

AGRICULTURAL RECOVERY AND COMPENSATION (ARAC)

ARAC's initial focus this past year had been primarily on the interim Relief offered by GoZ but secondly, more importantly, supporting and influencing CSC's engagement with GoZ to achieve an agreement. This culminated in the signing of the Global Compensation Deed (GCD) on 29th July 2020. ARAC's new task is to support and influence the creation of the all-important **ROAD MAP** for Zimbabwe. This is currently undergoing its preliminary stages and should by now, or at least by 15th Oct come out with a preliminary draft itinerary.

To place matters in context I would just like to remind all that the CFU has two constituencies, those OFF and those ON farms. The CFU has been instrumental in guiding the CSC regarding compensation for former farmers and at the same time providing a basic but pivotal structure for farmers who remain ON the Land. ARAC has for many years focused purely on matters affecting Former Farmers, allowing more freedom for CFU HQ to concentrate on more traditional issues. For many years the CFU has managed to remain in existence by downsizing both premises and Staff. In this respect I now speak of the CFU staff; it is to their great credit that despite redundancies and effective pay cuts (due to the collapse of our currency) our staff has managed an ever increasing work load. Credit must go to Ben Gilpin for heading up this team; he has given his all. ARAC holds only a limited brief regarding the operations CFU undertakes for its current ON farming members. However it is appropriate to applaud the Director Ben Purcell-Gilpin for his unstinted loyalty and the extreme hard work he has put into maintaining a semblance of normality both representing farmers on the various statutory bodies and promoting Zimbabwe Agriculture both locally and internationally. Ben has decided to retire shortly and in this regard he will be sorely missed.

With this in mind I would appeal to ALL operational Farmers to ensure they rise to the occasion and ensure that Ben's successor is given all the support he will need. In particular I speak to those Current Farmers who enjoy the fruits of the CFU's influence within GoZ bodies but who have been reluctant to contribute. YOUR CFU is an essential link in the chain to the future success of your very own enterprises. You may not recognise it, but the reality is that the CFU has demonstrably reduced the increased costs of many of your inputs, and this saving is perhaps as high as 20 times the cost of your subscription to the Union. What better investment can you have? I urge you to play your part, pay your subs and join in with the traditionally Zimbabwean Farmer unity. I cannot think of any honourable reason not to contribute your share.

Returning to purely ARAC matters, I wish to compliment the ARAC Committee Members for always making themselves available for meetings over the Past year. In particular I would mention and applaud those who despite their infirmities have made such a grand effort to attending at short notice. In the final stages of the Draft Deed debate, some robust opinions were expressed. At several joint Council/ ARAC meetings Andrew Pascoe allowed a full expression of all views. Let there be no doubt about it all Councillors were fully briefed and allowed a free vote. Ultimately, CFU Council voted unanimously to support Andrew's signing of the GCD, having given extensive thought to the broader implications

You will all be aware of the fragile financial position that the Union faces. It is critical that we all support the Union, and not least of all, by paying our dues. It is absolutely essential that CFU continues to represent us. Our President, Andrew Pascoe can only do this if he is funded sufficiently.

ARAC was created within CFU to focus on Compensation issues, as Chairman of ARAC, I was appointed to the Compensation Steering Committee together with the CFU President, two representatives from Matabeleland, two former CFU Presidents, one of which, John Laurie, is particularly well known by all. He has driven the compensation Saga for the last two decades. Despite John's infirmities and stepping aside as the Chairman of the CSC, John has attended nearly all the CSC meetings (sometimes twice a week) and remains a strong guiding force advocating particularly for those elderly and financially distress colleagues of ours. John continues daily to lobby extensively. Thank you yet again.

In this respect I should like to thank Andrew Pascoe, the CFU President for granting ARAC members, access to CFU Council on at least four occasions over the past year. The Council is the senior body and ARAC is a sub Committee. Andy's acceptance of ARAC's important contribution to the Compensation debate has made ARAC's views ever more important.

The most important development, for ARAC, this year has been the signing of the Global Compensation Deed.

Whatever the various dissenting views a few people may have, there can be no doubting that after two decades of stagnation with little or no movement, the signing of the Global Compensation Deed is nothing short of momentous. I acknowledge the agreement is not everything we might have wished for but surely we must look to the positives and lend support to our unbelievably hard working Team of CSC farmer representatives. In this regard, few farmers can have any real idea of the enormous amount of time and resources that are put in by your representatives. It's not just the meetings but the calls at any time of night or day (weekends as well), the transport and printing ink, and this apart from time spent away from private and business life. Recently, in addition to all their other responsibilities, Charlie Taffs, Harry Orphanides, John Reid-Rowland and Andrew Pascoe have all been appointed to the Joint Resources Mobilisation Committee (JRMC) to contribute to the creation of the National and all important ROAD MAP. We do now and will continue to owe them a great debt of gratitude. These Gentlemen have all given their time freely and absorbed all their own expenses willingly. It is simply not fair on them or their families that they should be even allowed to continue funding themselves without our support. **PLEASE MAY EVERY ONE OF US PAY OUR SUBSCRIPTIONS TO ENABLE THE PROCESS TO PROCEED TO FINALISATION?**

The only way forward is to negotiate, negotiate and negotiate with the *de facto* and *de dura* authorities in the Zimbabwe Government in "Good faith". Obdurate demands will lead nowhere, and will torpedo the possibility of resolution of our twenty year old struggle.

The Deed is not like a formal commercial investment agreement from which parties can just decline to continue (or walk off the field). It is a political opportunity for the whole Zimbabwean nation, to move forward with the assistance of the World's premier funding and financial institutions, guiding a structured recovery for our entire economy.

Some have asked “What’s the hurry?”. Well surely we must strike while the irons hot. A week can be a long time in this environment. Imagine a lukewarm response to the “Olive branch” offered by GoZ. Scorning this opportunity could have set back any chance of compensation for MORE decades.

Some have asked for greater transparency. However we all know, especially those with experience, that we cannot have a multitude of voices with varying agendas and expect a swift resolution without some compromises that are often uncomfortable for us. The key players acting on behalf of farmers are honourable men who have dedicated the last decade or so, to finding a solution, in the best way they can. They have come through the ranks democratically and emerged as acclaimed leaders because of their particular talents. It is a pity many of their detractors have not contributed to the exercise until the last minute. It cannot have gone unnoticed in our constituency that for three years some form of Compensation has been on the table. Transparency and reasonable inquiry is fine but a lot of the commentary on social media has been unkind or pure theatrics endangering the Deed. All farmers will understand that is so easy to criticise yet so difficult to draw two formerly irreconcilable opposing sides together. This can only occur in an environment of compromise and increasing trust.

So let’s look at the positives:-

1. The Global Compensation Deed value is now on the National debt
2. Dormant Title holding farming companies have now been regularised
3. The Ministry of Finance have begun the process of acquiring funding
4. The Government of Zimbabwe have made peace with the CFU
5. The Ministry of Finance has released ZWL funding to cover the Interim relief second program which is now in progress
6. Farmers who accepted some payment for their immovable assets prior to the Deed will be able to claim make up payments
7. Farmers who have managed to remain on their farms are to be offered a swift route to 99 year leases
8. There are to be no more downsizing of fully productive farms
9. International assistance has begun towards creating the all-important Road Map and this is going really well and will take some time to do properly
10. New Land beneficiaries are to be taxed
11. New tradable tenure is being established
12. New Land bank is to be established

All the above within a few weeks of the signing of the deed. To those criticising the agreement, I say “come up with viable alternative”, so that we may interrogate such alternatives, as you have done to the DEED.

What the vast majority of Farmers have said to me is “I just want to resolve this issue with USD in my O/S account before I pass this problem on to my Grandchildren”.

Twenty years ago the membership stood at approximately 4,000 members, owning approximately 5,300 titles. I would again urge you all to renew your CFU subscriptions to see this process through to a successful conclusion.

I am extremely proud to applaud the Intensive Farmers (largely from Mashonaland) who have shown huge unity of purpose and honour by sharing with Extensive Ranchers (generally from Matabeleland and the Low Veld) such payments as may be forthcoming equably. Thank you all, I do hope this unity will be reflected in the arrival of Subs into the CFU coffers.

INTERIM RELIEF TWO is now well underway. Hopefully this time round we will not get the same problems we had with those who received last year.

However we can maybe anticipate some snags with NEW applicants. Last year's exercise helped identify several complications involved in proving claims. I quote from last year's report. "ValCon has very largely and with great professionalism encased records of your assets in its Data base and has a template of values at credible realistic values for their registered clients. However what it cannot do, without your vigorous assistance, is to declare who **precisely** is to receive the proceeds. When the time comes, and it will, distribution of the funds will only take place after a meticulous audit of the recipients identity be they individuals, Company's shareholding or Trusts Etc. The title deed holders may have a few complications. THE TIME TO DEAL WITH THESE ISSUES IS **NOW**. For example perhaps the deed holder is a company that has failed to amend its shareholding (Registrar of Companies) and perhaps one or more of the Shareholders is deceased intestate, or sadly subject to family feuds of some kind."

SO PLEASE BE PREPARED

THE ROAD MAP is all important to the future of our country. The engagement is held under Chatham House Rule which means *"When a meeting, or part thereof, is held under the Chatham House Rule, participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed."*

So.... without revealing any identities may I say that generally huge progress has been made in respect to coalescing a consensus from the otherwise diverse opinions guided by proper internationally respected professionals? The Road Map itinerary is very comprehensive. It covers ALL the questions hitherto brought up on social Media and a lot more. The areas include:

- Resolution of virtually all the issues centered round the recovery of our nation
- Monetary Issues (Debt, Arrears, Currency, Maturity Risk)
- Land tenure issues Deeds 99 year leases Bankability Transferability AFC type issues
PROPERTY RIGHTS RECOGNISABLE BY THE UNITED NATIONS
- Raising Funding for both Immovables and land
- Legal Issues, enabling legislation needed, Illegal occupations
- Quick Payment in USD ESCROW Auditing One off payments Urgency Guarantees
- Administration arrangements Reporting Communications Perceptions

Having sat in at the back of Zoom meetings I can say that all the participants (Especially the International professionals) are completely up-to-date and familiar with our Zimbabwean Situation. There is a complete spectrum of our concerns to be resolved.

Unadulterated bankable tenure freely transferrable, without Ministerial veto or intercession is the **only way** forward for the nation. This our aim

I have no doubt that we have a Bumpy Road map to traverse, but with goodwill on both sides the journey will be achieved. Please make sure we have enough "Petrol"!

Tony Purkis heads up ValCon as MD and similar gratitude goes to him for his persistent leadership and patience ensuring the credible Global Valuation was finally agreed. His team, in particular Shallon Bester and Wendy De la Fargue were magnificent organising and following up endlessly on the Interim Relief exercise of last year. Hopefully they have identified the problems and can have a smoother run now

Finally

No farmer "stole his farm", in point of fact, the vast majority of farms' ownership were transferred after our independence and with the particular approval of the Government of Zimbabwe through the issuance of Certificates of no present interest!!

I would urge Govt to emplace a path for our young farmers to follow so that they may be able to become the Guardians of the future of our land. I am particularly alluding to the former AFC's Tenant Farmers scheme.

I would like to commend our New CFU President Andy Pascoe for the exemplary manner, in-exhaustive energy, and the single-mindedness with which he has tackled this year's issues.

It only remains for me to thank you, our ARAC members and my committee members Andrew Pascoe (our Ex officio Vice Chairman), Byron Dardagan, Harry Orphanides, Robin Wryly-Birch, Rob Beverley, Kerry Kay, John Perrot and Richard Harvey, Richard Taylor, Ian McKersie and Tok Arnold for their time, consistent effort and support and dedication to the cause all for no financial reward.

Thank you for your attention

Your support is so appreciated.

Patrick Ashton
Chairman of ARAC