

# NEWSLETTER

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## IN THIS ISSUE...

- Blueberries lead the way for horticulture
- Are your communication methods causing disputes?
- Here's how sustainability can boost your resilience in agriculture
- Are you doing this for your tobacco crop?
- Wheat offers hope



# Contents

CEO's Foreword ..... i

Blueberries Lead the Way: Zimbabwe's Horticulture Sector Sees Renewed Growth..... 1

Are your communication methods causing disputes?..... 3

Here's how sustainable farming can boost resilience in agriculture ..... 5

Are you doing this one key thing to boost your tobacco productivity? ..... 8

Wheat Offers a Glimmer of Hope ..... 10

## CEO's Foreword



Dear Reader,

Zimbabwe continues to weather the brunt of dry conditions and to deal with a fall-out of sub-optimum harvests, but the agricultural industry has shone through with its resilience and benefited from expanding diversification. The projections for the winter wheat crop have indeed been encouraging and offered new hope for food security through this strategic grain. Irrigation projects have supported both grain and horticultural production, and Zimbabwe is punching above her weight, notably, in the blueberry markets, offering both quality and volumes to the export sector.

We salute the men and women of the agricultural industry for their tenacity in making their own fortunes, and the Government of Zimbabwe for its steadfast support to the industry. Tough as the season has been so far, I am happy to note that in most subsectors, the dreaded failure to conclude collective bargaining agreements has been largely avoided. New collective bargaining agreements have been reached in the Kapenta, Tea and Coffee, General Agriculture, Agro, Sugarcane, and Timber subsectors between the first and second quarters, while a new Allowances Agreement has been reached for the first time in two years. The Council has also been seized with the finalisation of the Child Labour Policy, Industry Job Evaluation process and alignment of the Employment Council's Constitution with the Labour Act among other institutional arrangements and changes.

We attribute these successes to faith exhibited by social parties in the potential of social dialogue to yield good outcomes. We continue to encourage our stakeholders towards infusing the virtues of social dialogue and combining these with farming best practices and sustainable farming practices that are appropriate both in methods and external conditions to ensure strong, viable, and resilient agricultural enterprises. We do hope you enjoy our offering in this newsletter, discussing these and other matters.

Regards

**DAVID MADYAUSIKU**

# Blueberries Lead the Way: Zimbabwe's Horticulture Sector Sees Renewed Growth

DELIWE MAKOTA



Zimbabwe's horticulture sector has witnessed a remarkable quarter, marked by significant milestones, challenges, and growth. The standard-bearing crop is from the blueberry producers. It has continued to thrive and expand its reach in spite of the dry conditions witnessed in the country this year. The blueberry export season commenced in mid-April, with the first shipments bound for South Africa, where favourable prices were reported. This marked the beginning of a bustling period for Zimbabwean growers, eager to capitalize on the surging global demand for blueberries.

Common challenges for the sector included access to agricultural financing and policy certainty. Despite these hurdles, Zimbabwe's blueberry output for 2024 is estimated to reach 6,000 tons, which represents an impressive 10% increase from 2023. This achievement is a testament to the resilience and dedication of Zimbabwean growers, committed to producing high-quality blueberries for both the local and international markets.

A ground-breaking development in May saw Zimbabwean growers secure market access to China, paving the way for increased exports to this lucrative market. June marked the peak period for Zimbabwean blueberry exports, with high demand reported from Europe, the UK, and the Middle East. To meet this demand, significant investment was announced for the expansion of blueberry production in Zimbabwe, focusing on increasing yields and quality.

The growth of the blueberry industry has had a positive impact on the local economy, creating employment opportunities and stimulating rural development. However, challenges still persist. Limited access to long-term financing and high interest rates continue to hinder expansion and investment. Ongoing policy uncertainty affects investor confidence and profitability, and securing market access to key markets like India remains a challenge.

Addressing these challenges is crucial to sustaining growth and solidifying Zimbabwe's position in the global market. As the sector continues to evolve, blueberries are poised to remain a key driver of growth for the horticulture subsector, with Zimbabwean growers well-positioned to capitalize on emerging opportunities. With the right support and investment, the blueberry industry is set to continue its upward trajectory, benefiting both the local economy and international markets.

***Deliwe Makota is a Designated Agent of the NEC Agriculture based at Chinhoyi.***

# Are your communication methods causing disputes?

## The Ripple Effect of Communication Influencing Zimbabwe's Agricultural Workforce

**Erica Dumba**

In the ever-evolving landscape of Zimbabwe's agricultural sector, the power of communication cannot be overstated. As the industry navigates challenges like the ongoing drought, effective communication becomes a pivotal tool in building relationships for resilience, producing desired outcomes, and influencing attitudes. But what happens when our words reach further than we intended? This phenomenon, known as the ripple effect, highlights the profound impact our communication can have, not just on immediate recipients, but on a broader spectrum of individuals and communities.

Consider a manager's interaction with their team. Clear, transparent, and supportive communication can boost team morale, productivity, and job satisfaction. Conversely, vague, dismissive, or negative communication can lead to stress, confusion, and decreased productivity. These ripples can spread, affecting other teams, departments, and even the company's bottom line. The same applies to how a company communicates with its customers—positive interactions can build brand loyalty and referrals, while negative ones can damage the company's reputation and bottom line.

Effective communication within the agricultural industry can lead to profound changes, impacting labor practices, worker rights, and overall productivity. Thus, the NEC of Agriculture places great focus in its programs on delivering trainings to stakeholders on key labour matters and social dialogue not only at the level of employer organisations and trade unions, but also at the shopfloor level, thereby bridging the communication gap between the employer and the employee.

The ripple effect of communication extends to the broader agricultural community as well. Training programs and workshops that emphasize the importance of effective communication can equip both workers and employers with the skills needed to navigate complex labor issues. By promoting transparency and accountability, these initiatives can cultivate a culture of mutual respect and fairness within the agricultural sector, with positive outcomes for harmony and productivity.



*NEC official delivers training on communication skills*

Furthermore, communication plays a crucial role in fostering positive employer-employee relationships. Open dialogue between farm owners and workers can lead to mutual understanding and cooperation, addressing grievances before they escalate into disputes and finding solutions that benefit both parties. This collaborative approach can result in higher job satisfaction, reduced turnover rates, and increased productivity.

In addition, leveraging modern communication technologies can further enhance the reach and impact of these efforts. Mobile phones, radio broadcasts, and social media platforms can be utilized to disseminate vital information on labour laws, agricultural techniques, and market opportunities. This not only empowers individual workers but also strengthens the overall resilience and sustainability of Zimbabwe's agricultural industry.

In conclusion, the ripple effect of communication in the context of Zimbabwe's agricultural labour force and labour laws is profound. By prioritizing clear, open, and effective communication, stakeholders can foster an environment where workers are informed, empowered, and engaged. This, in turn, can lead to a more productive, equitable, and sustainable agricultural sector, benefiting the entire nation.

***Erica Dumba is a Designated agent of the NEC Agriculture based at Rusape.***

# Here's how sustainable farming can boost resilience in agriculture

**Patience Ngirazi**

In an era where climate change, food insecurity, and environmental degradation are pressing issues, sustainable farming emerges as the sensible approach to agricultural production. As a holistic method, sustainable farming balances ecological health, economic profitability, and social equity, ensuring the long-term viability of our agricultural systems. By addressing the immediate needs of food production while contributing positively to the environment, economy, and society, sustainable farming supports the well-being of our planet and its inhabitants.

## **Conservation Agriculture: Enhancing Productivity and Environmental Health**

Conservation agriculture is pivotal in sustainable farming, combining practices that promote sustainable and profitable farming. The Pfumvudza program, launched in 2020, aims to tackle food insecurity, improve resilience, and enhance the economic viability of smallholder farmers in Zimbabwe. Key principles of conservation agriculture include:



- Minimal Soil Disturbance
- No-Till or Reduced Tillage
- Cover Crops and Mulching
- Crop Diversity

## **Organic Farming: A Natural Approach**

The Shashe Agroecology School in Mashava champions organic farming, promoting composting, natural pest control, and crop diversification among local farmers. This approach increases food security, produces healthier crops, and ensures sustainable farming practices.



## **Integrated Pest Management: Reducing Chemical Dependency**



Practical Action, an NGO dedicated to sustainable development, emphasizes integrated pest management (IPM). Through agricultural extensions, IPM programs train farmers to use natural predators, crop rotation, and organic pesticides to manage pests, promoting ecological balance in agriculture.

### **Water Management: Optimizing Resources**

Efficient irrigation and rainwater harvesting are critical for optimizing water use in agriculture, particularly in regions prone to water scarcity. Organizations like Practical Action support drip irrigation projects, conserving water and improving irrigation efficiency.

### **Climate-Smart Agriculture: Building Resilience**

The Zimbabwe Resilience Building Fund (ZRBF) enhances the resilience of vulnerable communities affected by droughts, floods, and climate change. By supporting projects that promote diversified livelihoods, drought-resistant crops, and sustainable land management, ZRBF helps smallholder farmers adapt to climate change.

### **Rotational Grazing: Sustainable Livestock Management**

Rotational grazing optimizes pasture health and productivity by allowing livestock to graze in one section at a time while other sections regenerate. This practice mimics natural grazing patterns, promoting sustainable land management.



Social Sustainability:

**Positive Work Environment:** NEC Agriculture fosters a cooperative culture by involving employers and employees in improving working arrangements. This promotes a harmonious workplace, minimizes conflicts, and enhances farming efficiency and consistency.

**Job Creation:** Higher productivity and diversified farming operations lead to the creation of additional job opportunities. This not only supports the local community by improving livelihoods but also strengthens social sustainability.

In conclusion, Sustainable farming is essential for safeguarding agricultural resources and ensuring food security in a changing climate. By adopting sustainable practices, farmers can enhance resilience, protect natural ecosystems, and contribute to global sustainable development goals. It is imperative for governments, businesses, and consumers to support and promote sustainable farming initiatives, building a resilient and sustainable agricultural future for generations to come.

***Patience Ngirazi is a Receptionist at the NEC Agriculture based at Rusape.***

# Are you doing this one key thing to boost your tobacco productivity?

Cain Kagoro



Tobacco farming is a highly lucrative enterprise, and farmers can realise 100% returns on their investments. Tobacco is a highly valued cash crop due to its export earnings. An estimated 30% of foreign currency generated in Zimbabwe comes from Tobacco exports. Though the crop has high profitability prospects, we must always remember its operations require high management, labour, and capital costs. Suffice to say resurgence and incidence of diseases and pests pose great threats to the tobacco productivity agenda. This article aims to provide some insight for farmers on one sustainable tobacco farming practice, namely stalk destruction, to increase returns.

## **Stalk Destruction: 4 key dates you should know**

Stalk destruction is an essential event in the tobacco production cycle. It has been established that economically consequential pathogens such as Bushy Top Virus (BTV) and Potato Virus Y (PVY) and pests such as Aphids highly thrive and overwinter in Tobacco re-growths. These reduce overall crop output and profits, while increase crop management costs hence reduced returns on investments.

To enhance crop productivity, take note of these key programmes and dates.

- Stalks must be cleared by the 15<sup>th</sup> of May 2024.
- Seeding should not be conducted before 1<sup>st</sup> June 2024
- Planting should not be done before 1<sup>st</sup> September 2024
- Seedbed destruction should be done on or before 31 December 2024

In promoting industrial harmony, NEC Agriculture engages Employers and Employees to ensure their working arrangements enhance higher productivity. Increased productivity ensures farmers are able to meet their obligations as and when they fall due. Obligations include, among others, payment of wages and salaries, allowances and any other benefits. This is only possible if farmers get higher returns per unit area of production. Ultimately this curtails workplace disputes arising from non-payment of benefits. Moreso, with high productivity, farmers employ more workers and diversify operations.

In conclusion, NEC Agriculture encourages its constituencies in Tobacco Industry to adopt good agricultural practices to achieve sustainable crop productivity.



***Cain Kagoro is a Debtors Controller at NEC Agriculture based in Chinhoyi.***

# Wheat Offers a Glimmer of Hope

**Hillary Chirove**

As Zimbabwe navigates the devastating effects of drought, resulting in dismal maize yields, a beacon of hope emerges in the form of promising wheat yields. Despite the challenging conditions, wheat farmers have shown remarkable resilience, planting an astounding 121,769 hectares, a staggering 34% increase from the previous season.

This notable achievement exceeds the target set at the onset of the El Nino-induced drought of 120,000. The irrigated wheat crops proved to be a shrewd predetermination, setting the nation on course to a bountiful harvest of over 600,000 tonnes. This impressive surplus not only satisfies the country's staple requirements but also presents opportunities for value-added wheat products. This surplus will provide a welcome cushion against future uncertainties and aid the much-needed food supply .



The anticipated surplus of 240,000 tonnes will contribute significantly to the [Strategic Grain Reserve, currently standing at approximately 400,000 tonnes](#). This development marks a significant milestone in Zimbabwe's journey towards food security, building on the country's success in meeting local requirements. The Government has since adopted a policy of maintaining wheat surpluses, capitalizing on Zimbabwe's competitive advantage in wheat production.

The wheat crop's remarkable performance offers a glimmer of hope. This achievement is a testament to the determination and hard work of Zimbabwe's wheat farmers, who have demonstrated their ability to adapt and thrive against adversity. As the nation looks to the future, the wheat sector's promise offers a brighter outlook, ensuring a more secure and sustainable food supply for generations to come. In the face of drought, Zimbabwe's wheat farmers have shown that with determination and hard work, hope can be found even in the darkest of times, proving that "every cloud has a silver lining."

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