



Open Space Technology Newsletter



29 April 2011

Harare – About 200 people participated in an Open Space Technology Workshop held on Friday the 29th April 2011 at the Celebration Centre in Harare. The Zimbabwe Farmers Union (ZFU) and Commercial Farmers Union (CFU) conducted the workshop and the Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) a partner of ZFU supported it. The experienced Theo Groot and eight members from the local Association of Certified Process Facilitators facilitated the workshop.

Open Space Technology (OST) is a powerful meeting tool for the 21st Century. Developed by Harrison Owen, it taps into the spirit of an organisation like no other large or small group intervention can. It is now used around the world to enable organisations to learn and achieve beyond expectations. Based on clear principles and values, OST creates an environment for communication, innovation, problem solving, creativity, teamwork and rapid change.

ZFU has used this approach now a few times, but outcome is always surprising. OST will help to start the communication of the two unions and will be the first platform where an exchange of the members on a national level takes place. It will identify common grounds and needs of the unions.

An OST workshop follows four principles:

1. Whoever comes is the right person (Ivo vauya ndivo chaivo; Bona laba ababuyileyo yibo)
2. Whatever happens is the only thing that could have happened (Zvaitika pano ndizvo chaizvo; Okwenzakale lapha yikho sibili;)
3. Whenever it starts is the right time (Nguva yatintanga ndiyo chaiyo; Isikathi esiqalisa ngaso yiso sibili)
4. When it is over it is over (Kana zvapera vapera; Nxa sokupelile kupelile);

The ZFU – CFU had the theme: **How a joint commodity council can help commodity associations to improve the service to their members?**

After short welcoming remarks by the President of CFU Mr. Theron and by the Vice President of ZFU Mr. Nyathi, Theo Groot introduced the methodology of OST. After the participants understood what will happen during the day, small groups of four prepared topics to be presented in the open space and later discussed in small groups. The participants came-up with 43 topics which were displayed at the market place (Musika; Umkhambo) and then allocated a time and a space. 18 topics were addressed in

the morning and 17 in the afternoon. The participants discussed the topic in small group with a facilitator in order to focus on the theme of a joint commodity council and to document the proceedings.



Participants writing down their topics

The discussion circles followed two laws which are contributing to the success of an OST Workshop:

1. Be ready to be surprised (Gadzirirai Kushamisika; Lungiselelani ukumangala)
2. Law of the two feet (Mutemo wetsoka mbiri; Umthetho wenyawo ezimbili)

Therefore participants change the space to attend to another topic because they were not interested or another participant dominated the discussions. The hit among the topics were around marketing, training and commodity associations. Some groups had only 2 or 3 members and other topics were not discussed.

The discussion results of each group were written down and displayed on the wall called “The News Wall” (Nhau, Indaba).

At the end of the day, the participants received each five beans which were used for prioritising the topics. Everybody could now put between one to five beans into an envelope which was fixed under each topic at the news wall. The topics with most of the votes were presented to the audience assembled around the open space.

The ZFU President Mr. Hungwe closed the OST after a few participants gave highlights of their OST experience.

Market (Musika; Umkhambo)

1. Pricing of commodities
2. Security of land tenure
3. Credit facility scheme; private sector support to farmers
4. Market research both internal and external
5. Dairy: fodder species; water closer to farmers; dairy heifers; producer prices low;
6. Industrial crops: problems faced : lack of farming inputs
7. Marketing; Inputs; Training; Support farmers with implements
8. Commodity Associations: Clear structure of the commodity forum, i.e. implementation/ process and strategies; remodelling the commodity forum on a success story, i.e. milk.
9. Training of farmers
10. Ways of removing corrupt practices among our group leaders; e.g. limited time for official duties
11. Early disbursement of inputs
12. Consideration of disable persons in farming
13. Sicela sinedwe ngoku irrigatela indawo yabalimi; (assistance in irrigation
14. Kuwana mnombe dzokutenga sa, loan (cattle to sell and loans)
15. Exclusion of non-members of the two unions
16. Load shedding affecting dairy producers. Leading to deforestation
17. Banking and finance
18. Uncontrolled inputs; uncontrolled importation of heavily brined GMO fed chicken into Zimbabwe – unfair competition – resulting in limited unviable local production. Knock on problem also affects pig farmers and soya and maize farmers
19. Transport charges of mild to processing plant; DZL;
20. Farmers to be trained in Grading for quality products
21. Livestock vanhu vanoba momba nguva yose, kuba mari yokutenga dzimbe ngombe (people steal livestock)
22. Chibage chinonoka kutengwa, mbeu ino nonoka kuuya; (Buyers of maize come late and offer low prices);
23. Pricing of cotton and tobacco ;
24. Water supply in dairy schemes
25. Methods of improving production
26. Segregation of women in farming and accessing loans
27. Conservation for farming improvement
28. Support for crop farming should be same as animal farming;
29. Membership card to have discount when buying
30. Inputs like seeds e.g. cotton seed should be on the open market;
31. Resuscitation of coffee and macadamia crops
32. Affordability of dairy heifers which suit the environment
33. Momba mbudzi hwai ngurube (we have cows, goats and sheep) but marketing problem kumakoronyera
34. Price of stock feeds production
35. Title deed to access loans
36. Support given to crop farmers should also be given to cattle producers
37. Expensive inputs
38. Quality products; our products must be on a high quality so that to have a special market
39. Transport to market
40. Seed, inputs kunoka kutengwa kwe cotton, Magiredi tino bairwa nerna company, transport; (On cotton buying and grading, we are exploited by companies, middleman, transporters).
41. Cost of production; sharing of information; improving services to members; identifying areas of need; capacity building; facilitation of dialogue;
42. Need for value addition to produce before selling and to increase shelf life of perishable commodities
43. Value addition; peanut butter processing
44. Tinorima wheat. But price ye GMB neinozo tengwa nehurumende kunze zvine mutsauko.
45. Marketing tobacco, crops, beef;



Topics are discussed in interest groups

Priority Ranking:

| No | Topic | votes |
|--------------------|--|------------|
| 1 | Marketing of crops and livestock | 72 |
| 2 | Training of farmers | 70 |
| 3 | Cattle loans | 65 |
| 4 | Commodity associations | 53 |
| 5 | Segregation of women in farming and accessing loans | 45 |
| 6 | Livestock production in Zimbabwe | 43 |
| 7 | Security of land tenure | 41 |
| 8 | Pricing of tobacco and cotton | 38 |
| 9 | Training of farmers in grading for quality products | 37 |
| 10 | Dairy heifers and dairy farming | 36 |
| 11 | Pricing of commodities | 33 |
| 12 | Private sector support to agricultural industry in Zimbabwe | 31 |
| 13 | Market research | 28 |
| 14 | Banking and finance | 28 |
| 15 | Conservation farming | 21 |
| 16 | Need for value addition before selling | 20 |
| 17 | Cost of production | 20 |
| 18 | Supply of water in dairy schemes and its challenges | 17 |
| 19 | transport | 15 |
| 20 | Chicken imports | 10 |
| 21 | Resuscitation of coffee production | 6 |
| 22 | Support given to crop farmers should also be given to cattle producers | 5 |
| 23 | Disability issues/representation as special interest | 2 |
| 24 | Ways of improving production | 0 |
| Total votes | | 736 |

736 votes means at least 147 people voted in the prioritising exercise.

Later in the year ZFU and CFU will follow-up on the topics and priority areas and call for a future search conference to develop action plans to address the issues.



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