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**REPORT OF THE**

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**THEMATIC COMMITTEE ON PEACE AND SECURITY**

**ON THE**

**PREPAREDNESS OF THE GRAIN MARKETING BOARD (GMB) AND THE SUCCESS  
OF THE COMMAND AGRICULTURE PROGRAMME**

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**THIRD SESSION: EIGHTH PARLIAMENT**

**PRESENTED TO PARLIAMENT**

**JULY 2017**

**ORDERED IN TERMS OF STANDING ORDER No. 17:**

- i. At the commencement of every session, there shall be as many committees to be designated according to government portfolios to as the Standing Rules and Orders Committee may deem fit.
- ii. It shall be the function of such committees to examine expenditure administration and policy of government departments and other matters falling under their jurisdictions as Parliament may, by resolution determine
- iii. The members of such committees shall be appointed by the Standing Rules and Orders Committee, from one or both Houses of Parliament, and such appointments shall take into account the expressed interests or expertise of the Members and Senators and the political and gender composition of Parliament.
- iv. Each select committee shall be known by the portfolio determined for it by the Standing Rules and Orders Committee.

## **TERMS OF REFERENCE OF PORTFOLIO COMMITTEES S.O 160**

Subject to these Standing Orders a Portfolio Committee shall:

- i. Consider and deal with all Bills and Statutory Instruments or other matters which are referred to it by or under a resolution of the House or by the Speaker;
- ii. Consider or deal with an appropriation or money bill or any aspect of an appropriation or money bill referred to it by these Standing Orders or by or under resolution of this House;
- iii. Monitor, investigate, inquire into and make recommendations relating to any aspect of the legislative programme, budget, rationalization, policy formulation or any other matter it may consider relevant of the government department falling within the category of affairs assigned to it, and may for that purpose consult and liaise with such a department;
- iv. Consider or deal with all international treaties, conventions and agreements relevant to it, which are from time to time negotiated, entered into or agreed upon.

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The Command Agriculture Programme, an import substitution-led industrialization concept deliberately is meant to empower local producers of cereal crops, particularly maize, so as to achieve national food security. In the process, boosting capacity of farmers as well as the creation of employment for thousands of people in the sector. Introduced for the 2016/17 agricultural summer season, the programme is expected to produce maize bumper harvest. From 28 May 2017 to 2 June 2017, the Thematic Committee on Peace and Security conducted fact finding visits to selected Command Agriculture Programme beneficiaries to ascertain the success of the programme. The Committee also toured selected GMB depots in the provinces to assess their state of preparedness to handle the expected 2016/17 bumper harvest. This report provides the Committees' major findings, conclusions and recommendations.

## **2.0 OBJECTIVES OF CONDUCTING THE TOURS**

The Committee's fact finding visit was guided by the following objectives:

- To assess GMB's state of preparedness to handle the expected 2016/17 bumper harvest.
- To ascertain the success of the Command Agriculture contracted farmers in producing the expected maize.
- To appreciate the challenges affecting the smooth implementation of Command Agriculture Programme in the provinces.

## **3.0 METHODOLOGY**

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2017, the Thematic Committee on Peace and Security received oral submissions from the Ministry Agriculture, Mechanization and Irrigation Development. From 28 May to 2 June 2017, the Committee visited, received submissions, and toured the GMB depots and farms in the following provinces: GMB Gweru Depot - Go Beer Farm (Midlands Province); GMB Mvuma - Ziro Farm (Midlands Province); GMB Masvingo Depot - Lamonde Farm and Bushmit Farm; Nyika GMB Depot (Masvingo Province); GMB Rusape – Gijima Farm

(Manicaland Province); GMB Timbermills Depot – Merrifield Farm and Pirsevale Farm (Mashonaland East); GMB Lionsden – Mavuso Mudau Farm and Chipfundi Farm (Mashonaland West); GMB Banket – Nyatimhenyu Farm (Mashonaland West); GMB Concession – Belford Estate North Farm and Zanadu Farm; GMB Bindura – Chawagona ZPS Farm; and GMB Aspindale.

#### **4.0 BACKGROUND**

Agriculture is the backbone of Zimbabwe's economy. Zimbabweans remain largely a rural people who derive their livelihood from agriculture and other related economic activities. At its peak the sector provides employment and income for 60-70% of the population, supplies 60% of the raw materials required by the industrial sector and contributes 40% of total export earnings. Be that as it may, in the previous years, cereal productivity in the farms, resettlement and communal areas, have not been at optimum level. In 2014/2015, Zimbabwe was one of the worst affected countries by the driest year in decades in Southern Africa - including Malawi, Zambia and South Africa. This made the country food insecure. The government was compelled to spend over US\$200 million on food imports to take care of food requirements of at least 2.4million citizens. Secondly, failure to prepare land and plant on time because of the shortages of or failure to procure seeds and fertilizers by farmers, and or due to lack of machinery, resulted in dwindling crop yields for some time in the country.

As stipulated in the Comprehensive Agricultural Policy Framework (2012-2032), the main challenges facing the agricultural sector include, but not limited to: (i) low productivity; (ii) low level of farming skills amongst farmers; (iii) high production costs; (iv) lack of and/or limited availability of suitable finance schemes from commercial banks; and (v) shortages of crop inputs such as fertilizer; just to mention a few. These challenges compromised GMB's mandate to maintain minimum strategic reserves of at least 500 000 tonnes of grain in physical stock. National maize requirements for consumption are 1 800 000 tonnes/annum. Wheat, another strategic grain food crop, its consumption requirements are in the range of 350 000 – 450 000 tonnes /annum.

Against this backdrop, the Zimbabwe's Special Maize Programme Production for Import Substitution (also referred to as Command Agriculture) was introduced in the 2016/17 agricultural season, to among other things: ensure food security and maize supply self-sufficiency. The \$500 million Command Agriculture Scheme, is projected to produce in excess of 2 million tons of maize on 400 000 hectares of land. To ascertain the achievements of the Command Agriculture Programme by its beneficiaries, the Thematic Committee on Peace and Security conducted the fact finding visits and tour of the selected GMB depots and farms in seven provinces as outlined above.

## **5.0 COMMITTEE FINDINGS**

### **5.1 GMB DEPOTS PREPAREDNESS**

The Committee was pleased to note that GMB depots in the provinces were fully prepared to receive the anticipated bumper harvest, both from farmers contracted under Command Agriculture and other farmers. GMB depots visited by the Committee, Gweru GMB, Mvuma GMB, and other depots in Masvingo, Nyika Growth Point, Rusape and Timbermills GMB in Mashonaland East, were receiving new rail slippers and tarpaulin covering material for outdoor maize storage (hard surface storage). In addition, the silos at Lionsden GMB Depot, Concession GMB Depot and GMB Aspindale had undergone overhaul refurbishment, except water proofing which is due for completion by August before the rain season.

### **5.2 MAIZE BUMPER HARVEST**

The Committee was further pleased to note that due to Command Agriculture Programme most, if not all GMB depots, are anticipating to receive huge maize deliveries from contracted farmers. At Bindura GMB Depot, Mashonaland Central, the Committee was informed that the province was allocated an area of 105 000 hectares under Command Agriculture. In terms of harvest, command maize production was estimated to be at 141 176 tonnes, in a province that requires 130 776 tonnes for food requirements per annum. Thus, there is a surplus of 10 400 tonnes in the province. At Lionsden, GMB Depot, Mashonaland West, the

Committee was informed that 40 515.727 metric tonnes were expected, up from 10 118.388 metric tonnes received during the 2015/2016 summer season. At Timber Mills GMB Depot, Mashonaland East, it was reported that 15 000 metric tonnes were expected from farmers contracted under Command Agriculture alone. The Committee thus, was of the view that despite challenges that are referred to below, the Command Agriculture Programme resulted in the tremendous expansion of hectares under maize and like to result in a bumper harvest that will surpass 2million tonnes.

### **5.3 SHORTAGES OF INPUTS**

In all the provinces, and at all the GMB depots visited by the Committee, late supply or no supply of inputs (basal fertilizer, top dressing fertilizer, herbicides and fuel) and inadequate supply of the right variety of seed maize to contracted farmers, was mentioned as the main challenge of the Command Agriculture Programme. In Masvingo Province at Lamonde Farm and Bushmit Farm, the Committee was informed that instead of providing fuel at the rate of 100 liters per hectare, farmers were given at reduced rate of 60 liters per hectare. Command Agriculture Programme still owes these farmers the standing balance of fuel that was supposed to have been supplied for land tillage services. Farmers whose farms were toured by the Committee reported that they had to plant maize seed variety that they could lay hands on or that had been supplied under Command Agriculture. In most cases the 727 variety was in short supply, and farmers ended up planting 637 variety. Depending on the region, the shortage of appropriate seed compromised the yield per hectare. In Mashonaland Central, at Concession GMB Depot, the Committee was informed that long delays at fertilizer factories in Harare took much of farmers' time. This then gave rise to corruption, and also that Agritex Extension workers spent too much time at command centers instead of giving instruction and training farmers in the fields. In addition, the Committee was told at Lionsden GMB Depot and in Mashonaland East that billing and costing of inputs given to contracted farmers was slowed and complicated by the fact that farmers in the same district were taking inputs from different collection points: some farmers were collecting inputs at Lionsden GMB Depot, others from Harare, and also from inputs suppliers like Sable Chemeical in Kwekwe, Midlands, and lime was collected from Rushinga

in Mashonaland Central.

#### **5.4 PAPER WORK AND SLOW RELEASE OF CONTRACT FORMS**

The Committee was informed that the process of farms selection for Command Agriculture and related documentation was riddled with too much manual paper work. In particular, it was mentioned to the Committee that there was slow release of contract forms, and that 6 vouchers were needed per input during distribution.

#### **5.5 AGRICULTURAL EQUIPMENT SHORTAGES**

The Committee was also concerned about the challenge related to shortage of tillage tractors and other critical equipment. While lack of tractors delayed land preparation and planting process, the Committee observed that shortage of combine harvesters and driers is delaying harvest process in all provinces. The slow maize harvests is delaying winter wheat planting since maize fields are not being freed for wheat planting. At Chawagona ZPS Farm, Bindura, Mashonaland Central, the Committee was informed that using manual labor, it would take up to October to harvest the 120 hectares of maize. The Committee was further concerned that the late payment of tillage services by Command Agriculture was a drawback.

The Committee was informed that in light of the machinery shortages, Command Agriculture Programme is in the process of equipping farmers with critical machinery, although a lot need to be done in this regard. In Manicaland Province, at Gijima Farm, the Committee was informed that a mechanization programme was underway to repair 15 combine harvesters and 8 center pivots in the province. To address shortage of agricultural equipment in the farms, the Committee was further informed that plans were at an advanced stage to set up a pivot manufacturing plant in Masasa, Harare.

#### **6.0 COMMITTEE OBSERVATIONS**

- 1) That all GMB silos had undergone refurbishment, except waterproofing

which would be completed by August 2017.

- 2) That Mashonaland Central anticipated a surplus of about 10 000 tons of maize due to Command Agriculture.
- 3) That the Command Agriculture Program has resulted in a tremendous expansion of hectares under maize from previous years.
- 4) That there was inadequate supply of the right variety of maize seed to contracted farmers.
- 5) That during the current season Agritex Officers spent too much time at command centers instead of training and advising farmers on the ground.
- 6) That billing and costing of inputs given to contracted farmers was slowed and complicated by the fact that farmers from the same district were taking inputs from different collection points.
- 7) That the program's documentation and processes were riddled with too much manual paper work.
- 8) That the program witnessed a shortage of tillage tractors and other critical equipment.
- 9) That GMB paid farmers on time that delivered their maize during the 2015/16 season.
- 10) That weevils' had already began attacking maize still in the in the field in some areas like Chawagona ZPS farm in Bindura.
- 11) That Government was subsidizing at the output level of the chain of production instead of the input level.

## **7.0 CONCLUSION**

Considering the speed with which the Command Agriculture was rolled out and its expected maize production projected to be in excess of two million metric tonnes, the programme is, to a greater extent, successful in accomplishing its objectives. Under the programme, hectareage under maize was tremendously expanded to close to the anticipated 400 000 hectares, both dry and irrigated land. The objective of the programme, namely: to produce maize locally and reduce grain imports, was

achieved. However, the Committee concluded that a number of challenges continue to constrain the full realisation of the targets of the programme: late supply or no supply of inputs to contracted farmers; shortage of tillage tractors and other key equipment including combine harvesters, driers and pivots; late payment of rendered services such as payment of tillage services; and shortage of transport for the programme officers, just to mention the main ones.

## **8.0 COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS**

Given the Committee findings and the conclusion derived, the following recommendations are pertinent in order to ensure the success of the forth coming second phase of the programme.

- 1) Inputs for the 2017/18 summer farming season should be with the farmers as a full package by the end of September 2017. This will ensure that farmers plant in time. Early planting, in turn, will allow all maize variety adequate time to mature.
- 2) The Command Agriculture Programme should have mechanization as its critical component. Farmers should be assisted to get equipment: tractors, planters, combine harvesters, driers, and irrigation equipment, among others. This can best be achieved through affordable loan facilities, since most farmers have demonstrated capacity to purchase their equipment once they produce and are paid on time. In the meantime, critical equipment which include combine harvesters and driers, can be deployed at central GMB or collection points, so that farmers in the vicinity can make use of such machineries at a fee. In addition, there are lots of equipment in the farms, with minor mechanical defects, that are lying idle. The department of mechanization, through Command Agriculture team on the ground, should locate such equipment and repair them so that farmers can make use of them in the forth coming summer season. To make this possible, the Public Service Commission should decentralize the department of irrigation and mechanization since they are currently based at provinces making it expensive for them to offer services to districts.
- 3) The Command Agriculture Programme Team, in particular the AGRITEX extension officers,

should be provided with adequate vehicles and motor cycles to make them efficiently mobile by the time the second phase begins. This is critical to ensure that they attend to farmers in need of information, assistance and monitoring services. Provision should be made so that all ministerial vehicles that are being used for Command Agriculture Programme duties should be urgently serviced to improve general mobility of responsible officers.

- 4) Command Agriculture should improve its inputs distributive efficiency to the full benefits of all farmers, big and small. All essential inputs, in their varieties, should be delivered at central GMB distribution points timely for collection by farmers. This is vital to avoid a situation where farmers end up going to Harare or to suppliers such as Sable Chemicals in Kwekwe, to collect seeds and fertilizers, and or Rushinga to collect lime, at their own cost. Collection of inputs by farmers from the same central point will greatly improve the billing and costing and the reconciliation of financial records by the Command Agriculture team in provinces. Currently documentation and billing of inputs given to farmers is proving difficult since farmers, in the same district, took inputs from different collection points.
- 5) That contracted farmers, and indeed farmers on other programmes, should conduct soil tests on their farms, to ascertain the type and precise quantities of fertilizer blends to apply and provide the results before they are given inputs for the second phase.
- 6) The Command Agriculture Programme staff, who under difficult circumstances and shortage of motor vehicles and other equipment, continue to work, even during weekends and holidays, with unwavering dedication to duty, should be given incentives by giving them Traveling and Subsistence Allowances beginning the 2017/18 farming season.
- 7) Government should provide farmers with the right maize seed varieties and required inputs quantities for the 2017/18 farming season.
- 8) GMB depots should maintain the momentum gathered in paying contracted farmers within 14 days of the delivery of their produce. This will enable them to embark on winter crop and

also acquire the critical inputs in preparation for the next summer crop. Above all, prompt payment will inject confidence in farmers interested in engaging with the Command Agriculture Programme.

- 9) In order to achieve the recommendations stipulated above, there is need to put in place a cropping calendar. Among other things, the calendar shall provide guidance to contracted farmers, Command Agriculture provincial teams, and inputs manufacturers and suppliers:
- (i) dates for the supply of inputs (fertilizers, chemicals, lime, seeds) to farmers by August for summer crop;
  - (ii) timely accessing of ploughing, disking and harrowing services;
  - coordinated and effective application of pesticides to eradicate pests;
  - (iii) timed harvesting and collection of maize to free irrigation fields for winter wheat crop