

NEC AGRICULTURE

Newsletter

3rd quarter 2023





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FOREWORD

Dear Reader,

This edition of our quarterly update on the goings on in the agriculture industry in Zimbabwe comes at an auspicious time, in the aftermath of an elective meeting of the Council, which saw the election of a new Chairperson and Vice Chairperson to take the industry forward in its quest to uphold harmonious relations and productivity. It is auspicious because for the first time, a woman holds the Chairperson's seat. This is testament to the commitment of the industry to gender parity in true fulfilment of the founding values of our nation, Zimbabwe.

The new Chairmanship takes on the task of leading the Council in a context full of change, full of volatility, full of uncertainty, full of complexity, and full of ambiguity – in short, a VUCA environment. In the challenges that we may encounter, the election of the Chairperson and Vice Chairperson shows that the Council has chosen stability and continuity as the best instruments to meet those challenges. I therefore would like to pledge my full support to Mrs Tsitsi Nyirenda, our new Chairperson, and Mr. Friday Zondo, our new Vice Chairperson, and it behooves the whole industry to do the same and show unity of purpose in protecting the strong gains in production and productivity, which are simply not possible absent harmony between employers and employees.

The Council and all social parties continue to negotiate and find each other in various issues affecting the industry and assuring the continued working of this Employment Council. Meanwhile, the staff in the Secretariat continue to give their best in rendering advice, ensuring compliance with the labour laws of Zimbabwe, and overall ensuring that there are no disruptions to work in our farms. The legislative ground may change, as through the recent Labour Amendment Act, but the NEC Agriculture is up to the task of keeping current and keeping its members informed on these developments and so much more.

I hope, dear reader, that in this issue of the quarterly newsletter, you may find useful nuggets of information, whatever your role in the industry, and that this information can assist you in playing your role in ensuring the attainment of Vision 2030 that is backed by a productive agricultural industry.

Yours Truly,

David Madyausiku- **CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

FULL COUNCIL AND ELECTIVE MEETING FOR THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE NEC AGRICULTURE

Tonderai Matanda

On 22 September 2023, the Council of the National Employment Council for the Agriculture Industry in Zimbabwe (NEC Agriculture) sat in deliberation of various industry issues. It was also a special meeting in which a piece of history was made, with the unanimous election of Mrs. Tsitsi Nyirenda as the Chairperson (employers' representative), and Mr. Friday Zondo as the Vice Chairperson (employees' representative).

Mrs. Nyirenda, who becomes the first woman Chairperson of the Council since its inception, is taking over the reins from Mr. Zondo who ably led in the affairs of the Council with diligence, integrity, and strategic brilliance. The retention of both Mrs. Nyirenda and Mr. Zondo's experience in the Chairmanship will ensure the continuity, harmony, and stability that the Council strives for. In a notice to the industry at large, the Chief Executive Officer, Mr. David Madyausiku, congratulated the Chairperson and the Vice Chairperson on their election and pledged support during their term of office.



**The newly elected Chairperson,
Mrs. Tsitsi Nyirenda**



**The newly elected Vice Chairperson,
Mr. Friday Zondo**

Another notable development from the Full Council Meeting was the agreement of the Council to award dues for the functioning of the Council at 3% of the basic wage. This represents a reduction of 2%. This further cements the position that has prevailed during the exemption that had been in place since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, whose economic ill-effects still reverberate in the national economy. While the economy is in recovery from this shock, the Council has been

responsive to the needs of farmers in the industry by reducing the awarded dues. The new Dues Agreement stipulates that farmers are to remit dues monthly in terms of the Agreement, underlain by Section 28 of the Principal Collective Bargaining Agreement S.I. 41 of 2022 on the basis of a 1.5% deduction from employees' wages, and a 1.5% contribution from the employer in the currency of the wage paid.

The Council envisions the above developments as key to sustaining harmonious relations in the agriculture industry through adequately financing the assurance of adherence to fair labour practices in safe working environments.

Tonderai Matanda is an employee of the NEC Agriculture based in Harare.

COMMON PESTS THAT AFFECT TOBACCO

Nobukhosi Mkwanzani

Now that the tobacco farming season is here, it's all systems go from nursery to harvesting. For a farmer to harvest a good crop, there are aspects of crop production that the farmer needs to be aware of. These include the health of the crop. The health of the crop is affected by the amount of chemicals such as herbicides applied on the ground before planting, pesticides applied on the plants and other factors. We are going to look at common pests that affect tobacco plants.

Tobacco Budworm

The tobacco budworm is about 38 mm in length, pale green in colour, and marked with several longitudinal pale stripes. The female moths lay their eggs in or near the bud of tobacco plants and the tiny larvae begin feeding in the unfolded leaflets of the plants. This feeding makes the plants ragged in appearance. If the bud is destroyed the plants "sucker out" producing several stems rather than one main stem.

Tobacco Hornworm

The tobacco hornworm is one of the largest insects that damage tobacco. The larvae are greenish in colour with white bars on their sides and with a slender reddish horn projecting from near the rear end. They may reach 7.5-10cm in length and are such ravenous feeders that they may completely defoliate plants if not controlled.

Tobacco Flea Beetle

The tobacco flea beetle is a brownish-black, hard-shelled beetle about 1.5 mm in length. Adult flea beetles chew small round holes into and through the tobacco leaf. They attack the young plants in the seedbeds almost as soon as they come up. After the plants are set in the field they continue feeding and this feeding can weaken the plants or kill the buds. Damage may continue throughout the growing season even on mature leaves. Flea beetles lay their eggs on the soil and the delicate, white larvae feed on the roots of the plants.

Granulate Cutworm

The granulate cutworm is dark gray to sandy brown in color, about 31-38 mm long and each segment has distinct V-shaped figures on its back. They will curl up into a tight coil when disturbed. The primary damage to tobacco by the granulate cutworm is cutting off newly set plants at or near ground level. Later in the season they may climb up the stalks and cut entire leaves off the plants.

Green Peach Aphid

Aphids are small soft bodied insects about 3mm long, that vary in colour from light green to yellow or almost black. Two "tail pipes" or cornicles project from the rear end. They damage tobacco by sucking plant juices from the leaves of the tobacco and cause them to curl. As they feed, they excrete honeydew from their intestine that supports a fungus growth that gives the plants a black sooty appearance. Heavy infestations may result in uneven curing of the tobacco after harvest.

Wireworms (Tobacco Wireworm and Southern Potato Wireworm)



Both the tobacco wireworm and the southern potato wireworm occur throughout the south and either may be the predominant species in any field. When full grown the larvae are about 13-20 mm long and yellow-brown in colour, are hard, shiny and appear as a short piece of wire, hence their name. Wireworms feed on the roots or underground stems of tobacco plants. This underground feeding often destroys a stand of tobacco. The wireworms that feed on tobacco are usually in the soil at transplanting time.

Cabbage Looper

Cabbage loopers are greenish in colour, about 38 mm long with the body tapering to the head. There is a thin line along the side of the body, and two others near the middle line of the back. The larvae have two pairs of abdominal prolegs and crawls with a looping motion. These larvae damage tobacco by eating large areas of the leaves, usually from the lower part of the stalk.

Potato Tubeworm (or tobacco split worm)

The tobacco split worm is a pinkish-white caterpillar about 8 mm long. This caterpillar mines between the upper and lower surfaces, especially of older leaves, causing unsightly gray to brown blotches. During the curing process these areas deteriorate, and weight is lost due to the tunnelling in the leaves.

Stink Bugs (Southern Green Stink Bug and Brown Stink Bug)

The stink bugs are shield shaped, green or brown, and about 15 mm long. The triangle between the wings (scutellum) is about 1/2 the length of the wing. Both nymphs (no wings) and adults of these species feed on tobacco by inserting their beak into the mid-rib of the leaves sucking juices out at this point. Apparently, a toxic substance is inserted at this point that may cause the leaf to droop or deteriorate from the feeding point to the tip. Tobacco is not a preferred host for stinkbugs and damage usually occurs when they migrate to tobacco from other plants such as small grains that are reaching maturity.

Mole Cricket

Mole crickets are brownish, and their bodies are covered with velvety hairs, and about 38mm long. The front legs are flattened, and spade like for digging through the soil at a rapid pace. Mole crickets eat plant roots, however, much of their damage is caused by burrowing in the soil uprooting small seedlings.

White fringed Beetle (larvae)

White fringed beetle larvae are yellowish-white, legless and are about 13mm long when fully grown. These larvae stay in the soil during winter and when the tobacco is transplanted, they immediately begin feeding on the plants. This feeding may result in complete destruction of the plants or a stunting if the plants are not killed.

Tobacco farming requires attention to detail because there are pests that adapt to the changing environment regardless of changing weather conditions. Therefore, Farmers are encouraged to work closely with Agritex officers and Tobacco Research Board for a good yield.

Nobukhosi Mkwanzani is an employee of the NEC Agriculture based in Mutare.

HIGHLIGHTS ON THE LABOUR AMENDMENT ACT, 2023

Sydney Mutasa



The law is not static, but it is dynamic. This dynamism is the space in which law reform occurs. In the 3rd quarter of 2023, Zimbabwe amended its labour laws through the enactment of the Labour Amendment Act, 11 of 2023 . Key amendments introduced by the Amendment Act on issues such as the general conditions of employment and fundamental rights of employees, termination of contracts, retrenchment law, trade unions, employers' associations, collective bargaining, employment councils, dispute settlement by designated agents and labour officers, employment code of conduct, and collective job action.

The NEC for the Agriculture Industry conducted a stakeholders' workshop on 24 July 2023 facilitated by prominent labour law expert Mr Munyaradzi Gwisai, where he unpacked the Labour Amendment Act and its implications for NEC Agriculture Industry. A number of these amendments will be spotlighted in this article.

- ❖ The Amendment Act inserted definitions of “gender-based violence and harassment” and “violence and harassment” in section 2. This provision further criminalises violence or harassment committed directly or indirectly at workplace and makes it a justifiable grounds for dismissal. This aligns the Act with the ILO Violence and Harassment (Convention 190) of 2019.
- ❖ Section 5(2a) compels every employer to pay equal remuneration to male and female employees for work to which equal value is attributed without discrimination on the grounds of sex or gender.
- ❖ Any employer who practices child labour shall now be liable to a fine not exceeding level 12 or imprisonment not exceeding 10 years or both such fine and imprisonment.
- ❖ An employee may terminate his/her contract of employment through resignation and retirement whilst the employer can terminate through mutual termination, disciplinary proceedings and any other manner agreed in advance by the concerned employer and employee.
- ❖ The entire retrenchment section was repealed and substituted with new section 12C which reads “retrenchment and compensation for loss of employment on retrenchment”. The terms “capacity to pay”, “employer” and “retrench” were defined on this section in relation to the retrenchment. The section provides for the procedure to be followed when retrenching.

- ❖ A minimum package shall be payable by the employer as compensation for retrenchment unless better terms are agreed by the parties concerned. However, the formula for calculating the minimum package was not stipulated. The Amendment Act laid down the procedure to be followed by an employer who intends to retrench one or more employees and what to do following the retrenchment.
- ❖ A new section was inserted, that is, section 12CC which covers non-payment of retrenchment package due to fraudulent, reckless, or gross negligent conduct by employer.
- ❖ The qualifying service and other conditions on maternity leave were repealed on section 18, to bring it into alignment with the Constitution of Zimbabwe, 2013, guaranteeing the right of all expectant mothers to three months of maternity leave.
- ❖ A new section, that is, section 18A was inserted, and it covers contracts for hourly work. The employer can now employ an employee to work for specific hours and serve another employer on unpaid hours unless expressly prohibited by a collective bargaining agreement.
- ❖ Under section 25 which covers the effect of collective bargaining agreements negotiated by the workers committee where the employer is a statutory corporation, statutory body or an entity wholly or predominantly controlled by the State. In such a case, the Minister responsible for that body, corporation or entity shall be deemed to be a party on an equal footing with such employer and is a party to the negotiation of the collective bargaining agreement.
- ❖ In section 25A which involves the composition, procedure and functions of works councils, the employer is now entitled also to consult works council about a proposal relating to paid educational leave.
- ❖ Some amendments were made on the formation of trade unions and employers organisations, application for registration, requirements of application for registration, considerations relating to variation, suspension or rescission of trade unions or employers organisations, supervision of election of officers, collection of union dues and the repeal of section 55 which covered on the regulation by Minister on union dues. This enhances the freedom of association of the social parties.
- ❖ A new section, that is, section 34A was introduced which compels registered trade unions, employers organisation or federation to provide information to the Registrar, with a view of strengthening corporate governance in those bodies.
- ❖ Section 56 of the principal Act which dealt with voluntary employment councils was repealed and substituted. It now provides for the formation of employment councils "otherwise than under section 57" and admission of new parties to employment councils. The aspect of voluntariness was taken away to promote uniform standards in industries in the public interest.

- ❖ Amendments were made to section 63(3b) which covers jurisdiction of designated agents of employment councils. Labour officers can now assume jurisdiction in areas where a designated agent is authorized to redress disputes if the designated agent fails to commence the proceedings within the first 30 days when the dispute arose. The Registrar now has the powers to address complaints raised against designated agents.
- ❖ Section 93, which covered the powers of labour officers was amended by repeal of the draft ruling proceedings and substituted by the arbitration process after issuance of a certificate of no settlement. Certificates of settlement by labour officers are now registrable with the relevant courts for enforcement purposes upon default.
- ❖ Regarding the employment codes of conduct under section 101, an aggrieved party to the disciplinary proceedings may now appeal to the labour officer within 30 days of the conclusion of the proceedings. A new sub-section was also inserted which requires every registered code of conduct to be reviewed every five years failure to which the code shall be deemed deregistered.
- ❖ Notice to engage on collective job action under section 104 (2)(a) was reviewed from 14 days to 7 days. This strengthens the right of employees to engage in a collective job action as provided for under Section 65(3) of the Constitution of Zimbabwe 2013.
- ❖ Liability of persons engaged in unlawful collective job action was amended in section 109, making the penalty less stringent where the unlawful collective job action does not affect an essential service and section 111 was repealed which dealt with cessation of collective job action.
- ❖ Section 128 was inserted to cover for the transitional provisions. Draft rulings which were not registered with the Labour court were deemed to be judgements or ruling registrable with the courts for execution purposes. Any party aggrieved has the right to appeal to the Labour court within 30 days after notice of registration. The quantum to be calculated on the currency used in the judgement and payable in ZWL at prevailing official rate.

Sydney Mutasa is an employee of the NEC Agriculture based in Mutare.

SUGARCANE SUBSECTOR

BY PRIMROSE MARADZIKA

Sugarcane is prevalently the crop of choice produced in Chiredzi. This crop is used to produce a wide range of products including sugar, feed, bio- products for the pharmaceuticals industry, plastics, textiles, chemicals, and ethanol.

Most sugarcane farmers in Chiredzi are A2 farmers who are beneficiaries of the land reform program and occupy more than 30 000 hectares of sugarcane plots. Sugarcane is the major farming activity in Chiredzi region under the NEC for Agricultural Industry in Zimbabwe.

Preparing for sugarcane harvesting



Farmers burn sugarcane crops before harvest to remove the leaves and tops of the sugarcane plant leaving only the sugar- bearing stalk to be harvested. This burning method makes the job of manual cane cutting easier and it protects the cutters from the disease spread by rats and snake bites.

Transporting sugarcane

The sugarcane harvesting season is still under way and a common method used to carry it from the fields to the factories is through trucks.



TRIANGLE AND HIPPO VALLEY ESTATES

The Triangle facility is the biggest operation in Zimbabwe with a crushing capacity of around 2,5 million tonnes of cane per year and producing up to 30 000 tonnes of raw sugar per year.

Hippo Valley is the second largest operation and it is listed on the local bourse. The company produces approximately 50% of the local sugar industry output and has a mill with an annual capacity of about 2,4 million tonnes of cane at average cane sugar ratio of 8:1.

Primrose Maradzika is an employee of the NEC Agriculture based in Chiredzi.

ORGANIC FERTILIZER FOR YOUR FARMING NEEDS

Joseph Chingwe

Fertilizers are an essential input for all crop farming activities. It is good to share ideas on the use of fertilizers that do not harm the environment and have no compromise in the quality of crops. Organic fertilizer is the way to go. **GO GREEN** with organic fertilizer.

We are already in the 2023 -2024 planting season. We need to preserve our soil texture and create a positive impact on our environment for future purposes. Farmers need not to harm the environment and the entire ecosystem. Organic fertilizer is the way to go as it causes no damage to the environment.

Organic Fertilizer

What is organic fertilizer?

Organic fertilizer is a magic fertilizer comprising of quite a number of nutrients such as nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, calcium, manganese and copper.

Benefits of organic fertilizer

It has a crafted formula to provide crops with essential nutrients they need to thrive without any harmful chemicals. By using organic fertilizer, farmers will be ensuring the health and vitality of their plants whilst also making a positive impact on the environment. Organic fertilizer goes beyond the basics, it enhances soil fertility, promotes root growth, and improves the overall resilience of the crops. Organic fertilizer is safe for humans, animals, and the environment because of it being pure organic and free from toxic chemicals.

So, try organic fertilizer to take farming to new heights. Organic fertilizer is the game-changer for farming needs. Try it this season. Go green! Go many years on one piece of land. Organic fertilizer is the way to go.



Healthy maize crop fed with organic fertilizer.

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