

Report: Communal farmers top maize yield

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Zimbabwe - Communal farmers are leading in maize production for the 2016-17 farming season, as their output increased by 364 percent. According to the final crop and livestock assessment report issued by the Ministry of Agriculture, Mechanisation and Irrigation Development, communal farmers increased their yield with an expected harvest of 770,682 tonnes.



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The farmers last season produced 166,216 tonnes of maize.

The report states that A2 farmers increased maize production by 296 percent from 162,665 tonnes during the 2015-16 season to 643,790 tonnes this season, while A1 farmers increased production by 326 percent from 122,358 tonnes last season to 521,588 tonnes this year.

Farmers from the old resettlement sector increased maize production by 264 percent from 40,359 to 147,068 tonnes this season, while small-scale commercial farmers increased production by 333 percent from 14,893 tonnes to 64,538.

Peri-urban farmers increased production by 44 percent from 5,325 tonnes last year to 7,680 tonnes this year.

Government re-introducing marketing boards

Agriculture, Mechanisation and Irrigation Development Minister Dr Joseph Made applauded farmers for working hard in producing different types of crops, including grains, pulses, tubers and cucurbits. "Farmers from all sectors have done well," he said. "Farmers have done their part and it is now our part to assist them with the marketing of their crop."

"This is the reason why government is re-introducing marketing boards." Made said the parastatals that would be resuscitated would include the Cold Storage Commission, Dairy Marketing Board and Cotton Marketing Board.

"Companies such as Dairibord, Cold Storage Company and Cottco will not be affected by the resuscitation of the marketing boards," he said. "All re-established marketing parastatals and new agricultural parastatals are to enable farmers to market their produce and enable investors who will be working with government to recover their investments. This does not stop other companies and investors who may want to directly contract farmers. Contractors who choose to work on their own with farmers must be cleared by the Ministry of Lands and Rural Resettlement and Ministry of Agriculture, Mechanisation and Irrigation Development."

Made urged contractors to fund farmers fully to avoid side marketing, approve investors and isolate those who may want to destabilise the land and agrarian reform. "His Excellency President Mugabe on several occasions has pointed out that we must defend the gains of our independence and safeguard our land and all farmers," he said. "Zimbabwe would generally want to look at agro-processing and export agriculture raw materials that have been beneficiated to bring better and greater returns to farmers."

Maize production by province

Made said Mashonaland West was leading on maize production, registering an increase in production of 279 percent. The province produced 543,622 tonnes of maize up from last season's 143,573 tonnes.

Mashonaland Central increased production by 313 percent from 110,316 tonnes last season to 455,666 tonnes and Mashonaland East increased by 273 percent from 89,338 tonnes to 274,491 tonnes.

Manicaland increased production by 273 percent from 71,774 tonnes to 267,369 tonnes, while Midlands increased by 517 percent from 52,049 tonnes to 321,394 tonnes.

"The highest increase was recorded in Masvingo which recorded 1,170 percent from 11,818 tonnes to 150,938 tonnes, Matabeleland North increased by 347 percent from 15,155 tonnes to 67,759 tonnes, while Matabeleland South recorded an increase of 318 percent from 17,793 tonnes to 74,287 tonnes," said Made.



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Surplus

On maize and small grains such as sorghum, pearl millet, and finger millet, Manicaland has a surplus of 123,000 tonnes, Mashonaland Central 354,000 tonnes, while Mashonaland East has 130,000 tonnes.

Mashonaland West recorded the highest surplus of 400,000 tonnes, Matabeleland North 16,000 tonnes, Matabeleland South 31,000 tonnes and Midlands will have a surplus of 163,000 tonnes.

"Harare and Bulawayo will require 370,000 tonnes of maize and small grains, of which Bulawayo needs 100,000 tonnes," said Made. "The cereal excludes wheat which is under production and brewing barley, but I want to point out that the

country produces winter maize which is harvested as green mealies and this year we are going to repeat winter maize in the Lowveld to be produced by Tongaat Hullet.

"Seed Co has several projects where it is producing seed maize this winter."

Zimbabwe is expecting a maize harvest of 2,155,000 tonnes, with the high yields attributed to good rains, hard work by farmers from all sectors and government inputs programmes such as Command Agriculture and the Presidential Inputs Scheme.

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