



Livestock & Meat Advisory Council

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OVERVIEW

A consortium of international organisations including Welthungerhilfe WHH), Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV) and International Crops Research Institute for Semi-arid Tropics (ICRISAT) in partnership with local non-governmental organisations Sustainable Agriculture Trust (SAT) and Community Technology Development Organisation (CTDO) have started to implement the EU funded Zimbabwe Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (ZAKIS) project.

The project is part of the EU funded Zimbabwe Agricultural Growth Programme (ZAGP). The purpose of the project is to redesign agricultural innovation delivery mechanisms to farmers through effective coordination between research organisations, universities, agricultural colleges and public and private extension service providers.

A project inception stakeholder meeting was held at Gwebi College in October, drawing attendance from development practitioners as well as public and private sector representatives. It was proposed that two physical Agricultural Centres of Excellence (ACE) – one each in the north and south of the country – be established to foster close coordination between private, civic and public sectors.

At the ZAGP Steering Committee meeting held on 13th November, it was agreed that Matopos Research Station and Chibero Agricultural College be adopted as the two regional Centres of Excellence. In early 2019 the project implementing partners will start investments in technology demonstration units at the two sites and discussions with private sector on investing in the two ACEs is ongoing.

Through its participation in both the ZAGP Steering Committee as well as the ZAKIS Technical Committee, LMAC is well placed to ensure livestock related innovation delivery systems are redesigned to ensure steady flow of good quality knowledge products to livestock farmers.

Council Meeting of the Zimbabwe Poultry Association

The escalating cost of stockfeed in the livestock production equation, largely driven by increased soya bean procurement costs, was the main focus of discussion. Producers lamented that this is driving up the production cost of both broiler meat (which achieved an all-time high in the third quarter of 2018) and egg production.

A notable achievement in the poultry industry is that for the first time since the outbreak of Avian Influenza last year, local production of hatching eggs has exceeded imports of hatching eggs required for the poultry breeder industry. Along with the increased day-old chick supply to the market which has generated significant recovery in small-scale production, this is an important sign that the ZPA strategy to rebuild the country's poultry production capacity has borne fruit in 2018.

The Department of Veterinary Services (DVS) noted that outbreaks of Newcastle Disease is on the rise. There is also increased runting and stunting in smallholder flocks and producers are urged to practice good hygiene, with all-in, all-out stocking, and not use just one type of disinfectant continuously, but rotate different brands.

Passive surveillance on Avian Influenza kept up by DVS confirms that Zimbabwe is free of this disease. With the disease still active in South Africa, stringent bio-security must still be practised.

Annual General Meeting of the Mashona Cattle Society

Record attendance at the AGM of the Mashona Cattle Society (MCS) indicates growing recognition of the importance of Zimbabwe's indigenous cattle breeds under harsh farming conditions. The AGM event held at Henderson Research Institute (HRI), Mazowe, was an opportunity for cattle breeders and researchers to interact and to view the fine Henderson Mashona Herd.

In his introductory remarks, Acting Director of Livestock and Pastures, Mr Chamisa observed that the Mashona breed is an underutilised national asset, also noting that the higher production potential of the smallest cattle breed is becoming more widely recognised.

The ability of Mashona cattle to thrive and outperform other breeds under harsh conditions (borne out by the longest running research trial on cattle in Africa, conducted in Zimbabwe at Matopos Research Station), was highlighted in a presentation by the General Manager of Zimbabwe Herd Book (ZHB), Dr Mario Beffa. Emphasising that all cattle breeds have their own

special attributes, he posed the question - “Do you change the breed to suit your environment or do you change the environment to suit your breed?” Breeds like the Mashona, Nguni and Tuli perform better than exotic breeds under harsh conditions in rural Zimbabwe.

Also highlighted was the Open Appendix System devised by ZHB, which introduces a way for owners of Mashona cattle to upgrade their animals to pedigree status (for ZHB registration) in a four generational mating programme.

The Mashona Cattle Society remains very active and:

- Has updated the Mashona Cattle Handbook in 2018;
- Continues to work closely with research and training institutes to upgrade Mashona cattle herds there; and
- Registered new recruits for MSC Breed Inspection training in 2019.