

FIRST QUARTER NEWSLETTER

NEC AGRICULTURE 2023





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FOREWORD

Dear Reader,

Welcome to a new year, and with it, fresh hope for successful cropping and sustainable growth in the agriculture industry. This newsletter as usual is to give you an insight into the activities and concerns that are ongoing on in the agricultural industry in our country and beyond, and our interactions with our stakeholders as we strive to give the quality service that players in the industry have come to expect.

In this volatile environment filled with many uncertainties, both human and natural, our quarterly edition of our quarterly newsletter looks at some innovations that farmers are undertaking to adapt to modern challenges they encounter in carrying on business and in feeding the nation. The reader is introduced to the intriguing farming concept of hydroponics and its benefits to intensive horticultural production. Our team in Marondera had the pleasure of visiting one of our stakeholders undertaking this venture.

The NEC Agriculture also had the honour of attending the Field Day hosted by His Excellency, the President of Zimbabwe at his own Pricabe Farm in Kwekwe, where there was a showcase of excellence in agriculture witnessed by top officials and foreign dignitaries, and where various exhibitions were hosted.

As ever, we conscientize stakeholders on pertinent risks to productivity. In this edition we monitor the ever-more precarious situation brought about by climate change, this time manifesting in the deadly Tropical Cyclone Freddy, which has smashed records and piqued scientific interest, all the while wreaking havoc in the Southern African region. We look at how it has affected life and agriculture in the areas affected.

Lastly, the newsletter updates stakeholders about the efforts to rationalize work at the NEC Secretariat and throughout the industry through the Job Evaluation Exercise.

Dear reader, it is my hope that you find this newsletter as informative and engaging as ever. I wish you a prosperous and productive 2023!

Yours Truly,

David Madyausiku

Chief Executive Officer

1. HYDROPONIC FARMING – WATER FARMING

By Stellah Jalazi and Veronica Nyoni

The NEC Agriculture in the first quarter of 2023 paid a visit to farmers who have introduced hydroponic horticultural farming as their production method, which is being done at a residential area in the heart centre of Marondera's First Street. Gone are the days when one would require huge space spanning hectares, since, with hydroponic farming all you need is equipment and a small space, and you will be good to go! This mode of production is intensive and has the prospects of producing a large yield in that small space. The pictures below show some of the equipment needed for the success of this innovative urban farming method.



An employee explaining to Stellah Jalazi, an NEC Agriculture Staff Member in Marondera, the number of crops that can be grown, and how the equipment works to make hydroponic farming a success.



A hydroponic farm employee explains to the Designated Agent for Marondera Branch, Veronica Nyoni and the Receptionist, Stelah Jalazi the crops that are grown in the Greenhouse.

The farmer who owns this project took the bold step of demolishing his house and installed greenhouses that occupy only 864 square meters. The produce target market is for Hotels, Food Courts, Restaurants, and the general public.

The equipment required in this type of farming include Dutch buckets, channels, water tanks ,cold rooms and solar power systems, generator as backup, and a small piece of land of one's choice.



Some of the crops and systems demonstrated by the hydroponics farm employee

The farmer grows yellow cherry tomatoes, candela tomatoes, and Camelot tomatoes which take 3 months to grow and can be harvested continuously for up to 10 months. Red and yellow bell peppers that take 5 months to mature are also grown using this method, and can be harvested continuously for up to 10 months. They are planted in Dutch buckets and drip watering is done for 30 minutes every 4 hours. The water is mixed with fertilizers and fungicides and the room temperature must be controlled. The crop grows to about 9 meters, and is pulled out from the bucket, heaped, and stretched using a string, and hung up for 2 meters.

There are different types of vegetables that can likewise be grown such as, lettuce, mustard spinach, spices and herbs just to mention a few. They are grown in seed beds for 10 days, transferred to small channels for 2 weeks then transplanted to big channels and grow for 2 weeks then followed by harvesting.

They only grow crops that grow up to 2 meters and root vegetables such as carrots are not grown. The real novelty is that no soil or manure is required for this method! After harvesting the channels are washed with basic household detergents such as Jik bleach and dish washing liquid to kill off fungal diseases. All material used is produced locally. The only drawback is that it is expensive, but this is more than compensated by its durability.

Running The project does not require a big labour force, thus it is less expensive in terms of labour and is quite manageable and easy to control. Strong monitoring of the plants is needed. Cold rooms have been put in place, and solar power systems have been installed to provide power at all times. The farmer is also embarking on a chicken-rearing project on the same site. Very innovative indeed!

Thus the farmer's operation is diversified as a one-stop-shop for tomatoes, cucumbers, chickens, and eggs, conveniently in one location!

Stellah Jalazi is a Receptionist and Veronica Nyoni is a Designated Agent. Both represent NEC Agriculture and are based in Marondera.



2. FIELD DAY AT PRICABE FARM

By Deliwe Makota

A field day is an agriculture educational event organized and hosted by the producer, usually in collaboration with agricultural educators, on the farm. There are often demonstrations of specific management practices, equipment usage, and/or results of research presented at these events. On 11 March 2023, His Excellency, the President of Zimbabwe Emmerson Mnangagwa hosted a Field Day at his own Pricabe Farm in Kwekwe. The President was accompanied by the Vice President of Zimbabwe Constantino Chiwenga, and other senior government officials and Chiefs, among others. The event was attended by farmers from across the country and agricultural service providers and stakeholders including NEC Agriculture, represented by the Designated Agent for Midlands region Ms. Deliwe Makota. In addition, there were companies who exhibited their products, such as Seed-co.

At the farm, 500 hectares of land are under maize cultivation, 200 hectares under soya beans, while 35 hectares are under various horticultural plants. Part of the land is also used for fish farming and cattle rearing, with a herd of about 700 cattle and goats, while the remainder of the herd is at nearby farms, which the President rents. All Chiefs present were gifted with butternut, onion, tomato, carrot, and rape seeds donated by Valley Seeds Private Limited.

In his quest of advancing Zimbabwe's engagement and re-engagement policy, fifty-seven countries were represented by twenty-four Ambassadors, with the rest being senior diplomats.



Pictures of some of the exhibitions on display at the Field Day

3. CYCLONE FREDDY WREAKS HAVOC IN THE SOUTH EAST AFRICAN REGION

By *Deliwe Makota*

Cyclone Freddy [has been described](#) as a “freak of nature”: a cyclonic event that has set records tumbling as both the [longest lasting, and highest accumulated cyclone energy](#) (ACE)-producing cyclone on record, according to American space agency NASA. However, the scientific interest easily gives way to the human cost that the Cyclone has visited on [over 1 million people](#) in Mozambique, Malawi, and Zimbabwe, and the lingering effects that it has produced in those countries.

Cyclones have the potential to bring torrential rain, flash flooding, powerful winds, and lightning. These in turn produce risks such as landslides, rockfalls, destruction of property, drowning and fire during the life of the cyclone. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates that storms such as cyclones cost approximately USD 19 Billion in crop and livestock production loss between 2008 and 2018. The aftermath of the cyclone is equally, if not more devastating since flooding brings about famine through the destruction of agricultural crops, and helps to transport pathogens which contaminate drinking water sources and introduce waterborne disease. These issues have all been features of the recent Cyclone Freddy.



A man walks past a cyclone damaged building in Madagascar's Mananjary district.

©AP

In Mozambique, Cyclone Freddy took an unusual trajectory, making landfall twice. At the time of writing this article, [Cyclone Freddy deaths](#) in Mozambique numbered 314, with over 184 000 displaced, and damage to critical infrastructure and property left UN aid agency UNICEF [requiring more than US\\$50 million](#) to respond to the immediate needs and recovery of children and families affected.

In Malawi, Reuters reported that the President of Malawi [claimed that death toll had exceeded 1000 people](#), while destruction of crops has left many families food insecure. Inter Press Service [reports that](#) over 2 million farmers have lost their crops and livestock, and over 179,000 hectares of crop fields have been destroyed. Zimbabwe has delivered aid of 300 metric tonnes of the staple maize meal to alleviate the hardship caused to Malawi by Cyclone Freddy.



A Herald Newspaper photographer captured the extent to which sugarcane crop was flattened by Cyclone Freddy.

Zimbabwe was not spared of the ravages of Cyclone Freddy either, as parts of the Lowveld and Eastern Highlands were affected. [Two districts lost seven cattle](#), while two people were confirmed dead after being struck by lightning. Some schools had their roofs blown off or collapse due harsh winds and incessant rains. Citizens were urged to be alert for possible flooding, to avoid crossing flooded rivers or streams, stay indoors and avoid artisanal mining on unstable ground during the period. Citizens living in low-lying areas were also encouraged to move to higher ground. About eight houses also had their roofs blown off at Chinyamukwakwa, Vheneka and Chisumbanje areas. In Chipinge District, Ward 27, seven beasts were struck by lightning.

Stakeholders of the National Employment Council for the Agricultural Industries in Zimbabwe in the Sugar Cane Sector had feared the worst, expecting extensive damage to their crop when Cyclone Freddy flattened it, but Hippo Valley Estate will have heaved a collective sigh of relief on receiving the assessment of the Agritex Department that [the crop was not uprooted](#) and would be able to be harvested when it is due.

These experiences remind of the devastation that is likely to become more and more commonplace as a result of climate change, and the need for policymakers and farmers to be innovative in building resilience to mitigate losses in the industry due to natural disasters. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in collaboration with FAO have proposed [four principles](#) for building resilience to natural-hazard induced disasters made more frequent by climate change, namely:

- An inclusive, holistic and all-hazards approach to natural disaster risk governance for resilience;
- A shared understanding of natural disaster risk based on the identification, assessment and communication of risk, vulnerability and resilience capacities;
- An *ex ante* approach to natural disaster risk management, i.e., prepare for, prevent, adapt and mitigate natural hazard risks;
- An approach emphasising preparedness and planning for effective crisis management, disaster response, and to “build back better” to increase resilience to future natural hazards

NEC Agriculture supports policymaking that ensures sustained productivity in the agricultural industry.

Delive Makota is a Designated Agent of the National Employment Council for Agriculture, based in Gweru

4. 2023 JOB EVALUATION

By Kudakwashe Kabodzi

Job evaluation is the process of comparing a job with other jobs in an organization to determine an appropriate pay rate for the job. The exercise of Job evaluation and Job description formulation for the NEC Agriculture Secretariat was conducted in February and March 2023 across all departments. The process was extended from an industry-wide exercise to the Secretariat of the NEC Agriculture. Throughout the exercise, the NEC Agriculture Staff were also capacitated to carry out future job evaluations in the industry, cognizant of the technological and business process innovations that continually develop and affect the agricultural industry.

There is therefore always a need to align staff with current trends and best practices. All staff members' roles were also reviewed in the process, and every employee is better aware of their role in advancing the success of the Council's strategy, as well as giving effect to its mission and vision



NEC Agriculture Receptionists from all national branches in attendance at their job evaluation exercise.

Kudakwashe Kabodzi is an Account Analyst of the National Employment Council for Agriculture, based in Gweru.



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