



**SPEECH BY MINISTER OF LANDS, AGRICULTURE, WATER, CLIMATE AND RURAL RESETTLEMENT AT THE 76TH CONGRESS OF THE COMMERCIAL FARMERS UNION IN HARARE ON OCTOBER 24, 2019.**

Guest of honour;  
The President, CFU;  
Senior Government Officials;  
Farmer representatives;  
Captains of Industry;  
Ladies and Gentlemen;

It gives me great pleasure to address you this morning on the occasion of the 76<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Commercial Farmers Union. It is a little over a year since you invited me to officiate at your last congress. Regrettably, due to an unexpected call from the Vice President, I was unable to attend in person. I was however happy that my Director of Education Mr Nyamangara was able to officiate on my behalf on that significant 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of your Union. The following day I was able to meet with your incoming President Andrew Pascoe, your Director Ben Gilpin and also Dr Theo de Jager. That meeting gave me the opportunity to express a new openness from my Ministry to engage with your Union and also to reflect on the need to rebuild effective structures of organized agriculture in all our farming districts.

Our President, his Excellency E. D. Mnangagwa, has indicated from the onset of his inauguration in 2017 and subsequently during his election campaign and most significantly through the espoused details in the Transitional Stabilization Program, that Zimbabwe is open for business. In that regard, the President wants to see the matter of white farmers` compensation settled.

The joint efforts of my Ministry along with the Ministry of Finance have seen the introduction of an Interim Relief Programme to assist many of your members whilst a more comprehensive compensation programme is put in place. My Ministry has made significant progress in the evaluation of all acquired farms. We are hopeful that with the assistance and recommendations of independent assessors, a global figure for compensation can soon be agreed upon. We sincerely hope that with the envisaged reforms under the TSP, the country will turn the corner in its efforts towards international reengagement and further hope that an environment of trust will be created in which significant funds from such a large national liability can be turned into productive investment across the country and boost resurgent growth.

Last year's congress followed on my reappointment to this now greatly expanded Ministry. The merging and restructuring of the Ministry has improved the cohesion of various agricultural related arms of Government that were previously housed separately. Government observed that the previous fragmentation of key departments, made the ease of doing business in our sector difficult.

There is a saying in Shona, "Kukwira gomo, kupoterera". Essentially this means, "to climb a mountain, we have to get there by going around and round". We hope that the long and circling road that has brought us this far will indeed lead us to a vibrant and increasingly productive sector once more. I was at one time a member of the Commercial Farmers' Union and learnt that its past success was achieved through robust structures on the ground such as farmers associations and the coordinated support of commodity associations. Recognizing the effectiveness of such associations, my Ministry encourages the restructuring and formation of such bodies and will assist in facilitating the needed legislative and regulatory environment to get them to more effectively service the needs of their members.

One such endeavour is the current initiative to get a reformed, broad and inclusive producer body for the horticulture sector working again under a new Horticultural Development Council. Whilst my Ministry has taken a lead in this, it is essential that growers take it from here and we trust that your own Union Commodity Associations will do likewise not just in the Horticultural Sector but in the key areas of Cereals and Oilseeds for a start.

One of the issues that has seized my Ministry for some time has been the importance of achieving food self-sufficiency. It is unfortunate that again this year we are facing a significant challenge towards meeting the basic food needs of our people. Regrettably drought and cyclone had a significant negative impact on our harvest. We are aware that the fundamental to achieving sufficient domestic food production and the production of surplus for downstream industry and export requires that our farmers are adequately resourced and trained in order to produce viably. The Command Agriculture Program was introduced to mitigate this issue. Government has made a decision to fund the 2019/2020 Special maize and soya bean programme through Banks and Private Contractors. Government has so far entered into partnership with CBZ bank and shall support AI, A2 and other large scale farmers in soya bean and maize production.

Certainly the commercial farming sector has undergone considerable transformation over the past two decades. The range and number of farmers on the land both in terms of scale and skill is by this time very wide. We hope that ways will be found to collaborate across the divide of race, scale and skill to achieve win-win outcomes that will boost national development. We have introduced the policy of Joint Ventures and hope to refine this initiative in the near future. With the land audit currently under way, we hope to identify productive land that can be offered to professional farmers in their own right.

I note with appreciation the presence today of Dr Theo de Jager, President of the World Farmers' Organisation. I am delighted to know that he has attained that distinction through nomination by this very Union. I know that he holds the fortunes of all farmers around the world close to his heart but especially our farmers in Southern Africa. He has also facilitated visits of key members of my ministry to significant Agricultural events in Germany and he has also endeavoured to bring key investors into the agricultural sector in Zimbabwe. Your efforts are most appreciated, we hope that in future conducive conditions for investment will be achieved not only for foreign but also domestic investors who will find the environment in Agriculture suitable for significant investment. I look forward to hearing what he has to say in regard to the "Shaping of Commercial Agriculture in the Future", and anticipate there will be some ideas to take on as farmers in Zimbabwe as we seek to build a future together.

My Ministry's doors are open to your representatives. We appreciate and acknowledge that achieving a solid and inclusive national rural and agricultural recovery is a real big challenge. There may be glitches on this journey but I call on you all to do your part and as your Minister, I promise to engage constructively for the betterment of our common future in Agriculture.

I therefore have great pleasure in declaring this 76<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Commercial Farmers Union open and look forward to the presentations and debate that follow.

Thank You.