

## ARAC UPDATE #12..... 15/11/11

Dear Farmer,

Later this month we will participate in a joint taskforce meeting with all Agricultural Unions .It is hoped that we can clearly establish common positions on a number of essential policy issues to resuscitate agriculture in Zimbabwe. For a start, a common stance on property rights and the importance of restoring investor confidence will be encouraged. From an economic perspective, all parties have much to gain by firmly putting land back into the economic domain; we submit that already there are signs that the current agricultural season, inherently crippled by bad policy and the absence of an enabling environment, may yet yield Zimbabwe's most dismal post FTLRP results. Let's hope we move beyond denial into dealing with the fundamentals of a way forward!

I hope that before long all parties will be looking at inclusive strategies that restore hope in the nation and focus more on the overall good of the country and less on short term sectional interests.

### **Report on Zimbabwe Farmers' Alliance Trust meeting in Kadoma.**

Zimbabwe Farmers Alliance Trust (ZFAT) held its inaugural combined project meeting at Kadoma Ranch Motel Wednesday and Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> November 2011.

ZFU had around 40 delegates from around the country including their Presidential Trio.CFU was represented by VP Pete Steyl, Acting Director Neil Wright, Marc Carrie Wilson, Tongayi Marodza and Ben Gilpin. CFU Commodities and farmers were represented by Angus Guthrie, Piet Nel, Stu Brent and Jonathan Cathcart.

The meeting started with an address by ZFU President Silas Hungwe who described the ZFAT agreement as the realisation of a long cherished dream for closer unity with CFU. It builds on past experience of working together in the Presidents' Council of old. It is the result of the initial MOU signed in 2009 and now consolidated in the ZFAT agreement. The initiative has the backing of European Union with a Two Million Euro grant for the strengthening of ZFU and CFU with a specific focus on commodity associations and grass root structures of both Unions. President Hungwe emphasised that the advantages of unity clearly outweigh the disadvantages of disunity. The initial focus will work to establish viable commodity associations which will strengthen service delivery to farmers.

ZFAT aims broadly to:

- Form functional farmers groups at grass roots
- Create effective service delivery
- To improve productivity
- To improve access of farmers to decision making
- To improve farmer input into national dialogue
- To bring CFU and ZFU closer
- To assist with cross cutting issues such as HIV and AIDS.

Key to this success will be the improvement of services through providing accessible and accountable value to farmers. The Trust will recruit staff and report on its planned activities against a predetermined timeline and budget.

A number of presentations covered a range of subjects including the following:

1. The structure , composition and role of the Board of Trustees,
2. The structure, composition and role of the Management Committee,( equal representation in both instances)
3. The EU project, activities and budget line for the next two years,
4. The strategy and content of a pre implementation baseline survey targeted at individuals and communities. The draft questionnaires were extensively discussed and will be piloted before the full survey is rolled out in the 4 regions and 32 districts over which the project will operate.
5. The second day focused on the mindset needed to ensure a positive outcome and sensitized leaders to the sort of factors and commitments that are necessary for a successful impact on target communities.

From a practical perspective the programme will, from CFU's point of view, translate into the establishment of four country wide regional offices which will operate in close association with ZFU structures. It is hoped that in due course within the framework of ZFAT we will be able to further capacitate these offices to provide extension and consultancy services to both our own farmers and to the small scale farmers within the partnership. This exercise will build on the learned experience from the Union Project and the collective experience of farmers already engaged in this type of work.

VP Pete Steyl gave the concluding remarks and built on the positive commitment already shown by the respective parties in embarking on the joint exercise. Clearly there is much to be gained by the successful establishment of joint commodity associations at regional and national levels. He gave CFU's commitment to work together to go beyond the dream and deliver sustainable benefit to farmers at all levels and thanked ZFU for the positive

spirit and involvement of all the delegates, and the EU for its commitment to support ZFAT.

Pete's passion and determination was evident and I believe his commitment and leadership will greatly facilitate a positive result for members of the Union.

Best regards, Ben Gilpin.