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Part of the guests that attended the launch of the second Zimbabwe Agricultural Survey

Second Zimbabwe Agricultural Survey launched

THE second annual Zimbabwe Agricultural Survey, hosted by the Zimbabwe Agricultural Society in partnership with Financial Gazette with support from CBZ, was launched on 18 September, with speakers highlighting the importance of the study as Zimbabwe enters its agricultural season on the back of two successive droughts and a

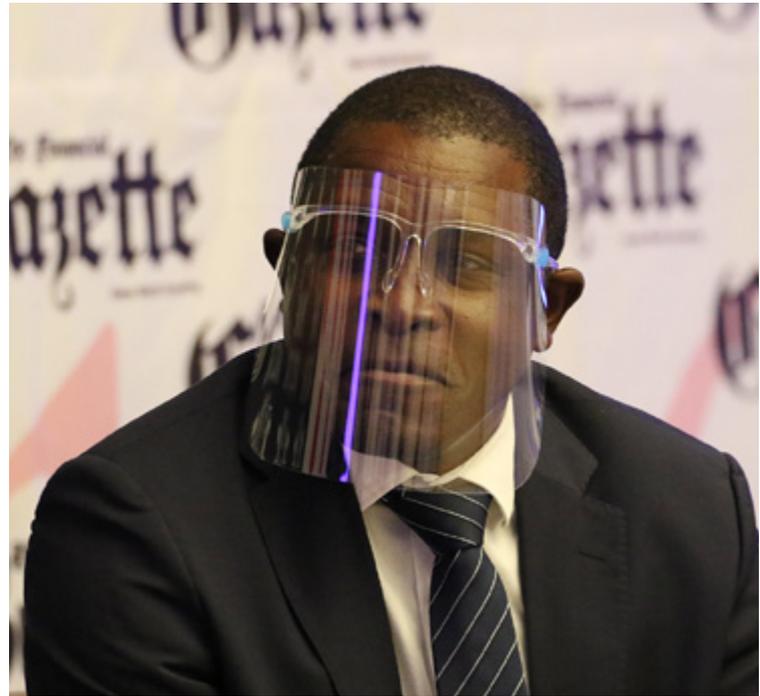
disruptive global pandemic.

The launch of the survey, which was moved from the initial date of 21 August, took place at the Meikles Hotel with only 50 guests in attendance while others followed proceedings virtually.

Running under the theme Production. Productivity. Profitability, this year's survey was



Dr Dahlia Garwe



Dr Blessing Mudavanhu, CBZ Group CEO

meant to produce findings that will serve as a mechanism to identify and prioritise agricultural improvement areas and provide a benchmark upon which future improvements in the sector will be measured.

In his speech, the guest speaker at the event, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Water and Rural Resettlement, Dr John Basera, praised ZAS for the survey, noting that information was a vital part of the agricultural production and development process.

“The Zimbabwe Agricultural Society and the Africa Economic Development Strategies (AEDS) continue to impress us in their dedication in carrying out this important work. Information, more importantly, relevant to our circumstances is a critical cog in programming for agricultural development. Such relevant snippets will enable farmers to be aware of key issues in their operating environment.

“The need for timely and accurate information to support farmers has become more imperative. This is why we commend the Zimbabwe Agricultural Society that is known for facilitating agricultural development and its partners for coming up with this initiative to support the farming sector and government,” he said.

Dr Basera said the launch of the study was timely, as it came in the wake of forecasts of good rains for the coming season.

“The 2020 Agricultural Sector Survey comes only two weeks after meteorological experts have given us a new ray of agricultural sector hope. After a series of poor seasons with erratic rainfalls, the La Niña weather conditions are expected to prevail over the southern African region during

the 2020/2021 agricultural season.

“We are delighted because these are the weather patterns that have always brought us good harvests. However, farmers must take note that such weather conditions are likely to be accompanied by heavy storms, which may destroy homes, crops and livestock. We must therefore prepare adequately, where we can, in this regard to protect our assets from adverse weather conditions, especially during the onset of the rainfall season as we saw last year.”

Zimbabwe Agricultural Society president Mr Ngoni Kudenga said the importance of the survey could not be overemphasized, as it came off the back of successive droughts, Cyclone Idai and the disruption wrought by the Covid-19 pandemic, whose effects would only be felt in the coming months when the agricultural season was in full swing.

“The disruption of supply and demand routes, its impact on farm productivity and, on farm profitability can only manifest in the months ahead. This survey serves as a fitting background to timely assess, gauge, rank and rate farmers’ and value chain actors’ initial responses to the drought and the pandemic, and to gather some insights about preparedness for the coming season, as well as suggesting intervention strategies for agricultural growth,” he said.

Mr Kudenga said he hoped that the survey would lead to positive deliberations on how best to reposition the sector given its importance to Zimbabwe’s overall economy.

“We hope that the results of this survey will spark much needed debate while assisting in redirecting agricultural investments, and sharpening policy

focus, to needed and potential growth areas, to enhance and expand agriculture's contribution to Zimbabwe's accelerated economic growth, for the attainment of Vision 2030," he said.

Agribusiness consultant Dr Jacqueline Mutambara who was the guest speaker at the event acknowledged the critical role of timely information in agriculture food systems for decision making by farmers, input suppliers, processors, government, consumers, banks, developmental organizations among others.

"The Information challenge adversely affects business processes and performance. Without adequate information, there is limited rationality by those deprived of it and there are chances of opportunistic tendencies by economic actors privy to critical information. Therefore, the availability of information, its dissemination, dealing with information asymmetry and enhancing cognitive capacity of economic actors

is critical in reducing transactions costs and improving performance," she said.

CBZ Holdings Group Chief Executive Officer Dr Mudavanhu expressed his gratitude to ZAS and Financial Gazette for allowing CBZ to play an intermediary role in the economy by being part of the survey.

Dr Mudavanhu reiterated the key role of agriculture in food security and as a foreign currency earner for the economy. He said surveys of this nature are key in assisting stakeholders by providing insights that offer guided direction in reviving the sector.

"As CBZ we are committed to offer tailor made solutions for farmers. It is important to also leverage on technology and we couldn't be happier to be part of this agriculture sector survey as a key player in the sector," he said.

CBZ Holdings, Syngenta and SeedCo sponsored the second annual agricultural sector survey.

'Telling the Zimbabwean agricultural story ...'

Journalists honoured at ZAMA

AS Zimbabwe begins the long journey of economic recovery after setbacks caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, journalists should showcase the resilience and resourcefulness of farmers in the country that are persevering despite the unique challenges that the pandemic has brought on.

These were the sentiments of the Minister of Lands, Agriculture, Water and Rural Resettlement, Dr Anxious Masuka who was the guest speaker



Minister of Lands, Agriculture, Water and Rural Resettlement, Dr Anxious Masuka

during the Zimbabwe Agriculture Media Awards (ZAMA), which were held on 28 August.

Now in their second edition, this year's awards, which were held virtually due to Covid-19 restrictions, ran under the theme "Supporting Livelihoods for Sustainable Development."

Hon Masuka, expressed his pride at the fact that the awards, organised by the Zimbabwe Agricultural Society (ZAS), had returned for the second year despite the challenges brought

about by Covid-19. Minister Masuka was the CEO of ZAS when ZAMA had its debut ceremony last year.

“Let me thank the Zimbabwe Agricultural Society (ZAS) for inviting me to be Guest of Honour for the 2020 Edition of the awards. The awards are special for two reasons. Firstly, I was at ZAS when the awards were mooted, incubated and launched last year and it is gratifying that despite the challenges and limitations imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, ZAS has, against all odds, managed to host the awards this year, albeit virtually.

“Secondly, due to my new position as the Minister of Lands, Agriculture, Water and Rural Resettlement, the awards are even more important for the agricultural sector and for capacitating journalists who write about agriculture. With 70 percent of Zimbabweans engaged in one form or the other in agricultural activity, the sector is a prime driver of economic development and the achievement of Government’s Vision 2030, of attaining middle income status,” he said.

Hon Masuka said it was important for journalists to capture the Zimbabwean agricultural story, at a time when the sector had been ravaged by Covid-19.

“The challenge I throw to the media fraternity is to be able to tell the story of Zimbabwe from an agricultural point of view; to be able to show the resilience of the Zimbabwean farmers and the agricultural sector especially at a time when many communities have been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Government remains committed to improving the livelihoods of local communities through production of sufficient food crops and value adding agricultural produce,” he said.

Hon Masuka said reporters had a duty to track six goals that are part of the country’s Food Systems Strategy 2020-2025. The six goals are Food and Nutrition Security, Import Substitution, Export Promotion, Value Addition and Beneficiation, Employment Creation and Improved Rural Livelihoods towards an upper middle-income economy by 2030.

“So, to reporters be there on the ground and complement Government efforts in tracking these six outcomes. Agriculture is in the farms and rural areas and you need to be where the story is,” Minister Masuka said.

Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Information, Publicity and Broadcasting Services Mr Nick Mangwana, said an obsession with politics had led journalists to neglect stories about the agricultural sector.

“We need to know more about agriculture, where are the journalists that inform us about what is happening? In this era of climate change, land degradation and other challenges happening on the topology, where are the journalists?”

“The challenge I throw to the media fraternity is to be able to tell the story of Zimbabwe from an agricultural point of view; to be able to show the resilience of the Zimbabwean farmers and the agricultural sector especially at a time when many communities have been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. . . .”

“Some of them (journalists) have been chasing politicians and the things they have informed us about are the things that the politicians will be doing, but they did not address the issues that bedevil our agriculture sector,” he said.

Mr Mangwana pointed out the importance of Zimbabweans telling their own stories, as foreign voices would fill the gap if they did not do so.

“I recall last year, we had journalists that came from other countries to write on the drought in Zimbabwe, but we did not see much from our own journalists. We need to see a shift in that culture. Let us tell our own stories,” Mr Mangwana said.

Mthandazo Nyoni of Alpha Media Holdings was the big winner on the night, walking away with five awards in the Oilseeds, Poultry, Small Grains, Beef and Cotton sections. Fidelis Mhlanga, also of AMH, walked away with two gongs in the Tobacco and Wheat and Cereal categories.

Leroy Dzenga of The Herald won Best Reporter Agriculture, Finance and Development while Muchaneta Chimuka of Kwayedza won Best Reporter in Agriculture Equipment and Sustainable Agriculture categories. Sunday News Senior Business Reporter Dumisani Nsingo scooped the best reporter accolade in the Dairy Farming category while Chronicle’s Stanford Chiwanga walked away with best reporter award on Small Ruminants. ZBC TV’s Mercy Bofu was the winner in the Sugar Cane section.

Second Zimbabwe Agricultural Sector Survey report key insights

Trends in Crop Production

GOVERNMENT has been urged to come up with deliberate policies to improve smallholder contribution to national output, which is currently on a downward trend with a 54 percent decline recorded in maize production during the 2019/20 season.

Communal areas and small-scale farmers contribute towards 69 % of total maize output in the country. According to Professor Gift Mugano, the lead researcher for the Zimbabwe Agricultural Society and Financial Gazette commissioned Zimbabwe Agricultural Sector Survey, one striking observation from the 2019 maize yield is that, on average, maize yield per hectare declined by about 54%.

“On a farming sector basis, in 2019/20, A1, communal areas and small - scale farmers who constitute 69% of total maize output, recorded an average yield of 0.27 metric tonnes/ha down from an average yield of 0.478 metric tonnes/ha in 2018/19. Because of the significant contribution of these small - scale farmers, from a hectare perspective, the fall in yield per hectare weighed down heavily national output.”

Prof Mugano noted that over and above the effects of climate change, policy significantly contributes to poor output in the agricultural sector. Similar to a trend observed in the inaugural sector survey report, the provinces with the highest area under maize production do not contribute the highest output. Midlands province had the highest area under production at 21% but contributed 12% of the output while Mashonaland West at 18% area produced the highest output at 29%.

“Seed is being distributed in the wrong provinces. Our recommendation is for government to place more emphasis in growing maize in Mashonaland Central, Mashonaland West and East provinces while more focus on traditional grains and livestock is placed in Midlands, Masvingo and Manicaland provinces. This will result in significant increase in production for livestock and grains,” said Prof Mugano.

Trends in Livestock Production

The livestock sub sector contributes about 19% to the agricultural GDP.

Similar to trends in crop production, productivity of smallholder cattle herds remains very low, with average calving rates of about 45% against a potential of 60%, and offtake rates of about 6% against a recommended 20% annually. The survey also showed that small scale farmers and communal farmers have a combined share of 90% of the total national cattle herd. However, the low slaughter rate of 5% per year is attributed to communal farmers who keep cattle as a store of wealth and not a business enterprise.

According to Prof Mugano, with this low slaughter level, it means that income is not circulating in the rural areas and poverty levels are anticipated to remain high. “This practise, if not reversed, will hinder the country’s progress towards attaining Vision 2030 considering the fact that 70% of the Zimbabwean population resides in rural areas”. A mindset shift is a must.

Good progress has however been observed in dairy production, and although the current output is still below the annual national demand of 120 million litres, the country has progressively reduced milk imports by 70%.

Impact of Climate Change on Agricultural Production

The research shows that climate change vulnerability negatively impacted productivity in the sector. Climate change has manifested through incessant droughts and reduced precipitation which has reduced output of grains by more than 50%. Livestock production has also not been spared with cattle dying due to food and water shortages caused by droughts. According to the study, Masvingo and Matabeleland South provinces recorded the highest number of poverty deaths in cattle at 17518 and 16863 respectively. This trend, if not addressed, is likely to negatively affect the country’s progress towards rebuilding the national herd.

The annual survey gathers sector-wide, in-depth, objective and independent data on agriculture, agribusiness, machinery, equipment, irrigation, climate change, investment, markets and comparative data from regional economies, to inform Zimbabwe’s stage of growth, highlight challenges and illuminate opportunities in agriculture. Download the full report on the Financial Gazette and ZAS websites.