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## ZAGP News

### The Newsletter for the Zimbabwe Agricultural Growth Programme (ZAGP)

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It is our pleasure to welcome you to the February 2020 issue of **ZAGP News**. This is the 10th issue of the newsletter.

In this issue, we focus on the [Beef Enterprise Strengthening and Transformation \(BEST\)](#) project. We take an in-depth look at the progress made to date as the project assists farmers to boost productivity and engage in commercial agriculture and in the process, strengthening the beef value chain.

The livestock sector is facing a number of challenges hampering its growth and preventing farmers and other players in the livestock value chain from reaping the full benefits from their activities. The 2019-20 agricultural season has been a difficult year for the sector. The climate change induced drought and the disease outbreaks that affected various parts of the country have devastated cattle production.

Add to that, the spiralling production and regulatory costs, the

beef value chain actors are left in a difficult position. We feature how BEST is working to find sustainable ways of assisting beef cattle producers to viably maintain their agribusinesses amidst the myriad of challenges they face.

We also share updates from the other projects under ZAGP. In this issue, we also cover the tour of the Balu Cattle Business Centre (CBC) by the Head of Delegation and Ambassador of the European Union Delegation to Zimbabwe, Timo Olkkonen and the Minister Lands, Agriculture, Water and Rural Resettlement, Hon. Perrance Shiri.

We welcome feedback on this, and future issues of the publication. Thank you, and enjoy reading!

(Cover photo: Centre Pivot erected at the Balu Cattle Business Centre in Umgusa district, Matabeleland North province).

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**ZAGP NEWS FOCUS****Beef Enterprise Strengthening and Transformation (BEST)****FODDER PRODUCTION:  
A RESPONSE TO  
CLIMATE CHANGE**

*Farmers in Makoni district, Manicaland province, scouting for pests and diseases in a velvet bean plot.*

The effects of climate change are beginning to play out and manifest themselves clearly for all to see. Two major climatic changes have been self-evident; rising global and local temperatures as well as a significant decrease in precipitation and its erratic geographical spread. These vagaries of weather have not spared farmers under the BEST project target areas as shown by the poor performance of their crop fields including the fodder demonstration plots. However, the unintended consequence of this harsh climatic condition has been the clear demonstration that some fodder crops actually perform better under poor rainfall circumstances than the cereals traditionally grown by farmers.

One such drought tolerant crop is the velvet bean (*Mucuna Pruriens*). It has been observed by the farmers and extension workers supervising the BEST demonstration plots, that the velvet bean crop seems to tolerate the drier conditions much better than the maize crop. The velvet bean crop has been observed to maintain good growth when the maize is exhibiting very clear signs of moisture stress. In some cases, the maize crop has reached permanent wilting point while velvet beans are still in a good state. This provides an important lesson for livestock farmers especially in the drier parts of the country which receive very little rainfall. These farmers will be advised to increase the size of the fields for fodder crops such as velvet beans as these are likely to produce consistently better results than cereals. Also, it is good agronomic practice to intercrop velvet beans with cereals so that it provides live mulch especially under poor rainfall conditions, as well as contributing significantly to nitrogen levels for following crops.

Besides the mulching effect, velvet beans intercropped with other crops help to control weeds as the canopy helps to suffocate the weeds. In times of poor rainfall, the canopy from the velvet bean crop will ensure that the moisture is preserved for a longer time and the cereals will produce much better yields than when mono-cropped. With these positive characteristics, velvet beans are a suitable fodder crop for livestock farmers in marginal areas with harsh climatic conditions. The crop is a definite drought mitigation solution for livestock farmers as it provides enough herbage to supplement animals during the lean season and maintain a good body condition score.

## ZAGP NEWS FOCUS

### Beef Enterprise Strengthening and Transformation (BEST)

The BEST project promotes fodder production as a good animal husbandry practice, which not only prevents livestock losses through poverty deaths, but ensures that animals maintain good body condition and are then able to produce calves every year. Fodder production, as one of the pillars of BEST project, will also enable farmers to condition their animals before they are inducted into a pen feeding programme. This means the cost of pen fattening will be significantly reduced making the economics of pen fattening worthwhile. Also herbage from leguminous fodder crops can be mixed with cereal stover to produce a low cost feed that is balanced for both protein and energy. Fodder production should therefore be the norm rather than exception for livestock farmers if they want to keep their animals alive and also to improve productivity of their herds.



BEST is establishing fodder demonstration plots in the 10 target districts to serve as learning hubs to carry out fodder production.



Farmers have adopted previously unknown fodder crops in their field in a bid to save their livestock from recurrent droughts. A velvet bean crop in Ward 17 in Gokwe South district, Midlands province.



Sizani farmers' group in Gokwe South's Ward 17 has planted sorghum, velvet beans, lablab, sun hemp, cowpeas and sunflower. In the background is a two-hectare plot where they have planted sunflower.

## ZAGP NEWS FOCUS

### Beef Enterprise Strengthening and Transformation (BEST)



## LEAD FARMER EXTENSION APPROACH WIDENS ADOPTION OF GROWING FODDER CROPS

Nickson Dube and his wife Sikhangeli. Dube is one of the selected lead farmers mentoring 10 other farmers including women and youths.

For Nickson Dube, a 53-year-old farmer in Ward 17 in Gokwe South district, growing fodder for his beef cattle was quite unimaginable. Dube represents a new breed of livestock producers who have ventured into the production of previously unknown nutritious cattle-feeding fodder crops.

For years, Dube who owns a herd of 35 cattle, has grappled with rearing his livestock in a marginal area with low rainfall and therefore poor forage production, leading to low productivity.

In view of the continued rising stock feed costs for supplementing beef cattle during perennial dry spells, the BEST project started an initiative to demonstrate forage and fodder production using the lead farmer extension approach.

Forage crops have been widely promoted to provide feed resources to livestock, particularly during the dry season and in years of low precipitation. However, production of forage crops among the smallholder farmers remains low, especially in areas that receive low rainfall.

The BEST project procured fodder seeds for velvet beans, sun hemp, lablab, cow peas, Katambora Rhodes grass, sorghum and Sabi panicum. The seeds were distributed to 10 selected lead farmers in the BEST targeted districts who were prepared to work with at least 10 other farmers in a farmer to farmer extension approach.

These seeds were used to establish fodder demonstration plots as knowledge transfer hubs.

Dube is one of the selected lead farmers mentoring 10 other farmers including women and youths. Together, they have formed the Sizani farmers' group and have planted at least 1.8 hectares of sorghum, 0.6 hectares of velvet beans, 0.1 hectares of lablab, 0.2 hectares of sun hemp, 0.1 hectares of cowpeas and 2 hectares of sunflower.

Despite the low rainfall received to date in the district, most of the fodder crops have survived and are now at flowering stage.

Showing his cattle in a pen just a stone's throw from his homestead, it is evident that Dube is a passionate livestock farmer as shown by with a herd with a good body condition score.

## ZAGP NEWS FOCUS

### Beef Enterprise Strengthening and Transformation (BEST)

"It's my first time to grow fodder for my cattle. Previously, I would leave my cattle to graze in depleted rangelands, which have insufficient food for them", he said.

Gokwe South district, like most communal areas in Zimbabwe, is experiencing poverty related cattle deaths as a result of the effects of climate change. Consequently, farmers like Dube are receiving poor returns after selling their cattle due to poor body condition.

"As farmers, we are being forced to sell our cattle for as low as US\$50 to middlemen who proceed to sell them on to unlicensed abattoirs and butcheries", said Dube.

Through assistance from BEST, Dube and many other farmers in Makoni, Buhera, Shurugwi, Mount Darwin, Gokwe South, Kwekwe, Lupane, Umgusa, Mwenezi and Chiredzi districts have grown fodder crops to feed their cattle during dry season. As part of the lead farmer extension model, group members gather and assist with labour at the demonstration plot. In return each member will receive fodder seeds for their own use in the coming season and some hay bales for their animals. BEST is working with local extension personnel offering technical advice and mentorship to the farmers. The demonstration plots will also benefit surrounding farmers and communities who will draw lessons from them.

"This project has opened our eyes through the trainings that have been given to us. Come the lean season, my cattle will not starve even when there is no grazing left in the rangelands. I already have plans to use the harvested crop to make low cost feed formulations and I also intend to fatten a few steers for the market as well as to do priority feeding. This will ensure that we fetch lucrative prices for our animals on the market," said Dube in conclusion.

The key focus is on commercialising beef production in Zimbabwe for improved productivity and increased overall contribution to national economic growth.



Dube with part of his herd. Through fodder production and good animal husbandry practices, farmers will be able to fetch lucrative prices for their animals on the market.

## ZAGP NEWS FOCUS

### Beef Enterprise Strengthening and Transformation (BEST)

#### European Union Ambassador to Zimbabwe Tours the Balu Cattle Business Centre (CBC)

The Head of Delegation and Ambassador of the European Union Delegation to Zimbabwe, Timo Olkkonen and the Minister Lands, Agriculture, Water and Rural Resettlement, Hon Perrance Shiri recently toured the Balu Cattle Business Centre (CBC) in Umgusa district in Matabeleland North province. The Balu CBC is managed by the Balu Pecan and Livestock Company and will grow irrigated fodder under a 50-hectare centre pivot.

The CBC is located at Balu Estate, 30km North of Bulawayo City. Balu is owned by the Agricultural and Rural Development Authority (ARDA), a parastatal under the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture Water, Climate and Rural Resettlement. The farm is leased to Balu Pecan and Livestock Company under the government's Public Private Partnership lease agreement with ARDA.

The purpose was to monitor progress on pasture irrigation and to improve understanding of the Cattle Business Centre concept and the irrigated pasture models being implemented by the BEST project. In addition, the delegation wanted to interact with Umgusa cattle farmers and appreciate any challenges impeding them to profitably produce beef cattle.

The Ambassador and the Minister got an appreciation of the progress made in the CBC's construction where BEST is working in collaboration with the private sector partner, local stakeholders and surrounding communities.

Significant progress has been made in setting up infrastructure which included the centre pivot, water pipeline, electric power line, land preparation and increasing the water holding capacity of the dam.

Addressing the stakeholders gathered at the site, the Ambassador Olkkonen noted that ZAGP falls under the EU's development cooperation where agriculture is one of the priority sectors.

"Agriculture has a tremendous potential for boosting economic growth for Zimbabwe and could be an engine for economic growth. ZAGP is looking at the commercialisation to boost the value chains under the livestock sector."

He added that ZAGP is introducing innovative methods to make livestock rearing more efficient, sustainable, competitive and more commercially oriented which would then generate economic growth for country.



Ambassador, Timo Olkkonen (centre) listening to the presentation by the Balu Pecan and Livestock Company Managing Director, Dr Jeremy Hubert.

## ZAGP NEWS FOCUS

### Beef Enterprise Strengthening and Transformation (BEST)

#### European Union Ambassador to Zimbabwe Tours the Balu Cattle Business Centre (CBC)

“What I have seen here is very impressive. I hope that this CBC will generate economic prosperity for the Umgusa area”, said the Ambassador in conclusion.

Key messages and discussions were centred on partnerships, innovative solutions to farmers’ problems, productivity enhancement and boosting agricultural production and national economic growth.

Through the CBCs, BEST offers services to the small-scale farmers, creating hubs where they can access goods and services such as veterinary drugs and medicines, public and private sector extension services, breeding services, access to input and output markets and information on good animal husbandry among others. The key focus is on commercialising beef production in Zimbabwe for improved productivity and increased overall contribution to national economic growth.

The irrigated pasture production is one response to improving access to good quality feed for beef farmers. Centre pivot irrigated pasture systems are being piloted under the BEST project in Mwenezi and Umgusa districts in Masvingo and Matabeleland North provinces respectively as an innovative service to be offered to beef farmers.

The CBCs will become a teaching unit for extension providers

and farmers as well as a centre for grazing cattle for farmers.

Farmers can learn from the CBC and replicate the good agricultural practices taught on their respective farms. The 50-hectare irrigated pasture at Balu estate has capacity to support at least 400 livestock units (LU) at full scale production when compared to veld production of 5 hectares supporting 1 LU. This leads to an increase in the productivity of the land.

According to Minister Shiri, the irrigated pasture system at Balu estate has the potential to transform the lives of smallholder farmers in Umgusa district.

“Lessons learnt from the other provinces indicate that beef cattle finishing from pasture grazing has the potential to significantly improve incomes of beef farmers, through improving the condition of beef cattle to attain higher grades at slaughter”, he noted.

The Minister, in the company of the Permanent Secretary, Honourable Dr John Basera, thanked the EU for financing innovative solutions that are aimed at improving agricultural production in Zimbabwe.

He challenged farmers to improve livestock productivity and to implement strategies that reduce cattle mortalities such growing fodder crops for their cattle.



Stakeholders getting a brief on the centre pivot system installed on the 50-hectare plot at the Balu CBC.

## PROJECT UPDATES



*Anthony Mutenda seen here posing with some of the crops he uses as supplementary feed for his goats.*

Located just over 220 kilometres north east of Harare, Mudzi is one of the hottest and driest districts in Zimbabwe, incessant droughts have ravaged the district resulting in food insecurity for humans and livestock alike. Most sources of water have disappeared and grazing land for livestock is depleted. Many in the district have resorted to rearing goats as a coping strategy and cushion against the adverse impacts of the droughts.

One such farmer is Anthony Mutenda from Ward 17, Mukota D who boasts of a 64-doe unit from a total of 96 goats. In response to the shortage of good pastures, Mutenda resorted to planting fodder to supplement feed for his bulging herd of goats.

"I procured some seeds that I planted as fodder to supplement my goat herd, these include velvet beans, lab-lab, cow peas as well as baobab fruit which I roast and mix with other locally available feed materials," said Mutenda.

This good agricultural practise has ensured that Mutenda is able to continue his goat business given the increasing price of feeds obtaining in the market. The proceeds Mutenda is making, are enabling him to reinvest in his goat business while meeting his financial commitments such as children's tuition fees. Mutenda was selected to be one of the 1000 anchor farmers in the 12 districts where the goat value chain component of the [Value Chain Alliance for Livestock Upgrading and Empowerment \(VALUE\)](#) project is being implemented.

The project is investing in centres of excellence – goat improvement centres where fodder plots will be planted and irrigated by solar powered boreholes to make supplements easily accessible to goat farmers in each district.

In addition, in collaboration with Grasslands and Matopos Research Institutes the project will undertake a research on alternative affordable fodder crops.

Watch video of Mutenda here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=203C1jyAPzA>

## **PROJECT UPDATES**

### **VALUE Trains Extension Personnel and Project Farmers on Commercialisation**

Optimising production and increasing enterprise efficiencies leads to the realisation of better returns on farming investments. In light of this, the VALUE project is conducting farmer trainings on farming as a business, good animal husbandry practices, business planning and commercialising small and medium scale productions. Four trainings have been conducted in Goromonzi, Marondera, Murehwa and Seke districts of Mashonaland East province.

The trainings are being undertaken in close coordination with the Pig Industry Board (PIB), partner government line ministries namely; the Ministry of Women Affairs, Cooperative and Small to Medium Enterprises Development and the Lands, Agriculture, Water and Rural Resettlement, Department of Veterinary Services (DVS) and AGRITEX.

Key aspects covered in the trainings include; pig genetics, caring for breeding stock, nutrition, herd health, business planning, processes leading to the formation and formalization of the Pork Producer Business Syndicate and pig nutrition.

“Small and medium pig producers have the potential to influence the pork value chain if they are more efficient and better organized because collectively, their sow unit is significant”, said VALUE Team Leader Newton Chari on the side-lines of the training for Goromonzi.

### **Inclusive Poultry Value Chain (IPVC)**

#### **Inputs Distribution**

After a successful first round of input distribution for feed formulation to lead farmers under the [Inclusive Poultry Value Chain \(IPVC\)](#) project, a follow up was made at the beginning of January. A second round of input disbursement has been done to farmers whose crops were compromised by the prolonged dry spell, towards the end of 2019. Inputs distributed in the second round included top dressing fertiliser and chemicals. Despite some crops having been affected by the dry spell, approximately 70% of the planted crop still looks promising.

#### **Financial Literacy Training**

Financial literacy trainings are underway in all the clusters (Bulawayo, Gweru, Harare, Masvingo and Mutare). The financial literacy trainings are aimed at facilitating the acquisition of appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes that will enable small to medium producers (SMPs) in the poultry value chain, to better manage their personal, family or business finances to promote sound financial decision making.

The trainings, which adopted the Training of Trainers (TOT) approach, are expected to influence a change in financial behaviour by SMPs and support more financially viable poultry enterprises and households. To date, the literacy trainings have been completed in Gweru and Bulawayo clusters. The coming weeks will see the trainings being done in the Harare, Masvingo and Mutare clusters.

#### **Business Development Services and Collective Action workshops**

Business Development Services and Collective Action workshops are on-going. The workshops have been carried out in three clusters; Mutare, Gweru and Bulawayo. Collective action is a potential solution to some of the challenges faced by SMPs which include, but not limited to; acquiring feed, veterinary supplies, day-old chicks and obtaining favourable producer prices for poultry products. Consequently, most lead farmers resolved to resuscitate existing poultry groups in their districts to facilitate bulk purchases of inputs and access to viable output markets.

## PROJECT UPDATES

### Matching Grants Awarded to Support Investments in the Dairy Value Chain

The [Transforming Zimbabwe's Dairy Value Chain for the Future \(TranZDVC\)](#) project is implementing a matching grants facility (MGF) for investments in productive assets to improve the performance of the dairy value chain in Zimbabwe. The purpose is to support investments to increase milk production and milk sales, participation by small-scale farmers in the dairy value chain, greening of manufacturing and production processes, decent job creation and local production of affordable feed. The facility is limited to capital investments in productive assets such as machinery, equipment and buildings and does not include finance for working capital and services. The matching grants have been categorised into the following windows:

#### Window 1: 50:50 match

Large-scale dairy processors and dairy farmers are eligible to submit co-finance proposals that aim for establishment of out grower schemes that are targeting small-scale farmers, especially women and young farmers, with a current milk production below 200 litres per day. The MGF will cover 50% of a capital investment cost not exceeding USD 92,000 per scheme.

#### Window 2: 70:30 match

Small and medium-scale processors and/or farmer owned milk collection centres are eligible to submit co-investment proposals that improve the performance of their businesses. The MGF will cover 70% of a capital investment cost not exceeding USD 16,200.

#### Window 3: 70:30 match

Within this window small-scale dairy farmers (with a milk production not exceeding 200 litres per day), and feed entrepreneurs are invited to submit co-investment proposals that improve their farming business performance. The MGF will cover 70% of a capital investment cost not exceeding USD 3,200.



Procurement of milking machines through matching grants will ensure more efficient operations for dairy farmers still using manual milking methods.

TranZDVC has awarded the grants to the following beneficiaries:

#### Window 1 - USD92,000 (50:50 match)

- Magure Farm Private Limited (Hwedza district)
- Wonderklip Private Limited (Chikomba district)
- Portelet Estates (Chinhoyi district),
- F.J. Barry and Company (Mutare district),
- Red Dane Farming (Harare South district)

#### Window 2 - USD16,400 (70:30 match)

- Celestial Delights Private Limited (Chinhoyi district)
- Red Tractor Farm (Bulawayo district),
- MilkZim FoodNet Private Limited (Mhondoro district)
- Rusitu Small Scale Dairy Association (Chipinge district)
- Sadza Masasa Dairy Milk Collection Centre (Chivhu district)
- Hamaruomba Dairy Cooperative (Masvingo district)
- Gokwe Dairy Association (Gokwe district),
- Marirangwe United Bush Dairy (Mhondoro district)

The assets applied for include agricultural equipment such as tractors, disc harrows, planters, slashers and silage cutters. Also covered are solar boreholes, centre pivots, irrigation equipment, cold rooms, cooling tanks, delivery trucks, spray races, milking cans, sausage filling machines and milking machines.

To assist in own feed production, the beneficiaries have included feed mixers, balers and forage choppers. For the MCCs the grants will finance construction of building and a processing plant.

A key project component is the implementation of renewable energy solutions. To cover this, some of the applicants applied for solar systems to power dairy operations and solar powered boreholes. Other investments include milk analysers, extruders, oil expellers and packaging machines.

Procurement of the productive assets has commenced and the project targets to have procured all the assets by March 2020. Shortlisting of 125 beneficiaries for Window 3 is in progress.

Additionally, TranZDVC will be hosting a gala for all 2019 matching grant beneficiaries in February 2019.

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