



NEWSLETTER

SECOND QUARTER 2025



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TO THE AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY IN ZIMBABWE.



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CEO's Foreword



Dear reader,

As the year marches relentlessly onwards, we are pleased to present to you the latest in our offering of our quarterly e-zine to give you the edge in the latest best practices, as well as a glimpse into a few indicators on how we are serving you.

The second quarter of 2025 has seen us pursue the attainment of our strategic goals, and an exciting implementation drive for our historic industry-wide job evaluation programme which launches our employment best practices into the 21st Century in fairness, objectivity, and with scientific rigour. In the same vein, this edition of our newsletter spotlights the role of youth farmers in leading the agritech revolution, and we explore some of the latest applications of emerging technologies in improving agricultural productivity.

Our ordinary functions continue even as we socialise the job evaluation outcomes to the industry, and this includes the conducting of labour inspections as a method of ensuring that conditions of fairness and workplace safety remain at the forefront of the attention of employers and employees alike. A healthy and safe workplace makes for a productive and efficient workplace benefiting both employer and employees.

We do hope that you enjoy our offering in this edition and encourage you to keep reading our newsletter quarterly to keep abreast of the latest efforts of the Council and Secretariat of NEC Agriculture in advancing a peaceful, harmonious, and productive industry for all participants.

Regards

DAVID MADYAUSIKU

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What everyone should know about job evaluation

By Peter Makusha

The National Employment Council for the Agricultural Industry in Zimbabwe takes pride in moving with the modern times by embracing the best employment practices. This commitment to modernising the industry was demonstrated through unveiling the first industrywide job evaluation in recent years. The approach taken was, for the first time, to employ a scientific system – the Patterson System – to interrogate the job titles, job descriptions, their complexity and role in strategic and other decision-making in order to arrive at a fair model of grading.

A significant sample of jobs was interviewed, and the interviews took into account the differences that obtained per subsector, therefore resulting in a tailored catalogue of job titles complete with job descriptions, and segregated by subsector. This, of course, can be a lot to take in. Accordingly, the Council of NEC Agriculture in its wisdom assigned the secretariat to socialise this process to the industry before implementation. The assigned foot soldiers, namely the Designated Agents of the employment council, accordingly embarked on the mission, with the driving capacity of the CEO and management, on the 1st of April 2025. The intent, after the realisation of a solid comprehension of the system by the stakeholders by the 31st of August 2025, for implementation to commence on 01 September 2025. NEC Agriculture has therefore demonstrated its commitment to innovation and to growing the capacity of the industry through bringing the codified jobs in the system up to date to take into account the technological and technical changes that have taken root through the decades since the last comprehensive review through a job evaluation process.

Before being deployed to socialise the programme, Designated Agents were also thoroughly familiarised with the major aspects, implications, and

misconceptions in order to be in the position to field questions from stakeholders in the industry.

Benefits of the Job Evaluation Process

The practical effect the job evaluation process outcome which takes effect on 01 September 2025 is its lessening and elimination of the challenges on hiring and classification of employees into their respective grades. The well-structured jobs with their comprehensive job titles, and job descriptions places the hirer at ease with these specifics of employment.

The Approach

An integrated flexible approach is being employed in the execution of the socialisation exercise. The DAs have the liberty to use both the cluster method or to socialise different entities separately. There is no prescription as to how many entities per cluster can be accommodated, although it remains common cause to apply rationality as regards the magnitude of each cluster. Thus, each DA yields sole discretion in determining viability of the selected modality to conduct the socialisation.

The Achievements to Date

A significant number of farms have been visited, and the job evaluation exercise is already yielding robust discussions on implementation in the farming communities of Zimbabwe, having since been propagated quite well.

Does the Socialisation Impede other Field work Responsibilities?

No. The exercise has been inserted seamlessly into the other duties and responsibilities of Designated Agents such that at once they are able to deal with multiple aspects of their statutory mandate. On any one farm visit, various crucial functions are performed. A job evaluation socialisation visit can be combined with one or more of;

1. A physical farm visit itself
2. Labour inspections and inspection of records

3. Industrial trainings
4. Workers committee election facilitation
- 5. Compliance checks and enforcement of collective bargaining agreements**

Thus, a number of ancillary aims which are nonetheless central to the mandate of Designated Agents of NEC Agriculture may be realised during a single farm visit earmarked for socialisation exercise.

Peter Makusha is a Designated Agent at NEC Agriculture stationed at Gweru Branch.

Technology in Zimbabwe's Agricultural Industry: Shaping the Future of Farming through youth-driven agritech solutions

By Yolanda Veremu and Monalisa Mpambawasha

Zimbabwe's agricultural sector – a vital pillar of the national economy – is undergoing a profound transformation, powered by emerging technologies and driven by the energy and innovation of the country's youth. In response to long-standing challenges like climate change, soil degradation, and limited access to finance and markets, farmers are embracing Agri-tech solutions that are redefining how agriculture is practiced.



Technology as a Catalyst for Agricultural Progress

With climate change disrupting traditional farming methods, the integration of technology is no longer optional – it is essential. Precision agriculture techniques such as GPS-guided machinery, soil moisture sensors, and satellite imaging are enabling farmers to monitor crop health, optimize input use, and increase yields with greater efficiency. Mobile platforms and apps are delivering real-time weather updates, market prices, agronomic advice, and access to financial services – even in remote areas. Innovations like drip

irrigation systems, solar-powered equipment, and data-driven decision-making tools are making agriculture more sustainable, resource-efficient, and climate-resilient. These tools are helping smallholder farmers – who form the backbone of Zimbabwe's agricultural sector – mitigate risk and improve food security.



Youth Leading the Agri-Tech Revolution

A standout feature of this transformation is the role of Zimbabwe's youth. Tech-savvy and entrepreneurial, young farmers are developing and adopting Agri-tech innovations tailored to local challenges. From designing mobile apps that monitor crop health to creating affordable precision irrigation systems, youth-led solutions are energizing the sector. This wave of innovation is making agriculture more attractive to the younger generation, reversing the trend of youth migration away from farming. It is also generating new employment opportunities and fostering "agripreneurship" across the country.

Benefits are being reaped such as:

- **Increased Productivity and Efficiency:** Technologies such as drones, biotechnology, and smart irrigation systems are enabling higher yields and better resource management.

- **Climate Resilience:** Climate-smart practices—like drought-tolerant crops, water harvesting, and conservation agriculture—are helping farmers adapt to environmental uncertainties.
- **Market Access and Financial Inclusion:** Digital platforms are connecting farmers to markets and financial services, improving profitability and decision-making.
- **Youth Empowerment:** Innovation from Zimbabwe's youth is modernizing agriculture while creating jobs and supporting rural development.

Addressing Remaining Challenges

Despite significant progress, several barriers remain. Smallholder farmers continue to face issues such as insecure land tenure, limited access to capital, and underdeveloped infrastructure. To overcome these, coordinated support through targeted policies, private sector partnerships, and investment in rural technology infrastructure is essential. This will enable small-holders to move beyond subsistence towards viable business enterprises and employment enhancement in the industry.

Looking Ahead: A Path Toward Sustainable Growth

As Zimbabwe continues to work to revitalize its agricultural sector, the integration of Agri-tech and the empowerment of youth will be central to achieving sustainable growth. Expanding irrigation, promoting crop diversification – particularly into high-value crops like avocados and macadamia nuts – and scaling up climate-smart innovations are key priorities. With the combined force of technology and youth leadership, Zimbabwe's agriculture sector is poised to become more competitive, resilient, and economically impactful. The future of farming in Zimbabwe is not only digital – it is dynamic, youth-driven, and full of potential!

Yolanda Veremu is a Receptionist based in Karoi, and Monalisa Mpambawasha is an HR student-intern on attachment at NEC Agriculture based in Harare at the Head Office.

Safety and Health in the Farming Community

By Sarafina Shoshore

Statutory Instrument 197 of 2020 is a collective bargaining agreement of seminal importance in the agricultural industry, enforced by NEC Agriculture. Our overarching objective as an inspectorate is to promote a preventative Occupational Safety, Health and Environment (OSHE) culture within agricultural production and related activities. This includes:

- Raising awareness of occupational hazards and risks associated with agriculture.
- Providing guidance on how to effectively manage and control occupational accidents, injuries, and diseases in agricultural production and activities.
- Raising awareness of OSHE issues concerning specific groups of employees, such as women and young workers.
- Promoting positive attitudes and behaviour towards OSHE within the Zimbabwean agriculture sector.

We achieve these objectives through workplace labour inspections, training programs, and meetings with both employers and employees.

Recently, there has been a growing concern regarding the misuse of alcohol and drugs by employees while discharging their duties. This has a profound and detrimental impact on an employee's safety and effectiveness at work, affecting not only the individual but also colleagues and the overall working environment.

Statutory Instrument 197 of 2020 specifically addresses hazards that employers and employees in the agricultural industry may encounter or be exposed to. These hazards can be broadly classified into the following categories:

- Mechanical hazards: Arising from the use of or other contact with dangerous machinery such as tractors, vehicles, harvesters, and cutting and piercing tools.
- Chemical hazards: Resulting from the use of or other contact with chemicals such as pesticides, fertilizers, carcinogenic substances (e.g., arsenical and phenoxy-acetic herbicides), antibiotics, other veterinary products, and various dusts.
- Physical hazards: Including excessive noise and vibration, confined spaces (such as silos, pits, cellars, and tanks), working in tunnels during tobacco curing, slips, trips, and falls from heights, and adverse weather conditions.
- Ergonomic hazards: Related to the use of inadequate equipment and tools, awkward body positions or prolonged static postures, the lifting and carrying of heavy objects leading to musculoskeletal disorders, and repetitive work.
- Biological hazards: Such as transmissible livestock and animal diseases.
- Other hazards: Including drowning, fire, and lightning strikes.

Exposure to these hazards is significantly increased when an individual is intoxicated by alcohol or drugs. This not only affects the individual's safety but also has a ripple effect on the entity and the clients being served, creating a challenging working environment that translates to significant economic losses for the business. As a result, some farmers are now opting to introduce breathalysers at the gate and may even send an employee home until they sober up, recognizing the impaired cognitive functioning caused by intoxication.

Effects of Misuse of Drugs and Alcohol in the Workplace

1. Increased Absenteeism and Lateness: Employees struggling with substance or alcohol abuse often exhibit high rates of absenteeism, frequently due to hangovers, withdrawal symptoms, and addiction. Tardiness is also common, with employees frequently arriving late and leaving early. This inconsistency

burdens co-workers, who must often pick up the slack to ensure set targets are met.

2. Workplace Accidents and Safety Risks: Impaired coordination and judgment due to alcohol and drug abuse significantly increase the risk of accidents and injuries in roles requiring physical alertness. Examples include driving a tractor, welding, mixing chemicals, or operating a tobacco curing tunnel. Impaired judgment endangers not only the individual but also the safety of others.

3. Theft and Financial Issues: Employees with alcohol and substance abuse issues frequently borrow money from colleagues and request salary advances, often leaving them with no salary to take home at the end of the month. They may resort to stealing property from the employer to sell for money to purchase alcohol or drugs.

4. Increased Healthcare Costs and High Turnover: Substance abuse often leads to related illnesses, increasing healthcare costs for the employer. Additionally, employees struggling with addiction often find it difficult to maintain consistent employment, leading to a high turnover rate, which necessitates constant recruitment and training. Production periods can also be disturbed due to the need to conduct disciplinary hearings.

Role of Employers in Addressing Alcohol and Drug Misuse

Employers play a crucial role in addressing the issues of alcohol and drug abuse in the workplace by:

- Implementing clear workplace policies on maintaining a drug and alcohol-free working environment.
- Establishing education and prevention programs to raise awareness about the risks of drug and alcohol abuse in the workplace.
- Providing training on the provisions of Statutory Instrument 197 of 2020.

- Offering support, counselling, or referral services to employees struggling with alcohol or drug abuse.
- Where legal grounds exist, implementing drug testing and the use of breathalysers.

By proactively addressing the misuse of drugs and alcohol in the workplace, employers can protect their employees from significant harm and encourage adherence to Safety and Health practices that improve well-being and enhance overall workplace effectiveness.

Sarafina Shoshore is a Designated Agent at NEC Agriculture stationed at the Karoi Branch

Labour Inspections: Promoting Fairness and Safety in Agriculture

By Tapiwa Svuvure

Labour inspections remain one of the most critical tools in ensuring that agricultural workers operate in safe, fair, and legally compliant environments. As NEC Agriculture Zimbabwe, we are intensifying our inspection efforts across all subsectors to promote decent work and improve industrial harmony.

Why Inspections Matter

Agriculture is the backbone of Zimbabwe's economy, and with thousands employed across estates, farms, and agro-industries, protecting workers' rights and employer interests is paramount. Inspections help us to:

- Ensure compliance with wage agreements
- Monitor occupational safety and health standards
- Identify gaps in employment contracts and documentation
- Prevent child labour and exploitative practices
- Encourage best labour practices that boost productivity

Common Findings in the Field

Our inspection teams have noted several recurring issues during recent visits:

- Failure to display wage schedules publicly
- Non-issuance of contracts of employment
- Inadequate provision of protective clothing
- Underpayment of wages, especially in seasonal roles
- Lack of grievance handling procedures

We are working hand-in-hand with farm owners to address these challenges constructively.

The Way Forward: Collaboration Over Punishment

Inspections are not meant to punish but to guide. Our goal is to support both employers and employees in complying with the law. We offer:

- On-site advisory services
- Training on safety, dispute resolution, and disciplinary handling
- Follow-up visits to monitor progress

We urge all employers to welcome NEC inspectors, make records available, and view inspections as a way to improve operations and worker satisfaction. Employers should remember that Designated Agents of employment councils are empowered under the Labour Act section 63 to enter upon any premises to conduct their work and hindering them in doing so is criminalised by the Act. In order not to fall foul of the law, employers are requested to cooperate with designated agents in conducting their work and to understand that inspections are not witch-hunts but assist the farmer to optimise their operations by being legally compliant. The cost of non-compliance can ultimately be greater than compliance because of the legal consequences that attach to non-compliance!

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