

CFU Calling

19 August 2011

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK (Charles Taffs)

The negative impact of what has been happening to many of our farmers country wide has been immense. Agriculture in Zimbabwe has been for some time viewed, both locally and internationally, as a no go zone in terms of funding risk and every time there are incidents such as those witnessed over the last 10 days these views are further strengthened.

The behaviour carried out by small groups of lawless individuals is totally unacceptable to the general population of Zimbabwe and we are, and will continue to canvass the relevant authorities to immediately intervene and restore order.

As long as this kind of behaviour continues, this country will beg for basics. Let us work as united Zimbabweans to find a lasting solution to the land question so that agriculture and its associated industries can take back their positions as world leaders in their respective fields.

The continued disregard for property rights and the rule of law is doing no one any favours; it is perpetuating poverty and donor reliance and for the continued harassment of the few farmers still contributing to the extremely stressed economy is nothing short of ridiculous. Let us rather change tack as a country and develop a cohesive strategy to finalise all outstanding issues that will put value back into the land of this country on the back of which we can all succeed.

I urge you all please – take extreme care in what can only be described as a very tense period in our history and let us all work together in a positive fashion to find a lasting solution.

EXECUTIVE NEWS

Last week we started by saying that the weather was definitely warming up – but this week has arguably been one of the coldest weeks this winter! Perhaps it would therefore rather be better to rely on the boffins before making comments about the weather.

We have a number of Internet links to a number of interesting weather sites on our website www.cfuzim.org which may assist you on weekly assessments and planning but so far none of those will help with a forecast for the season. We have just found a new link www.yr.no being the National Norwegian Weather Service which was recommended to us by a farmer and allows you to link to a number of farms in the country and get a short-term forecast – 7 days. As soon as the long-term weather predictions are released we will let you know.

From days gone by we used to say Show Week was when we had our first bit of rain. But this week it seems that we are trying our best to make this happen as we have opened our stand again at the Harare Agricultural Show, which started today and will be open all of next week. We have not had a stand at the show for a number of years, for obvious reasons, but we hope that this will now herald the start of a new beginning for agriculture in Zimbabwe. We have to move forward so we are using the opportunity and seek your support by visiting the stand at the show grounds.

The week itself started with another violent eviction in Manicaland targeting one of the last remaining farmers in the Nyazura area, which has attracted the attention of the powers that be at a time when many of them had considered the land invasions to be over. Although their reaction has allegedly been rather slow they have at least taken the matter very seriously.

What has come to our notice about the incident is that the same group of people who were involved in violent evictions in the same area as well as Rusape in December 2009 are the same people accused of being involved in this incident as well as the recent violent eviction/theft/assaults on 3 other properties. What is shown very clearly by this is that law and order is allegedly still being

applied selectively as the perception out there is that there has been no prosecution of those well-known offenders.

We once again remind farmers out there, whether members or not, to please keep reporting to us exactly what is happening out there, whether court cases or disruptions, to mashc@cfuzim.org. It is very important that our information is up to date and verifiable at all times. Where farmers have been violently evicted please also remember that Meryl Harrison, now with VAWZ, is always available to assist with the removal of either pets or livestock. She is available on 0774-168 218.

This has been another week of constructive meetings and workshops with the main topic of discussion on trying to find a way forward through getting agriculture in Zimbabwe back on track; compensating those who have lost absolutely everything; calling for a moratorium on the prosecutions of farmers, evictions and more land allocations; securing property rights; creating confidence for investment in our industry; securing finance at viable rates.

Without going into greater detail on what happens at each meeting or who they were held with we can say that we are making good progress. Each meeting held is just another spoke in the wheel, or like building blocks which are used to piece everything slowly together, whilst heading towards our eventual goal.

However, we must emphasise that discussions are still in a delicate situation and we must all keep on working much closer together to achieve our eventual aim. Whichever way we look at the situation we are all involved in one way or another so it is important, for all our interests that we all speak from the same page.

It is important therefore that we start rebuilding our structures out there and in particular you need to propose the election of representation on CFU Council of 2 dedicated people, one farming and the other not farming from each province/region. We still have a few positions on council which urgently need to be filled. Vice President Peter Steyl has been tasked with this so please liaise with him directly psteyl@cfuzim.org

Some of the press reports this week have done us no favours by allegedly misreporting matters attributed to your Union so we appeal to everyone to please check with us before being coerced into making statements in the press. Although we fully recognise the freedom of the press we would prefer to see factually correct reports being put out to the public – especially when they are purportedly quoting us directly.

There was some good news this week in that another farmer did manage to successfully defend his prosecution under the Gazetted Land (Consequential Provisions) Act. Although the crux of his defence revolved around the property being situated within a municipal area it also touched on the rather contentious issue of *lawful authority*. The judgment has been circulated to most of the lawyers who are dealing with land cases.

Later in the week we also saw the passing of Vice President Mujuru's husband to whom we extend our sincere condolences.

Please remember that our doors are always open and do not hesitate to come forward with either your ideas – or complaints – so we can make your Union work for you in the manner recommended by you. To contact the President directly – ctaffs@cfuzim.org

There will be no report from either the Crops Association or the Business Council as Richard Taylor is stuck at Gabarone Airport after his plane failed to arrive!

Below is taken from Valcon's latest newsletter:

THE VALUATION CONSORTIUM

SUITE 4, LINDSAY HOUSE, EASTLEA SHOPPING CENTRE,

SAMORA MACHEL AVENUE EAST, HARARE, ZIMBABWE

TELEPHONE +263 4 746648/54/55 EMAIL : valuationconsortium@gmail.com

Newsletter: 8/11

While browsing my book of quotations this morning I came across two that were printable and maybe germane;

George Bernard Shaw: - “Governments that rob Peter to pay Paul can always rely on the support of Paul “.

What if there are twelve million Peters and a few hundred Pauls?

Robert F Kennedy: - “one fifth of the people are against everything all of the time”

Ironically we have four fifths of dispossessed farmers registered on the database. More significantly we have several bodies and individuals purporting to represent farmers. These probably have little or no mandate but nevertheless they cause dissent and cynicism amongst the very people we are trying to bring on board for the compensatory exercise. The call for unity of purpose has been made by ourselves and the main players we deal with.

At the CFU congress the President of the Zambia National Farmers’ Union, Mr Jervis Zimba (Zambia Agriculture – the recipe for success) made a strong call for inclusivity and unity within the Zimbabwean context. This has been seriously considered and strong moves already have taken place between the various Farmers Unions. There is still a need for unity of purpose from the dispossessed and the old Northeast/Southwest divide must be addressed.

More than a year ago a small group of ex-farmers decided to approach the Government Valuation Branch without professional or legal representation on their own behest and throw themselves on the mercy of the Valuers. Offers at about 20% of the true compensatory value were made and nine former farmers accepted. The fact that some compensation was paid lead to a flood of impoverished elderly ex-farmers wishing to follow the same route on the principle that anything is better than nothing. We have been advising and assisting where possible but can report that no payments have been made for nearly a year and that no funds are available for the foreseeable future.

Let us consider the implications of the actions of these few on the overall situation.

1. The politicised members of the Ministry were delighted to “Divide and Rule” alienating owners from professional and legal representation.
2. A culture of low valuations as precedent is established; these were used against us in Paris and will be used against you in the future.
3. The Government will claim that “We are dealing with the issue, we don’t need any interference”.
4. The credibility of the Farmers representatives who are working on compensation is devalued.
5. The role of the Lawyers and Valuers as players is weakened.
6. A handful have benefited at the expense of three thousand dispossessed farmers.

A lot of the gaps have been plugged; Lawyers have succeeded in obtaining a high court order to allow professional access to the Compensation Committee for representation. Predictably this has been ignored and as far as we can gather the Committee has become non functional.

We have been advising applicants on proper submissions with realistic values and reports as per the schedules, if these applicants accept a low compensation we can still argue duress and continue a claim for the land element.

By monitoring the work rate of the Government Valuers we can confidently predict that the exercise will take them two hundred and fifty years. The Valcon database can complete it in a few months when the stage is set.

Valcon feels that those who have taken the backdoor route have eschewed our mandate and we are not prepared to represent them when the final exercise is under way and the issue of payment for land or underpayment is considered, nor will they appear on any Valuation Rolls we produce for the Compensatory exercise.

We are making significant progress on the Compensation issue both as a universally accepted concept and with regard to a reasonable quantum. A lot of the work is behind closed doors and publicity or the wrong moves could be counterproductive.

Mapping and the database. *(Sorry would not copy)*

Pretty is it not?

To view full scale pay us a visit and at the same time update your farm image

I repeat the paragraphs below from the last newsletter as it is still valid.

We are in the process of verifying all the information on the database using satellite imagery within Google earth pro, that now also allows us to view farms historical images of farms from the year 2000 for most areas. This is particularly helpful for farms that were registered within the last few years without a previous valuation or access to the actual property for verification. If you have not done so please come in and arrange to sit down with our technicians and identify the improvements on their properties, it would assist us greatly and help complete the process a lot quicker. Please contact Dyllan or Shallon by either replying to this Email or by calling the office: [+263 \(4\) 746654/5](tel:+26347466545). **If you are not able to come in because you are out of town or country, we can email you an image of the improvements on your farm for identification and can then verify sizes etc at our offices.**

Peer Assessment

The peer assessment project continues well with about 1100 Farms covered with about 300 having two assessments so far. We need more volunteers to help with this project which should tie up the valuation process.

Technoserve Agro Innovation Contest

We have been on the periphery of this contest for the last few months and last Friday, five prizes of \$50,000 were awarded to deserving projects. The winners were varied and ranged from mobile animal feed processing, mobile purchasing of product, small scale Tabasco paprika outgrowing, through vertical integration of coffee from small scale producers (roasting and milling) to essential oil production (rose geranium) via outgrowers in Matabeleland. The theme was definitely connected to the provision of a value added process to small scale producers. I would suggest a visit to their website

www.technoserve.org/work-impact/locations/zimbabwe

I commend them on their achievements and advise any of you with bright ideas to watch out for the next round.

(As a footnote, the Matabele essential oil project was touted as being totally a new idea; I clearly remember it being discussed at Gwebi forty four years ago with at least three of one of the winner's now-elderly relatives being students at the time.)

Plug of the week.

With our approval our very competent IT technicians are prepared to do after hours or weekend private work. This applies to all software and hardware installation and fixing, networking and debugging and curing any of the headaches Bill Gates has given us. Phone Shallon Bester on 0773254634 or Dyllan Stratford on 0773163383.

DIRECTORS: G.C. MULLETT FRICS, FEL, Dip Ag. (Gwebi); G.R.L. FERNANDES, AEI;

L.BURGOYNE, FEI; A.N. PURKIS FRICS, AEI; D.C. FRIEND, AEI;

M. REDFERN FRICS, FEI; C.K. Holland, FEI; K.M. HIGGINS, FEI.

COMMENTS AND VIEWS

Please let us know your comments and views on items contained within this issue or any other issues of CFU Calling by sending an email to us on dir@cfuzim.org

Disclaimer

The information contained in this email is strictly confidential and solely for the intended addressee(s). Written without prejudice. Unauthorised reproduction, disclosure, modification, and/or distribution of this email is unlawful. If you have received this email in error please notify the sender immediately and delete it from your system. The views expressed do not necessarily reflect those of either the sender, or the CFU. Permission for publication or forwarding must be obtained from CFU. Telephone 263-04-309800-16 or e-mail dir@cfuzim.org