



**MIDLANDS  
REPORT TO CONGRESS 2011**

I'd like to welcome everyone to the meeting, and to thank you all for coming. A special thanks to Mr Charles Taffs, Vice President of CFU, for traveling from Harare to attend our meeting.

As I have only been in office for a few months, I propose to combine my annual report with an up to date one which will hopefully be further updated by the Vice President.

I took over as Regional Chairman from the previous Chairman Brian Pearce in early April. Brian and his family moved to the UK at the end of March and if things work out for them they may remain in the UK. On behalf of Midlands members I would like to thank Brian for his diligence and honest representation at CFU council meetings on our behalf. I wish him and his family all the best for the future.

**1. Membership and Finances**

The past year has been one of uncertainty for many of our members. There have been ongoing farm invasions, attacks and harassment of farmers, and in some cases evictions from farms and homes. Many of our members have spent considerable time and money in ongoing court cases.

It is with much regret that I have to report the recent loss of two prominent and longstanding farming families of our community, Phillip and Ellen Hapelt and Sid and Joan Shaw. After a long battle in the courts and with the authorities they were evicted from their homes and farms and have moved to Bulawayo. Neither eviction seems to have been done with the proper legal procedure and they were apparently not sanctioned by the higher authorities but were allowed to happen all the same. On behalf of us all I would like to wish them all the best in the future.

Sadly we have lost another well known family from our district during the past year. Bryan Harvey passed away in March 2010, his widow Cherine was evicted from their farm in August of last year, and sadly Cherine passed away early this year. The Harvey family are well remembered as members of our community for many years and also for their part in maintaining the Tuli breed started by Bryan's father in the 1940's.

I pray that there will soon be relief from all the uncertainty over the issue of land tenure, and that this situation will soon settle down. Members of the farming community will then be able to get on with their lives and their businesses.

Without security of land tenure, there can be no meaningful investment and development in agriculture.

Up to the 11<sup>th</sup> April, there were some 471 members in all, i.e. full CFU farming members and ARAC members together (some fully paid up and some on installments). The combined membership income will cover only 3 months of the total annual CFU budget.

The financial position of the union is extremely tight at the moment, to such an extent that the President and Vice President have not been able to draw their honoraria.

The CFU is relying on an EU grant of 2 million Euros split 50-50 between CFU and ZFU, which as I understand it will only become available when the combined CFU – ZFU Commodity Council is formed.

Approximately two thirds of CFU income for the last financial year was spent on salaries, wages and travel.

The CFU is going to be extremely dependent upon external EU finance to operate the way it does currently. I do not think this is a sustainable system and some drastic changes need to be made.

## **2. Commodity Council**

CFU and ZFU have signed an understanding under the title of Zimbabwe Farmers Alliance Trust.

A meeting was held in Harare on Friday the 29<sup>th</sup> April, where approx. 150 ZFU members and 25 CFU members were present.

Matters of mutual concern were listed by those present, and ways in which problems could be resolved were discussed.

It is hoped that a Commodity Council involving all agricultural commodities can be formed between the two unions, so that representation to the authorities would carry greater weight. Such a council would also help to de-politicize the work of farmer's unions.

What remains to be finalised is the exact way in which farmers from both unions will meet and work together.

## **3. Agriculture House**

The building is owned by Agriculture House (Pvt) Ltd. It is a valuable asset and perhaps should be sold and the proceeds invested and used to finance attempts to secure compensation for all dispossessed farmers.

Some shareholders are for and some against the selling of the building. A majority of the shareholders would have to agree before the building could be sold.

A house could then be purchased or rented in Harare to accommodate a much smaller organization.

## **4. Compensation**

ARAC continues to operate and to work towards the completion of the land and improvement database, with the aim of securing compensation for all dispossessed farmers at some time in the future.

## **5. Other matters**

So far there have been no new developments with regard to farm wages or the NEC. Results of arbitration are still awaited.

Various efforts are being made to bring in income for the union, for example the Discount Club and the magazine (this is a cost to the CFU in spite of advertising revenue). However it remains to be seen whether such ventures can significantly assist the financial state of the union.

As can be seen from my report, I have spent very little time on farming and viability issues, and yet this should be the main concern of the Union.

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The production of beef and milk continues but at a much reduced level compared to previous years. Milk imports and high costs of production have impacted significantly on viability.

Broiler and egg production is probably at relatively higher levels but is also seriously affected by cheaper imports and high costs of production.

High costs of production and marketing difficulties have caused the production of export horticultural crops to be reduced, with fewer flowers, peas and chillies, being exported, but this has been compensated for by an increase in the production of potatoes and tomatoes for the local market.

Greater efforts need to be made to reduce the cost of production and to limit the import of cheap and dumped commodities onto the Zimbabwean market.

The President, Vice President and the Director have made great efforts to keep the Union going, and to represent Zimbabwean Agriculture at various international fora. I would like to express my gratitude to them for their hard work during an extremely difficult year, for what is surely a thankless task.

However, I cannot help thinking that we need to make further serious and drastic changes to our Union. Our activities must return to farming issues ( under the Commodity Council ) and the political , legal and compensation side of our interests should be handled by a separate organization, perhaps the CFU and ARAC in a smaller combined organization, which is not directly associated with active farmers.

We as farmers cannot be seen to be in any way linked to political issues, and I sincerely hope that the proposed Commodity Council will pave the way for more changes to our Union.

Finally, I would like to thank Starr for his help and wise counsel these past few months, and to him and Shaku for manning the office so well, and for organizing our meetings. Thank you to Derek and Sandy Shaw and Pat Glen-Williamson for their cheerful help at meetings. I would like to particularly thank Derek Shaw and Veneka Bwerinofa of NADF for their tireless assistance and attempts to lobby the authorities on behalf of many of our members.

It is true and most frustrating that we are not in control of our futures as far as our land is concerned. But if we put our trust in the Lord, he will help us to manage our personal lives, whatever may happen to us.

I would like to wish all members the very best of good fortune for the remainder of the year.

**G.D.Anderson**  
**Midlands Chairman**  
**30 June 2011**