



NEC AGRICULTURE 1ST QUARTER NEWSLETTER

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CEO's Foreword



I greet you, dear reader, with the greetings of a fresh season. 2024 has started in earnest with several activities and concerns that are affecting the industry. At the core of our concerns is the dry conditions that have dominated the time that should be Zimbabwe's rainy season. This has precipitated pressures through crop failure and fears of vulnerability to food insecurity in cities and in rural communities. In response, His Excellency, the President of Zimbabwe declared through SI 55 of 2024 a State of Disaster to exist in the rural and urban areas of Zimbabwe. The

challenge posed to our industry is to take mitigatory measures to provide sustenance to our compatriots, to safeguard employment, and to use all ingenuity reposed in us to rebound quickly from the effects of drought.

In this edition of our quarterly publication, some measures to ameliorate the situation regarding drought are explored. It is also common cause that a major worry in this context affected by environmental factors beyond our collective control is the spectre of job insecurity and the mental anguish that brings. At this time, it is very important to look after the mental health of employers and employees alike, recognising that mental health affects the ability to make key decisions and interventions at the required times.

We also laud some proud successes that have been achieved in the first quarter of the year. A highlight of 2024 already is the launch of the translation of SI 41 of 2022, the principal collective bargaining agreement applicable in the industry with respect to conditions of service and the industry code of conduct. We had a highly successful launch event where copies of the translations in ChiShona and IsiNdebele were handed out. The ceremony was graced by dignitaries from the Ministry of Public Service, Labour, and Social Welfare, our key stakeholders and business partners, as well as members of the press who covered the event in digital, print and radio media. Not only were the two translations launched, but also the outcomes of the industry-wide job evaluation and job grading were presented by our partners in the project, Kubasa Human Capital Consultants. I would like to personally thank all the stakeholders and the industry at large for your support which contributed to the success of the launch.

As we tackle head-on the difficult climatic conditions that have culminated in drought this year, let us value social dialogue, unity, and harmony at every level. It is essential therefore for workplaces in the industry to give effect to structures such as workers' committees and works councils as vehicles to safeguard business continuity and sustained productivity.

I thank you, and I wish you a prosperous 2024!

Regards,

DAVID MADYAUSIKU

Three things that the translation of SI 41 of 2022 means to the employment relationship in the Agriculture Industry

By Sibusisiwe Maruma



On 8 March 2024, the NEC Agriculture launched the two translations of the principal collective bargaining agreement for the agricultural industry governing the conditions of service and providing for the industry code of conduct. The project was the brainchild of the CEO, Mr David Madyausiku, and fulfils the provision made in the agreement's section 1 (5).

The event was well-attended by the Ministry, at the highest level, with the Minister being represented by the Legal Advisor in the Ministry, Mr Mabhena, as well as directors and deputy directors in the Ministry namely Mr Vusani, Mr Ngorima, and Mrs Kanyayi. Also in attendance were key stakeholders including members of the Council, employer and employee representatives, and business partners. The event also attracted media attention and was featured in print and news media. Star FM, The Herald and Newsday amongst other media houses gave the launch publicity.

Here are three ways in which the translation will affect the industry:

1. Increase interaction with the standards embodied in the agreement

The natural response to information being made available in the language of choice is that it will give rise to more interaction with the terms of the collective bargaining agreement. This may

include employees being more in tune with their rights and responsibilities while employers will be better able to clarify expectations in line with the conditions of service. [People generally tend to learn better in their own home language](#) and the translations provide just the right common vocabulary to conduct trainings and communicate the law in indigenous languages.

This can potentially prevent many misunderstandings in the industry, while promoting safety and harmony.

2. Give employers and employees a greater feeling of equality

The Constitution of Zimbabwe (2013) recognises 16 official languages in Zimbabwe. The translation of the agreement into two of the most widely spoken vernacular languages gives the speakers of those languages who use the document a greater feeling of equality and show that the industry is cognizant of, and values its diversity. Agriculture is a common feature of all the regions of Zimbabwe with different languages being prevalent in all the areas. Therefore, collective agreements should be available in more than one language to give expression to this diversity. Studies have shown that [linguistic diversity at work can bring about innovation and creativity](#), whereas varying levels of fluency in a single common language can drown out perspectives of less confident speakers and amplify unequal power relations. The translation of the CBA therefore creates room for more discussion in the workplace in vernacular languages from a position of equality and removes the stigma around vernacular languages as formal languages of communication.

3. Increased fairness and transparency

Fairness and transparency are issues at the core of the employment relationship. Often, conditions of service are hidden behind extravagant “legalese” which make them inaccessible to ordinary people. A combination of plain language and vernacular language increases transparency, fairness, and the by-product is broad trust among the social parties and their constituencies.

The translation of the principal CBA of the industry is already proving to be a gamechanger, and the CEO highlighted in his speech at the launch event that the translation to Shona and isiNdebele was only the beginning, and work would be soon underway to make the translation available in more of the official languages of Zimbabwe.

Sibusisiwe Maruma is a Designated Agent for the NEC Agriculture, based at the Head Office in Harare.

NEC Agriculture Staff lead by example, form workers' committees

By Tonderai Matanda

Staff in the NEC Agriculture secretariat have conducted votes to form a workers committee and a "managerial workers committee".

The staff members have done so to promote workplace harmony, democracy, and participation in decision-making on matters of interest to both staff and management. The NEC Agriculture secretariat saw the need to be exemplary and to conform to industrial relations best practice, in accordance with the provisions of the Labour Act [Chapter 28:01].

The existence of the workers' committees makes the constitution of a works council possible, where issues concerning productivity, interests, and workplace policies can be discussed and adopted. The Chief Executive Officer, Mr David Madyausiku, hailed the formation of the workers committees, and said that it marked a new chapter in the internal industrial relations of the organisation. He further expressed hope that the workers committees would be partners rather than opponents of management, and that the workers committees would be the birthplace of innovation and ideas to take the NEC Agriculture forward in the fulfilment of its statutory mandate.



In the workers' committee elections, unique, innovative processes were developed by staff members, ensuring gender parity in representation on the workers' committee, and in leadership positions. This showed sensitivity to the need to have women's representation on gender-specific issues that arise in the workplace. Staff members further expressed satisfaction with the process that was entirely led by themselves, and hope that the workers' committee would lead to even stronger employer-employee relations, workplace dialogue, and new possibilities for internal bargaining.

Tonderai Matanda is the Legal Officer of the NEC Agriculture, based at the Head Office in Harare.

Mental Health at The Workplace

By Sibusisiwe Maruma

Work is a major part of most people's lives. It is where we spend much of our time, where we get our income and foster diverse relationships. It is important to maintain one's mental health. Just like any part of the body that hurts, the brain may also need attention when in distress.



Mental health is the way we think and feel and our ability to deal with ups and downs. When we enjoy good mental health, we have a sense of purpose and direction, the energy to do the things we want to do, and the ability to deal with the challenges that happen in our lives.

If you enjoy good mental health, you can make the most out of your potential at work. It is important that one is always operating at their optimum mental health so that they are always fully engaged to be highly productive. Safe and healthy working environments are not only a fundamental right but are also more likely to minimize tension and conflicts at work and improve staff retention, work performance and productivity. Both parties in a work relationship need to play their roles in making sure that the environment is conducive for great mental health. An employer may provide a healthy working environment but if the employees are not well balanced mentally, they can cause disharmony and thereby creating unbearable working conditions for others. This can lead to a toxic workplace. The following are examples of what can be done to stay healthy mentally at the workplace;

- a healthy body translates to a healthy mind.
- staying positive in the midst of a calamity
- resolving conflict amicably

- avoiding bullying
- maintaining a friendly work environment with professional boundaries

The consequences of mental health problems in the workplace can be summarized as follows (WHO & ILO, 2000):

Absenteeism

- increase in overall sickness absence, particularly frequent short periods of absence;
- poor health (depression, stress, burnout);
- physical conditions (high blood pressure, heart disease, ulcers, sleeping disorders, skin rashes, headache, neck- and backache, low resistance to infections).

Work performance

- reduction in productivity and output;
- increase in error rates;
- increased amount of accidents;
- poor decision-making;
- deterioration in planning and control of work.

Staff attitude and behaviour

- loss of motivation and commitment
- burnout
- staff working increasingly long hours but for diminishing returns
- poor timekeeping
- labour turnover (particularly expensive for companies at top levels of management).

Relationships at work

- tension and conflicts between colleagues;
- poor relationships with clients;
- increase in disciplinary problems.

According to World Health Organisation (WHO), research supports the connection between mental health disorders and decreased work productivity. Furthermore, in a joint paper, the WHO and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) recognised the need to avoid job stress – referring to the harmful physical and emotional response which occurs when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources, or needs of the worker, causes of which include overwork, lack of clear instructions, unrealistic deadlines, lack of decision-making, job insecurity, isolated working conditions, surveillance, and inadequate child care arrangements.

It is therefore self-evident that mental health is important both from the employer perspective and the employee perspective.

Sibusisiwe Maruma is a Designated Agent for the NEC Agriculture, based at the Head Office in Harare.

Drought Effects and Mitigation Measures

By Kudakwashe L. Kabodzi and Peter Makusha

Increased uncertainty in rainfall patterns due to climate change has heightened production risks in agriculture, with this season's drought attributed to the El Niño effect. Agricultural drought, surpassing floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, and earthquakes in costliness present substantial challenges to farmers and economies, particularly in the developing world. Farmers and economies, particularly in the developing world, are facing substantial challenges as a result of a staggering estimated loss of \$166 billion USD recorded from three-quarters of the global cropped area spanning 454 million hectares. On a global scale, each drought event decreases agricultural gross domestic production by 0.8%, albeit with varying impacts across different countries (Kim et al., 2019).



Wilting maize crop in Midlands province, Hurudza Area (Chirumhanzu).

As the National Employment Council for the Agriculture Industry in Zimbabwe (NECAIZ), we express concern regarding the detrimental impacts of drought. We urge stakeholders to collaborate harmoniously, leveraging established relationships from prosperous times. Aligned with our vision and mission, NECAIZ dedicates itself to fostering harmony among stakeholders, including both employers and employees.

Adaptation, resilience, and sustainability are imperative in mitigating the effects of agricultural drought. Adaptation, defined by Burton et al. (2002), entails the ability of economic, environmental, and social systems to adjust to change and cope with drought consequences. Agriculture, encompassing livestock, aims to maintain production levels while adhering to sustainability indicators covering environmental, economic, and social aspects (Kajikawa, 2008). Resilience, as outlined by Duru and Therond (2015), emphasises the continuity of systems despite adversities like agricultural drought.

Drought a Global Issue

According to [National Centers for Environmental Information](#), global indicators revealed that dry conditions persisted through to February 2024 across northern and eastern parts of North America, Central America, Brazil to the northern coast of South America, southern parts of South America, much of southern Africa and parts of central to northern Africa, southeastern Europe to Southwest Asia, parts of Siberia, and much of Oceania from Southeast Asia to New Zealand. In western Africa, northern Africa and much of southern Africa February was hotter and drier than normal. The dryness was located across southern Africa, including Madagascar, and western to northern Africa, especially the Maghreb region. With Zimbabwe being one of the most severely affected, it leaves us with the pertinent question: *What are the implications for our farmers?*

Outlined below are some strategies for adaptation, resilience, and sustainability:

1. Livestock Reduction:

We encourage farmers to consider selling surplus livestock, such as cattle, while they have favourable weights and only keep a sustainable herd throughout this drought spell. This action bolsters financial capacity, enabling farmers to cover expenses like vaccinations, feeds, and wages. Such measures not only facilitate adaptation, but also promote resilience through sustainable farming practices until the abatement of El Niño.

2. Embracing Horticulture:

Ideally regarding drip irrigation: One of the most crucial techniques in dry farming spells is efficient water management. Drip irrigation systems deliver water directly to the roots of plants, minimising water loss through evaporation and runoff. Locational example includes Israel, particularly in the Negev Desert, has successfully implemented drip irrigation systems to cultivate crops such as dates, olives, and citrus fruits in arid conditions. Moreover, it offers economic benefits by generating income and employment opportunities, with avenues for export being facilitated by governmental initiatives in collaboration with ZimTrade.

3. Food Preservation:

Preservation of fodder for livestock and food for human consumption is crucial until the next harvest. We encourage stakeholders to minimise wastage through collaborative efforts and discussions on ways to conserve food until at least the next rain season. Formal networks like unions and farmers' associations can enhance resilience by fostering mutual assistance and resource access.

4. Future Sustainable Development Strategies:

Planning for the future is imperative despite current challenges. Water harvesting initiatives, including the construction of small farm dams and borehole drilling, are essential for drought adaptation and resilience. These efforts facilitate irrigation system installations, mitigating the impacts of drought-induced shocks.

Local Response

The majority of our small-scale farmers are still struggling to cope with adverse climatic conditions due to incapacity. However, the bulk of them have now seen the need to adapt by adopting pro-active measures such as investing in water harvesting, drilling solar-powered boreholes and viable irrigation schemes. One of the farmers from Gokwe area (name withheld) has since switched more energies from general to horticulture whose irrigation methods such as drip irrigation expend much less water.

In conclusion, proactive measures addressing adaptation, resilience, and sustainability are essential for mitigating the adverse effects of agricultural drought and fostering long-term agricultural prosperity. Together, we can conquer.

Kudakwashe L. Kabodzi and Peter Makusha are employed by NEC Agriculture as Account Analyst and Designated Agent respectively, and are based in Gweru.

Exportation Of Fresh Produce: Entering New Defining Markets

By Peter Makusha

Overview

There has been growing interest among small scale farmers in Zimbabwe in reaching export markets to harness lucrative gains from their farm produce. Quite a number of these small-scale farmers have moved to horticultural products or fresh produce such as peas, fine beans, blueberries, and vegetables. The increase in international markets participation has been motivated by the new realisation by smallholder farmers that fresh produce is one of the low hanging fruits for local exporters. The venture is advantaged by Zimbabwe's good soils and conducive climatic conditions for the growing of an array of fresh produce.

However, these smallholder farmers face a plethora of challenges to successfully penetrate international markets. According to [the Sunday Mail](#) the challenges faced by these farmers include lack of access to reliable information, capacity development, compliance issues, documentation, and market linkages. These challenges are however not without remedial measures to rescue them to navigate prospective lucrative markets. The most challenging thing is that the smallholder farmers do not know where to start. It is against this background that this piece is prepared to unlock knowledge and relay it in a simple and comprehensive way to capacitate farmers, especially small-scale farmers, eyeing these international markets.



Mr Gilbert Makore is a small-holder farmer of Queen's Rest Farm in Habern Park Gweru working towards exporting fresh produce.

Access to Reliable Information

Before a decision is made prospective exporters need to conduct thorough research to gather and evaluate information on target foreign markets. **ZimTrade** prepared [a Guide to Export Market research](#) which smallholder farmers can utilise for guidance to penetrate foreign markets.

The information, which is constituted of the twelve steps requisite for success in exportation of fresh produce, is readily available on its website.

Key to note is that the farmers need to consider their capacity to produce, the availability of buyers, consistency in supply, standards certification and costs involved. In the case of capacity gap the farmers can address this by developing capacity first working closely with ZimTrade and its regional partners.

Documentation/Registration

Prospective exporters cannot export fresh produce unless they are registered with [the Agriculture Marketing Authority \(AMA\)](#), a national authority that regulates the marketing of agricultural products in Zimbabwe. The registration which is done annually comes in two types which are;

- Agro-producer for actual farmers intending to export.
- Agro-dealer for merchants in the exportation of fresh produce.

Once registration is complete, the incumbent should proceed to apply for **an export permit** with **the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Water and Rural Resettlement**. The permit is valid for specific product, quantity and time meaning that the exporter cannot export a product that is not covered by the permit and cannot exceed specified quantities as well as the life of the permit.

It is noteworthy that a farmer cannot export fresh produce without having attained **a phytosanitary certificate** which is issued by **Plant Quarantine Services**. Phytosanitary requirements are usually specified in the permit as prescribed by the importing country and are necessary for ensuring the control of plant diseases. Failure to meet these requirements tarnishes the image of the country and the exporters in the entire sector risking blacklisting if exported produce is found to have above permissible residual levels.

After this the farmer must approach **a bank of their choice** and complete **a currency or declaration form (CD1)** as another important documentation process, an exchange requirement with the Reserve bank of Zimbabwe that specifies the value of consignment. This takes the farmer to the next step of processing of **the bill of entry** with **Zimbabwe Revenue Authority (ZIMRA)** which specifies the product, quantity, value to be exported, transport and port of exit when exporting the produce.

This process of documentation seems a burden and cumbersome to most players but it is requisite and necessary as it protects other players from the sector and ensures that necessary revenue is collected. To that end **ZimTrade** is making frantic efforts engaging authorities to streamline the documentation process for all necessary permits to be obtained within a short time period. If the proposal of the development of a one-stop electronic window succeeds there shall be a significant reduction of the time and resources required to obtain the documentation by the exporters.

Though not compulsory, it is beneficial for fresh produce exporters to consider registration with **regional bilateral and multilateral agreements** that Zimbabwe is part of as they would enjoy exporting duty free or at preferential rates. **COMESA, SADC, Zimbabwe-Malawi Trade Agreement, Zimbabwe-Botswana Trade Agreement, Zimbabwe-Mozambique Trade Agreement, Zimbabwe-South Africa Trade Agreement, Zimbabwe-Namibia Trade Agreement, Esa-Uk Economic Partnership Agreement, and Esa-Eu Economic Partnership Agreement**. Through **Zimra** farmers are

assisted by **ZimTrade** to register with the existing trade agreements. To benefit from trade agreements a **certificate of origin** signed by the exporter and duly authenticated by **Zimra** must be produced. It is important for farmers to have knowledge of certificates of origin required for preferential tariffs. These include;

- **EUR1** Movement Certificate when exporting produce to European Union countries.
- **Generalised System of Preferences (GSP)** when exporting to countries offering preferential tariffs.
- **Certificate of origin** in respect of export to countries which ratified the COMESA Free Trade Area.
- **Certificate of origin** when exporting to countries which ratified the SADC Trade Protocol.
- **Form 18** when exporting to Malawi.
- **Form CE59** when exporting to Botswana or Namibia.
- **Form DA 59** when exporting to South Africa.
- **Zimbabwe/ Mozambique certificate of origin** when exporting to Mozambique.

It is critical to note that producers need to comply with the NEC Agriculture regulations. This includes compliance with working conditions as well as remittance of council dues. Destination countries vet such issues including issues to do with child labour. Mr Gilbert Makore, pictured above, talked to Mr Makusha during a labour inspection and indicated that when he planned to enter export market, he was informed of the requirement to be compliant with NEC conditions and all regulations in the agricultural sector. He thus decided to work with NEC to know what is required. He was happy to have his aspirations featured in this newsletter at the same time demonstrating to other farmers the importance of compliance.

Certification

A producer of fresh produce targeting markets such as European and Middle Eastern Markets is required to have certification such as **the Global Gap, EcoCert, FairTrade and Rain Forest Alliance** among others. The list is not exhaustive. Producers can be assisted by resource persons specialised in the certification scheme and food safety standards prescribed by the export market. Further to that ZimTrade made several strides by conducting a webinar (a virtual seminar allowing participants from different locations to partake in the presentation-Merram Webster as quoted by Aditya Sheth 2021) in conjunction with Open Trade Gate Sweden on how to export to Sweden indicating that one has to be quality certified.

Packaging

Producers of fresh produce need to understand the importance of packaging and that several countries have specific packaging requirements. It is critical to note that packaging need to conform to the prescriptions of the destination market, at the same time communicating the brand status. In that regard it the duty of the exporter to ascertain packaging of the final product. The task has however been lightened by **ZimTrade** which has assisted by recently launching the **in the ZimPackaging portal (www.zimpackaging.co.zw)** to assist exporters to choose the right packaging.

Transportation

A producer of fresh harvest needs to invest in **cold room facilities** and as such **requires a cold chain management** to preserve the produce. The producer must be mindful of the fact that maintaining consistent quality is of utmost importance by placing emphasis on issues of condensation and maintaining the right on-farm cooling temperature. It is, to that effect, critical to consider the life span of the product and cut down on delivery time hence most exporters to Europe utilise **cargo airlines** for most of their produce. However, due to the bulkiness of some produce such as sweet potatoes it is ideal to ferry them **through sea**. The producer must thoroughly examine the costs involved and explore all available options to achieve competitiveness in pricing.

Feedback Loop after Sale

To ensure customer satisfaction and highest quality standard, the producer must establish a feedback loop from buyers on a continuous basis to see areas for improvement.

Implications

Success is inevitable when prospective small-scale farmers have access to information such as this and exploit it. If the farmers work closely with Zimtrade they shall unleash great potential inherent in them and realise greater achievements in international markets. The NEC Agriculture thus presents this great opportunity by availing this critical information for the farmers to explore new markets for growth and success.

Peter Makusha is a Designated Agent at the NEC Agriculture based in Gweru Branch.



**6 Cottenham Avenue
Off Lomagundi Road
Greencroft
Harare**

Email: info@necagriculture.co.zw

Phone: +263-242-334472-3, 303669

Website: www.necagriculture.co.zw