



**CFU PRESIDENT
REPORT TO CONGRESS 2011**

List of Councilors

President	-	G S Theron
Vice President	-	C Taffs
Vice President (part of the year)	-	L Fick
Zimbabwe Crops Producers Association	-	A Guthrie
Livestock (NADF and CPA)	-	A Kirk
Mashonaland Central Regional Representative	-	A Bruk-Jackson
Mashonaland East Regional Representative	-	P Grinham, B. Gemmill
Mashonaland West (South) Regional Representative	-	B Lenton
Mashonaland West (North) Regional Representative-		Z. van der Merwe, B Dardagan, R Linfield
Manicaland Regional Representative	-	Vacant
Masvingo Regional Representatives	-	M Clark, R. Beverley, D. Goosen
Midlands Regional Representatives	-	B. Pearce, D. Anderson, P. de- Bruin
Matabeleland Regional Representative	-	Vacant
Agriculture Recovery and Compensation (ARAC)	-	P Steyl

Secretariat

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

Introduction

The 68th Council of the Commercial Farmers Union of Zimbabwe was involved in 26 separate meetings over the past year. These included meetings of the Regional and Commodity Council, Financial and Management, Executive Committee (EXCO), Audit and an Extraordinary General Meeting.

General overview

Once again the Union was faced with the daunting task of surviving financially while representing both farmers still able to farm, as well as those already evicted. Assisting farmers on the ground was a real challenge. While security of tenure remained a priority, viability issues became the main concern. On security of tenure issues we engaged the relevant Government Ministries, and although we were always well received it was near impossible to stop the continuing evictions. We have had good meetings with JOMIC, and I hope that they will play a more active role in stopping illegal farming disruptions.

In addressing the various factors that affect farmer's viability, liquidity – or access to affordable finance over a medium to long term period – proved to be the most pressing. I believe that we have made huge strides in addressing this, and hope that we will be able to share some significant progress in this regard in the near future.

On the input side we continue to seek ways of reducing costs through negotiation and structured deals. However, this sometimes goes pear shaped as a particular deal with fertilizer went sour. Although the farmers reaped the full benefit of the deal, the Union is still embroiled in a legal battle with one of the partners who failed to fulfill their part of the deal.

ZESA, ZINWA, regulatory, policy, legal and labour issues also featured prominently on our daily list of "to do's" on behalf of farmers.

The resolution of the conflict of land ownership continues, and we continue to pursue the route of Compensation with government. In this regard I need to commend my Vice President Charlie Taffs for the incredible document and DVD that he has put together on The Way Forward. This led to a very successful trip to the UK where we had numerous meetings with various people, including Minister Henry Bellingham, the Minister for Africa. Doors have been opened, and I trust this will assist in bringing the land reform to a final successful conclusion between us, our government and the British.

Unity

Unity has always been high on our agenda, as unity brings strength. I am pleased that the relationship between farmers and evicted farmers has improved tremendously. On a monthly basis we have meetings that are well attended by both, and issues of mutual concern are discussed. We also have representation of both on Council

Although there is room to improve unity with SACFA and JAG, I am pleased to say that there is no animosity between us, and for this I am grateful.

Our relationship with ZFU has been cemented through the formation of the Zimbabwe Farmers Alliance Trust (ZFAT). Together, the two unions will lead the agricultural recovery in Zimbabwe. We continue to meet, discuss and plan the way forward. I thank all those involved in making this possible, especially my team, President Hungwe and his team as well as the EU and DED for their support.

Our relationship with VALCON, RAU and others continues to grow as we finalize documentation of all our farms.

Conferences

I have already mentioned the highly successful trip to the UK where we held meetings with Minister Bellingham, various parliamentarians, business leaders and captains of industry, CDC, DFID and the National Farmers Union. The doors that were opened on this trip will play a significant role in the way forward.

We also attended various conferences throughout the region and the world. Being invited and sponsored to attend these conferences emphasizes the high regard the Union is held in.

We attended and spoke at the annual congresses of Agri SA, Transvaal Agricultural Union (TAU), Namibia Agricultural Union (NAU) and Zambia National Farmers Union (ZNFU)

We attended a policy conference and AGM of SACAU, a conference on Corporate Governance and Code of Conduct and Ethics, and were involved in the formation of PAFFO (Pan African Farmers Forum), the first Continental Agricultural Body in the world.

I was twice a panelist and once a speaker at Zimbabwe Investment Conferences hosted by the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Economic Planning and Investment Promotion.

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The French also invited and sponsored me to attend the G120 summit in Paris where I joined 75 other countries in discussing various issues including access to land by farmers. As with the UK trip, valuable contacts were established.

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Meetings

Apart from our scheduled CFU meetings (Council, Exco, farmers, etc.) that I mentioned earlier, we had numerous meetings with government Ministers, government officials as well as the two Deputy Prime Ministers and the Prime Minister himself.

We had regular meetings with the World Bank and IMF, as well as all our local banks and financial institutions.

On a weekly basis we met with Ambassadors from all Embassies in Harare, discussing the way forward for agriculture and how their respective countries could get involved. This also includes DFID, UNDP, FAO etc.

We were involved in various meetings with organizations that we either have a seat on, or were invited to attend, such as Zimbabwe Economic Policy Analysis and Research Unit (ZEPARU.) CFU was President of Business Council of Zimbabwe (BCZ) until May, when we handed over to EMCOZ. During our tenure as President and secretariat of BCZ we had regular meetings with various ministers including the Prime Minister himself. We led the way holding workshops and drafting documents for COPAC as well as on indigenization and drafting a National Business Agenda with Government.

As a Board member I attended meetings of the Farmers Development Trust, Agriculture House, and Good Corporate Governance.

EGM

We held a very successful EGM in November where we agreed to implement various changes to the CFU Constitution on a trial basis, which would either be ratified or changed at Congress. Some of the proposed changes have worked exceptionally well while others have had little effect. This will be discussed and decisions made at Congress.

Acknowledgements

The person that stands in the front line on a daily basis is the CEO. It has not been an easy year for CFU, and I would like to thank Hendrik for his efforts in keeping the Union afloat. It is an ungrateful role you play, handling daily pressure and not always receiving the acknowledgement you deserve. With the rest of the CFU team you have managed to survive another extremely difficult year, while still offering a service to our members. Your time, effort, loyalty and dedication was always appreciated.

To all the Councillors: To all those that participated to the full – thank you. To those that attended only a few or hardly any council meetings, you let your members down by not attending and therefore failed to represent their best interests. You either need to attend on a regular basis or stand down.

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Louise, I need to thank you for being an excellent PA to both Charles and I. Without your input I would not have been as well prepared for my meetings, and would probably have missed many of them.

To my two vice presidents, Louis and Charles I am most grateful.

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Louis took on the South African initiative and it has been one of the real success stories of the past year. The benefit to members of this initiative has been tremendous. Thank you, Louis. I am sad you had to stand down for personal reasons, but am grateful that you continue to sacrifice your personal time in still representing these members.

Charles, as the incoming President I wish you well. I believe that you will take the CFU to new levels, and ask all members to unite behind you. You have the incredible ability to see opportunities and then bring them to fruition. It was a pleasure working with you.

To both the Trustees, Dave and Pieter, who frequently come into the office or attended meetings and who shared their wisdom with council and the top team. Thank you to both of you.

To my wife Martha: Thank you for your patience. I felt I could make a difference at CFU, and only time will tell if I succeeded or not. I know it was extremely difficult for you to watch me spending nearly all my time at CFU over the past five years while our own lives were being shattered. We have lost the financial security we used to have, but thankfully I am at last coming home. I trust that through the grace of God we will be able to rebuild what has been stolen from us.

Conclusion

There is hope. As farmers we are innovative, determined and committed to rise from the ashes of destruction. Zimbabwe is our country and we will not be denied the opportunity to participate fully in the rebuilding and recovery of our country.

I thank those of you that supported the Union over the past year. To all those that supported me personally with words of encouragement through emails, sms's, phone calls or visits to my office or when I was in jail – thank you. May God bless you for your kindness.

**Deon Theron
President
15 July 2011**