate of appreciation.

To June Nicholls, my Executive Personal Assistant. Thank you for looking after me. Whenever I got snowed under by appointments, you took control and made my life bearable by telling people that they could only see me for a limited time.

Hendrik, as Chief Executive Officer you took most of the flack on behalf of CFU. When things went wrong you had to face the music. You have been incredible in handling pressure and abuse. Thank you for your loyalty and dedication towards the Union and its members. It has

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not been an easy year and the coming year will be no different. Your support of me as President has been a hundred percent and for that I am most grateful.

Martha, your time of dumping me for someone else because I do not give you enough time or attention is running out. Pretty soon I will be home full time and you will then get all the attention you deserve.

Lastly my sincere appreciation to a committed secretariat and the entire staff component that under very challenging times have supported both Council and myself.

Thank you.

**Deon Theron
(President) Commercial Farmers' Union
29 June 2010**