



## **MIDLANDS REGION ANNUAL REPORT AND REPORT TO CONGRESS 2012**

I would like to welcome everyone to this meeting and to thank you all for coming. A special thanks to our Vice President, Mr Piet Steyl and Dr Clive Levy for travelling all the way from Harare to join us. I will start with farming issues firstly, as that is the primary reason we are here as farmers, then progress to other issues which are no less important of course.

### **1. WEATHER**

The weather this last year has certainly added to the financial burden farmers are facing. It started with the worst Black Frost many of us have had in the last fifteen years on the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2011, killing many fruit trees, passion fruit and other horticultural crops. Then the rains were late and very sporadic, with a below normal first half of the season, followed by an extremely dry January with a slight improvement in February and March. This has adversely affected dry land crops and resultant yields with some complete crop failure in the province. There is a deficit in grazing bulk although in some areas grass quality has been good. There has been little run off so dam levels are extremely low which will have an adverse effect on winter irrigation and next season's irrigable crops. Total rainfall was around 450mm.

### **2. COMMODITIES**

Very little commercial maize is grown in the province and with the low rainfall yields will be down. Some reasonable small scale crops around but complete failure in some areas.

Approximately 750ha of soya beans were grown in the Sherwood Block area with some good yields achieved even on dry land due to reasonable distribution of rain in that area. It is estimated that 750ha of wheat and barley will be grown but area to be grown is lower than normal due to ZESA constraints.

A small hectare of tobacco was grown in Midlands with good yields under irrigation although high costs of production and hail damage to the crop affected profit margins.

An increase of vegetable crops for local consumption has dominated the horticultural sector, with less emphasis on flowers and other export commodities. Margins on tomatoes and potatoes have been good which has helped cash flow for these farmers.

The poultry industry is the one commodity that has seen an increase in production on 2000/2001 levels and a significant one at that, with almost 1 million broilers and close to 800 thousand dozen eggs being produced in Midlands. The restriction on imported product has aided this to a large extent as well as reduction of duties on imported stock feeds.

The cattle industry carries on at a slow pace and margins are very tight indeed due to lack of economies of scale in operating small herds with large numbers of staff needed to secure your bank walking around on four legs. Generally grazing in the Midlands is fair to good although bulk is short. There have been outbreaks of disease and a report of Anthrax in the Shurugwi area. Prices have been firm in the periods of greater demand i.e. : November and December, but lower now this time of the year. What is of major concern is the lack of pedigree breeders in the province, forcing farmers to have to go further afield to source decent bulls.

The Dairy industry is under pressure due to high input costs and farmers really need to look at efficiencies and the need to produce more home grown feeds such as silage etc to reduce the feed bill. Currently the dairy herd and production in the Midlands is half of what it was in 2000, with approximately 10 million litres per annum.

3. **MEMBERSHIP AND LAND**

Unfortunately I have to report here that the past year to eighteen months has possibly been the worst so far in the Midlands with no less than seventeen farmers being evicted from their farms, losing their homes and livelihoods. This situation is untenable and unfortunately we cannot tell when it is going to end. Due to this our membership levels are under pressure and are mostly made up of non farming members. I appeal to you all to pay your membership fees non farming or farming as it is in your best interests to keep the union strong and to fight for your compensation and land tenure. **NO one else is going to do it for us!** To those that have been evicted, our thoughts and prayers are with you, and we wish you all the very best in your new endeavours. Also I want to express my utmost gratitude for all those that helped relocate evicted farmers during their time of need. It is this community spirit that keeps us strong and we know we can rely on. Your efforts in helping will always be remembered.

4. **FINANCES**

Since dollarization, we as farmers have had to make many changes to the way we operate and have come to realise the value of an American dollar very quickly. All of us have had to take a serious look at our operations to cut costs and improve efficiencies. Two major cost areas, wages and ZESA, have had significant increases in the last year and impacted markedly on profitability. Added to this is the complete lack of, or extremely expensive finance available.

5. **CONCLUSION**

I wish to make the point that has been expressed by this region in the past. We firmly believe that some drastic changes are required in our Union and that political, legal and compensation issues are separated from farming issues under some different organization, so that active farmers are not perceived to be involved in political issues.

The President, Vice President and Director have made tremendous efforts to keep your Union going under extremely difficult circumstances with a severe shortage of finance. I would like to express my gratitude and those of our members, to you for the work that you are doing. We ask you to keep going and to persevere until we reach a better situation for us all.

I would like to thank Starr and Shaku for looking after this office so well, for organizing meetings and for running this all on an extremely tight budget. Well done.

Finally to all our members. Please support your Union, pay your fees, keep your chins up, and all the very best for the rest of the year.

**OWEN JARMAN  
MIDLANDS CHAIRMAN.  
MAY 2012**