



FARM EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES FEATURE

Plant early, farmers urged

As part of Seed Co's corporate social responsibility, Seed Co general manager Denias Zaranyika hands over a two-kilogramme seed pack to a representative of 300 widows in Zimbabwe who will benefit from the 600kg of seed set aside for them by the company.



Seed Co public relations and communications manager Marjorie Mutemera welcoming journalists and other guests at the media luncheon in Harare.



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Idah Mhetu

SEED CO Zimbabwe, the country's leading seed producer and marketer, has urged farmers to take advantage of the early rains in order to get better harvests.

Speaking during a media luncheon with stakeholders in the media industry, Seed Co managing director Denias Zaranyika said it was important for farmers to fully utilise the soil moisture content as Zimbabwe has this year received rains earlier to kick start the 2016/2017 farming season.

"Rains have come early so we encourage our farmers to take full advantage of the current moisture. Zimbabwe must maximise on the fact that most neighbouring countries like Zambia and East Africa have not yet received planting rains. We cannot continue importing grain so let us plant now for great yields," Zaranyika said.

He added that the full utilisation of the land was critical as the country is facing food deficits due to the drought-induced El Nino.

"At Seed Co, we are bullish that this year is going to be a successful year. We are of the conviction that Zimbabwe is now on a genuine path to regain its strong bread basket position."

Seed Co is well-stocked with maize and soya bean seeds. All varieties for the five natural regions are available.

"Our teams are on the ground working with farmers to ensure full utilisation of all arable land. Our agronomists are motivating and encouraging farmers to take advantage of the current moisture content. This year the rains came early, hence the push for farmers to take full advantage of the moisture," Zaranyika said.

Zimbabwe faces one of the most severe lean seasons in the last few decades due to the impacts of last season's El Nino-induced drought — a second consecutive drought year for the country.

According to the Famine Early Warning System Network, the national cereal deficit for the 2016/17 consumption year is estimated at about 1,6 million tonnes following a second consecutive year of poor rainfall and drought conditions that resulted in maize production level that is only 50 percent of the five-year average. National carry-over stocks from the previous 2015/16 marketing year and 2015/16 maize production will only cover about 28 percent of national cereal requirements this consumption year.

Seed Co has already distributed the seed to supermarkets for easy access for the farmer, the grain has been packed in different packaging, a 10-kilogramme bag is pegged at US\$26,50 and the seed company is well stocked for the season.

"Seed Co varieties are available in supermarkets. We have stocked supermarkets and traders with our seed so that at least this one ingredient, seed is available. We are well stocked," added Zaranyika.



Seed Co general manager Denias Zaranyika addresses journalists at a media luncheon hosts by Seed Co at celebration Centre in Harare.



Tobacco farming is the country's largest foreign currency earner.

Farmer encourages investment in infrastructure

Buhle Nkomo

INSTALLATION of an irrigation system is ideal for every farm and a dream for many farmers.

Tariro Dengwa (29) a tobacco farmer from Marondera has managed to invest in this capital intensive and labour involving yet very rewarding fit as she has installed an irrigation system to water her crops.

"I started tobacco farming in 2013 and have gradually increased my hectares from 1,5 hectares to the current eight, and most importantly I have managed to invest in irrigation infrastructure," said Dengwa.

Dengwa whose net income this season was US\$49 000 has four hectares of irrigated tobacco and four on dry land.

From her proceeds, she purchased farm equipment which include a tractor, a truck and another 10 000 litre water tanks to store water for irrigation purposes.

Dengwa engaged people who constructed a weir and it was plastered and strengthened with cement.

Besides tobacco farming, Dengwa has a herd of cattle, a flock of sheep, a tribe of goats, a gang of turkeys, a brood of roadrunners as well as a flock of geese.

As a way of crop rotation Dengwa said that they cultivate maize and beans which they then sell to individual business people, boarding schools, milling companies, have some for family consumption and sometimes pay for labour for those who would prefer maize to money.

"I started tobacco farming because it was said to be lucrative although I did not have adequate knowledge.

Tobacco Industry and Marketing Board should invest more in extension services because for one to attain good quality and yields, one ought to adopt good farming practices.

"I use a farming booklet that I got from Kutsaga as my guide and it has helped me put the correct amount of fertilisers," Dengwa added.

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"During the first two years I wasted money on labour since I used hired workers that charged per day. I now have permanent workers whom I pay approved wages on a monthly basis. These are the same people that we work with when we are grading so that we maintain the same grade of tobacco," Dengwa said.

"Another seemingly small yet critical issue is weed management. Anything which is not tobacco in a tobacco field is a weed, and this includes other crops such as pumpkin leaves. I monitor my plants every day."

"I have also invested in rocket barns because even if you have a good leaf if it is not properly cured, you are doomed to failure," she said.

She added: "During last season when we experienced El-Nino induced long dry spells, for my dry-land crop, I dug holes between plants which we filled with water so as to try and conserve moisture."

"Being a tobacco farmer is not a walk in the park; there is no time to rest, because while you are waiting for the crop to mature, you will be preparing barns, once it matures, you start curing and taking the product to the market and while the marketing is ongoing, you destroy stalks and start on land preparation and the cycle continues," said Dengwa.

"One never has adequate financial resources and I encourage my female counterparts to venture into tobacco farming without hesitating because it is not intimidating as it looks.

"It is lucrative and a good vehicle of women empowerment as it enables us to provide for our families.

"Tobacco is a commendable crop because it has a ready buyer no matter what quality one produces. It is also enables us to contribute significantly to economic growth and national development of Zimbabwe," Dengwa concluded.



SERVICES OFFERED BY TIMB

The functions and powers of the Tobacco Industry & Marketing Board, which are derived from the Tobacco Industry & Marketing Act (Chapter 18:20) are -

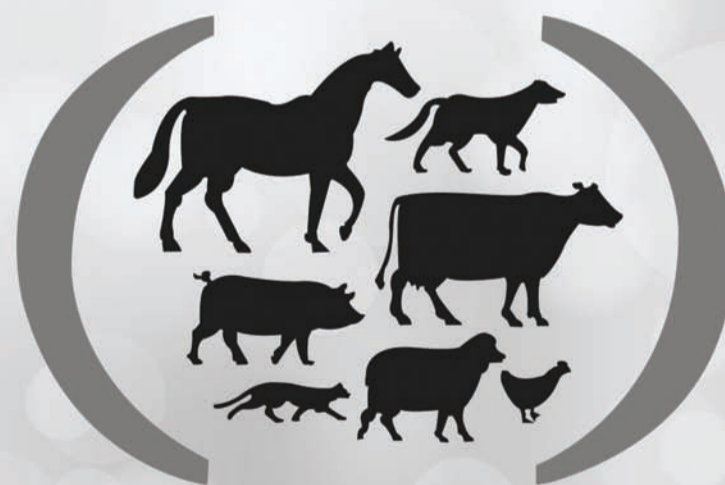
- Administration and control of the tobacco delivery system
- Arbitration and sales supervision at auction floors in order to maintain orderly marketing
- Classification of tobacco from which statistical information is derived and reports published, our website is www.timb.co.zw
- Collate statistics relating to the provision, marketing, manufacture and consumption of tobacco;
- Conducting crop assessment surveys to determine crop yield potential and quality composition of the crop in advance of the selling season
- to register tobacco growers
- Granting of exports permit
- Licensing of tobacco buyers, auction floors and commercial graders
- Monitoring and ensuring timeous and efficient shipment of tobacco exports
- Monitoring the control of pests to ensure exportation of tobacco free from pesticide residues
- to provide inputs to growers through our Tobacco Inputs Credit Scheme and
- Advise the Minister of Agriculture on all matters relating to the marketing of tobacco;

PROCEDURE ON HOW TO REGISTER AS A TOBACCO GROWER

- i. Completed Application form must be rubber stamped and signed by the grower's local AREX OFFICER to confirm that the grower is a *bonafide* tobacco farmer Or a separate recommendation letter stamped and signed by the grower's local officer.
- ii. Proof of land availability i.e. permit/land offer letter Or a recommendation letter from the growers local Councilor/Chief if in communal area
- iii. National Identification(original/certified copy)
- iv. Registration fee payable on submission of the form(in terms of Section 26 of the Act). A late registration fee will be charged for registrations done after the deadline date (31 October of every year)

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