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PARLIAMENT OF ZIMBABWE

FIRST REPORT

OF THE JOINT PORTFOLIO COMMITTEES ON LANDS, LAND REFORM,
RESETTLEMENT AND AGRICULTURE AND PUBLIC SERVICE, LABOUR
AND SOCIAL WELFARE
ON
THE PLIGHT OF FARM WORKERS AND ITS IMPACT ON AGRICULTURAL
PRODUCTIVITY

SECOND SESSION – SIXTH PARLIAMENT

Presented To Parliament on Thursday 8th March 2007

Ordered in terms of Standing Order No. 153

- (1) Where inquiries by different portfolio committees relate to the same subject matter or to similar issues, or will involve the same or similar stakeholders, the portfolio committees concerned may agree to hold joint sittings.
- (2) Where committees agree to hold joint sittings, members of the committees involved shall select a chairperson from amongst the chairpersons of the holding the joint sitting.
- (3) The report of a joint sitting of committees shall be a report of all the committees involved.
- (4) An agreement to hold a joint sitting of committees shall be reported to the House.

Terms of References of Portfolio Committees S.O. 152

"Subject to these Standing Orders a Portfolio Committee shall:

- a) Consider and deal with all Bills and Statutory Instruments which are referred to it by or under resolution of the House or by the Speaker,
- b) Consider or deal with an appropriation or money bill referred to it by these Standing Orders or by under resolution of this House; and
- c) Monitor, investigate, enquire 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.
- d) 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.

On Tuesday, 19th of July 2005, the Speaker announced that the Committee on Standing Rules and Orders nominated the following Members to serve on the Portfolio Committee On Lands, Land Reform, Resettlement and Agriculture:

Hon. Chief Bushu

Hon. Chief Chimombe

Hon. Gabbuza

Hon Katsande

Hon. Mahofa

Hon. Mguni

Hon. Mkhosi

Hon. Mugabe

Hon. Mzembi

Hon. Pote

On Thursday, 23 February 2006, The President of the Senate announced that the Committee on Standing Rules and Orders nominated the following senators to serve on the Portfolio Committee Lands, Land Reform, Agriculture, Resettlement and Water Development:

Hon. Senator Chief Chikwanha

Hon. Senator Chief Chiduku

Hon. Senator Dete

Hon. Senator D. Khumalo

Hon. Senator Rtd General Zvinavashe

Hon. Mzembi to be Chairperson

On Tuesday, 19th of July 2005, the Speaker announced that the Committee on Standing Rules and Orders nominated the following Members to serve on the Portfolio Committee On Public Service Labour and Social Welfare:

Hon Chibaya

Hon Chisvuure

Hon Gwetu

Hon Matutu

Hon Mawere

Hon Maziriri

Hon Mpariwa

Hon Shumba

On Thursday, 23 February 2006, The President of the Senate announced that the Committee on Standing Rules and Orders nominated the following senators to serve on the Portfolio Committee on Public Service Labour and Social Welfare:

Hon. Senator Chief Charumbira

Hon. Senator Gumbura

Hon. Senator Haritatos

Hon. Senator A.S. Nyathi

Hon. Mawere to be Chairperson

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Your Portfolio Committees on Lands, Land Reform, Resettlement and Agriculture and Public Service Labour and Social Welfare conducted a joint inquiry into the plight of farm workers and its impact on agricultural productivity, in terms of Standing Order No. 153. This was a follow-up to an all stakeholder workshop organised by the Portfolio Committee on Lands, Land Reform, Resettlement and Agriculture together with the Farm Community Trust of Zimbabwe in October 2005.

In carrying out its inquiry, your Joint Committee held stakeholder meetings with relevant organisations in the agricultural sector and conducted public hearings in Mashonaland Central and Manicaland Provinces. Your Joint Committee also received valuable written submissions from stakeholders as well as members of the public.

At the time of its inquiry, your Joint Committee found out that farm workers were getting unacceptably low wages, Z\$8 000 per month. Your Committee was told that new wages for the current quarter had not been agreed upon due to a deadlock between farmers' and farm workers' representatives in the National Employment Council board for Agricultural (NEC). The former was proposing a new wage of Z\$16 000 whereas the latter was demanding Z\$78 000 per month. Apart from paltry wages, your Committee was not happy with the general appalling conditions of service for farm workers, especially as regards; housing, employment contracts, late and non payment, denial of lunch breaks, sick and compassionate leave, just to mention but a few.

Farmers on their part, whilst appreciating the plight of farm workers said that they were not able to provide adequately for the welfare of their farm workers due to a number of reasons. They cited late distribution of inputs and the general shortage of inputs on the open market, late processing of bank loans, lack of security of tenure and collateral security, equipment and irrigation infrastructure as some of the factors that have contributed to low productivity. They said as long as these issues were not addressed, farmers could not be expected to produce at a level where they were able to provide adequately for the welfare of their workers.

As a result of poor working conditions, some farm workers have resorted to gold panning and all sorts of illegal activities in order to eke out a living.

All the afore-mentioned challenges have led to low agricultural productivity and in turn adversely affected the welfare of farm workers. Your Joint Committee, therefore, urges government to adopt a holistic approach to address the issue of low agricultural productivity and the welfare of farm workers because they are inseparable.

1. INTRODUCTION

In October 2005 the Portfolio Committee on Lands, Land Reform, Resettlement and Agriculture together with Farm Community Trust of Zimbabwe (FCTZ) organised an all stakeholder workshop in Nyanga to discuss the plight of farm workers and its adverse impact on agricultural productivity within the broader context of the Land Reform Programme embarked upon by government in 2000. In particular, the workshop sought to find ways and means of alleviating the plight of farm workers and ex-farm workers with respect to lack of permanent homes, conditions of service, minimum wages and social facilities such as schools, clinics and decent accommodation on farm compounds. Whilst some recommendations were made at this workshop, your Committee felt prudent to go and see for itself the reality on the ground. Since the subject of the inquiry is a cross-cutting issue, the Committee resolved to conduct a joint inquiry with the Portfolio Committee on Public Service Labour and Social Welfare as provided for by Standing Order No. 153. Hence the findings contained in this Report are a product of the joint inquiry by the afore-mentioned portfolio committees.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 As noted above, the Committee initially organised an all stakeholder workshop to brainstorm on the subject of inquiry. This workshop was useful to the Committee as it brought to fore dynamics of the problem. This was followed by meetings with targeted stakeholders, namely;

- (i) Farmers Unions – ZFU, ZCFU, CFU and ZNFU
- (ii) Farm Workers Union – GAPWUZ
- (iii) Farm Community Trust of Zimbabwe
- (iv) NEC Agriculture
- (v) Labour Registrar

- 2.2 In order to capture views of the wider section of society, the Joint Committee conducted public hearings on the issue in Mashonaland Central Province and Manicaland Province, respectively. Apart from exposing Members to the reality on the ground, these public hearings gave an opportunity to the Joint Committee to interact with farmers and farm workers and hear from the horse mouth as it were. The Joint Committee also received written submissions from stakeholders and members of the public.
- 2.3 It is also worth-mentioning that the Joint Committee made use of background research by its secretariat.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In 2000, the Government of Zimbabwe embarked on a Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) to compulsorily acquire land for equitable distribution to the people under the villagization model (A1) and the commercial model (A2). This policy was given an impetus by spontaneous mass land occupations that erupted around the country. In terms of policy, one of the major objectives of the Land Reform Programme was to economically empower indigenous people by enabling them to produce food for self-sustenance as well as for exports and thereby reducing the intensity of poverty especially among rural families.
- 3.2 However, given the magnitude of the Land Reform Programme (LRP) and the manner in which it was implemented, the programme was bound to have unintended policy ramifications. One of these policy ramifications, which is the subject-matter of this Report, is the plight of farm workers and its impact on productivity on farms. During farm invasions, which preceded the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) it is said that farm workers were marginalized and barely 5% of them benefited from the programme. Various reasons have been

cited to explain why farm workers were sidelined during plots allocations. It is said that generally farm workers did not support the Fast Track Land Reform Programme and thus collaborated with their former employers in resisting the land reform programme. As a result they did not bother to apply for land like other people did and hence they lost out.

3.3 Be that as it may, if the problem of farm workers is put into its proper historical context, it is clear that most of these farm workers were not going to be able to get land even if they had applied for it. This is so because most of these farm workers are aliens or have alien parentage. The laws of Zimbabwe do not recognise them as citizens of this country and most of them do not have documents like birth certificates and national identity cards (I.D.s), which are prerequisite documents for land allocation. Hence there was no deliberate government policy to deal with such categories of people in our society as far as land redistribution exercise was concerned.

3.4 At the 2005 Nyanga Workshop, your Committee was told that farm workers were currently operating in an environment characterized by general decline of permanent employment opportunities, lay-offs without severance packages, low wages, insecure access to land and housing, and constant conflict with the new farmers. And that this has severely affected productivity on the farms. Your Committee, therefore, resolved to conduct public hearings on the issue in order to see for itself reality on the ground. The findings of the Committee stated hereunder.

4. FINDINGS OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE

4.1 Concerns of Farm Workers

4.1.1 The most concern that your Joint Committee was confronted with in all the public hearings it held was an outcry by farm workers regarding their paltry wages. At the time your Joint Committee conducted public hearings, (i.e. 12th – 14th February 2007), wages for farm workers were still pegged at Z\$8 000 pending new wages for the current quarter. Some farm workers almost broke into tears whilst giving testimonies to your Joint Committee regarding their welfare on the farms. They said with Z\$8 000 they were only able to buy a bar of soap, leaving them with nothing to buy food, clothes, medication and to pay for school fees for their children. Your Joint Committee was informed that as a result, many children have dropped out of school. Farm workers were very concerned that the lives of their children were doomed without education. They feared that this would perpetuate the cycle of poverty among the current farm workers and future generations. Given the prevailing economic environment, characterized by hyperinflation and price escalations for basic commodities, your Joint Committee failed to understand how the farm workers have survived up to this point in time on Z\$8 000 per month.

4.1.2 Besides the paltry wages that they were getting, farm workers also complained about late payment and non-payment of overtime. Farm workers who testified before your Joint Committee at public hearings at Avoca Farm in Bindura and Nederland Farm in Makoni District, respectively, said that they were sometimes made to work long hours without tea and lunch breaks. They also told your Joint Committee that some of their employers denied them sick leave and compassionate leave. It goes without saying that this is a flagrant violation of the provisions of the *Labour Relations Amendment Act*.

- 4.1.3 Your Joint Committee also heard very disturbing cases whereby employers terminate contracts of their workers willy-nilly without paying them their wages and terminal benefits. What was more disturbing to your Joint Committee was the apparent *laissez faire* attitude by labour arbitration officials. At Avoca Farm, your Joint Committee heard of one case where a certain farmer was summoned to appear before the Labour Arbitration panel. However, this farmer just ignored all six attempts, which were made to have him appear before the Labour Arbitration panel. All this was at the expense of the farm worker who had to shuttle between the Labour Offices in Bindura and his workplace at Avoca Farm. Many farm workers gave similar accounts to your Joint Committee during the public hearings. Your Joint Committee found it strange for the Department of Labour to ask the aggrieved part to deliver summons to the accused instead of sending a messenger of court or such person as designated by the Department of Labour. **Be that as it may, it is your Joint Committee's humbly opinion that failure to appear before a Labour Arbitration panel is tantamount to contempt of court given the fact that these Labour Arbitration panels are legal entities recognised in terms of the laws of the country.** Members of the ZRP who attended the Joint Committee's meetings confirmed disputes of this nature and said it was not their duty to serve summons but that of the messenger of court. They said theirs was to escort the messenger of court on request. The explanation by the official from the Labour Department in Bindura that cases were taking too long to be finalized due to a huge backlog as a result of understaffing, was not satisfactory to your Joint Committee, especially with respect to the above cited case, where six attempts were made to summon one individual but to no avail.
- 4.1.4 Farm Workers informed your Committee that they were not getting enough support from GAPWUZ especially at their hour of need. And as a result they were left stranded when they had disputes with their employers.

- 4.1.5 At a stakeholder meeting in Mutare, your Joint Committee was told that there was lack of good rapport between GAPWUZ and farmers. Because of that situation GAPWUZ was finding it difficult to educate its members.
- 4.1.6 Your Joint Committee was extremely concerned about the appalling and squalid houses for farm workers. It is not an understatement to say that those houses are not fit for human habitation. Farm Workers told your joint Committee that one family was sharing a small room, which doubled up as a kitchen and bedroom. What was more worrying to them was that they were sharing one room with their grown up children, some of them who were even married. Undoubtedly, farm workers are facing serious housing problems, but your Joint Committee found the above-mentioned statement somewhat exaggerated.
- 4.1.7 Due to lack of decent housing and security of tenure, many farm workers have resorted to a nomadic lifestyle where they migrate from one farm to the other in search of better opportunities. **Your Joint Committee shudders to think the psychological and social impact of this, especially on children.**
- 4.1.8 Apart from housing, farm workers also cited other social facilities such as schools and clinics as some of the problems they were facing. They said schools and clinics were far in between. Besides the problem of distances they said they could not afford school fees and health care costs which were far beyond their reach.
- 4.1.9 As noted above, a sizeable number of farm workers are aliens or have alien parentage from Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique. During their active and productive years, their welfare is wholly dependent on their employer. However, when they reach retirement age or when their contracts have been terminated they have nowhere to go. They end up becoming destitute. Government officials who attended your Joint Committee's public hearings were not sure if there was a policy in place to deal with such a situation. However, farm workers on their part, said they would prefer a situation whereby they were allocated land in their own

right where they can built permanent homes away from farm compounds. They said this would ensure that their children have a stable lifestyle and permanent homes. Your Committee believes that this is a noble idea which government should consider pursuing to alleviate the problem of homelessness among farm workers. Your joint Committee had the occasion to meet ex-farm workers in Mutare District who were allocated 2-hectare plots during the land redistribution process. Apart from the problem of agricultural inputs, small plots and high cost of living, these ex-farm workers confirmed to your Joint Committee that having their own permanent homes had given them a new lease of life. They said they could choose to be small-scale farmers in their own right or to continue working on the farms but commuting from their own homes.

- 4.1.10 As a result of the afore-mentioned problems, especially low wages, farm workers have resorted to gold panning, illicit beer-brewing ("*kachasu*" and "*vinyu*"), stealing and cross border activities as alternative means for their survival. the latter was more pronounced in Manicaland Province. The Mazowe Farmers Syndicate testified to your Joint Committee that gold panning has become a serious threat to the viability of agriculture in the country. Not only have many farm workers turned to gold panning, these gold panners ("*Makorokoza*") have encroached into farming land causing untold environmental degradation.

4.2 Collective Bargaining Process

- 4.2.1 The Secretary General for the National Employment Council for Agriculture (NEC) Mr Jera informed your Joint Committee that wages for farm workers were gazetted quarterly after agreements have been reached between farmers unions and farm workers representatives on the NEC Board. Traditionally, Agriculture Labour Bureau (ALB) represented farmers at NEC whereas the General and Plantation Workers Union of Zimbabwe (GAPWUZ) represented farm workers.

However, with the advent of the Land Reform Programme, the representation at NEC has since changed to reflect the new dispensation.

4.2.2 The Labour Registrar, Mr Vusani told your Committee that ALB resisted the changes and took the matter to court. Moreover, your Committee also heard that ALB flighted adverts in the press denouncing the legal status of NEC. Your Committee was informed that this has brought about confusion in the collective bargaining process. Since the matter was *sub judice*, your Joint Committee did not delve deeper into the issue for the avoidance of stepping on the toes of the judiciary.

4.2.3 Due to their different backgrounds and interests, farmers' representatives at NEC were not agreed among themselves on the new figure for farm workers wage. By and large, Mr Jera informed your Committee that farmers unions were proposing Z\$16 000 whereas farm workers representatives were proposing Z\$78 000 per month. This has led to a deadlock in the collective bargaining negotiations, all this at the expense of the farm workers. As a result the bulk of farm workers were still getting a gross wage of Z\$8 000 per month before NSSA and GAPWUZ deductions. However, seeing delays at NEC negotiations, some farmers were already giving their workers an interim wage pending the NEC negotiations. While this is giving some level of reprieve for some farm workers, this has tended to distort labour costs in the agricultural sector. Your Joint Committee was informed that lack of uniform wages has resulted in disharmony among farmers as they use their financial muscle to "snatch" each other's workers leaving the former employer stranded at the most hour of need.

4.3 Concerns Raised by Farmers

4.3.1 Your Joint Committee also sought to hear the perspective of farmers regarding the issue at hand. While farmers were generally in agreement that the current gazetted

wage for their workers was a pittance, they cited various reasons which made them unable to pay their workers reasonable wages. Most farmers that made representations at your Joint Committee's public hearings cited the problem of adequate capital to venture into serious commercial farming at a larger scale. Farmers informed your Joint Committee that they were having problems in accessing bank loans due to lack of collateral security. As a result, banks were giving them small loans, which did not cover their full operations. They further lamented bureaucracy in processing loans by Agri-Bank and other financial institutions tasked with disbursing government facilities to farmers. They said by the time banks processed their loan applications the loans would have been eroded by inflation. Farmers further noted that high interest rates, hyperinflation, coupled with controlled prices especially for commodities such as maize and wheat, had a debilitating effect on the viability of agriculture in this country. Farmers were not able to recoup their investments and let alone make a profit out of farming. **Your Joint Committee is of the view that as long as farmers are not making a profit, it would be foolhardy to expect them to invest in the physical infrastructure on their farms and worse still the welfare of their farm workers.**

- 4.3.2 Farmers also noted that even those farmers with 99-Year Leases were having problems in accessing loans from banks. Your Joint Committee was informed that some banks were not accepting 99-Year Leases as they felt that these leases had legal loopholes and hence did not provide adequate security. Farmers said, therefore that these financing challenges had a serious bearing on their capacity to produce in surplus and thus be able to provide adequately for their farm workers in terms of remuneration, housing and their general welfare.
- 4.3.3 Your Joint Committee also heard that most farmers were still yet to receive their 99-Year Leases. Hence they said that due to lack of security of tenure they were hesitant to invest on their farms in terms of infrastructure such as housing for their farm workers as they feared that they could be removed anytime from their

allocated farms. They said before they could provide security of tenure to their farm workers, they needed security of tenure themselves. **Your Joint Committee failed to understand what was holding up the process of the issuance of 99-Year Leases since this has serious ramifications on productivity and the welfare of farm workers.**

- 4.3.4 Farmers also complained of delays in the delivery of inputs and the general shortage of inputs on the open market, especially fertilizer and chemicals. At the time when your Joint Committee was conducting its public hearings (12 – 14 February) GMB was still distributing Compound D instead of AN fertilizer to farmers. Farmers cited these delays as having an adverse effect on productivity because they end up missing planting deadlines and in some cases had to reduce hectarage put under crops.
- 4.3.5 Due to the financing problem cited above, farmers said they were not able to mechanise their operations and to put irrigation infrastructure to harness water from idle water bodies scattered around the country. As a result, most farmers were only engaged in rain-fed agriculture as opposed to all-year-round production. This scenario has resulted in reduced productivity and layoffs of farm workers during off-season. With no source of income, these farm workers end up turning to gold panning and other illicit activities in order to eke out a living. Farmers told your Joint Committee that theft was rampant on the farms especially during off-seasons. This was also confirmed by the ZRP.
- 4.3.6 Farmers also told your Joint Committee that most farm workers did not want to work for new farmers. They said apart from the problem of poor working conditions, reluctance by farm workers to work for new farmers was instigated by former white commercial farmers as an act of sabotage to the Land Reform Programme. Farmers said that some farm workers were still under the payroll of their former employers and hence they were still under the impression that their former employers would one day come back to their former farms. Related to this

issue was a complaint by farmers of ex-farm workers who were still resident on farm compounds yet they were not providing labour to the farms but involved in gold panning and other illegal activities on the farms. Because of these resident ex-farm workers, farmers said they had no accommodation for those farm workers who were willing to work for them. As result, most farmers had resorted to ferrying workers from communal areas and back daily. Farmers' and government officials who attended your Joint Committee's public hearings said there was no law to evict these ex-farm workers from the farm compounds. Your Joint Committee was made to understand that these ex-farm workers were refusing to vacate farm compounds because they were still yet to be paid their severance packages after their former employers were evicted from the farms as a result of the Land Reform Programme. The other reason given was that, most of these ex-farm workers were aliens or have alien parentage from Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique and therefore had nowhere to go even if they were evicted from the farm compounds.

- 4.3.7 Your Joint Committee was further told that reluctance by farm workers to work for new farmers had distorted the labour market and costs in the agricultural sector. Many farm workers now prefer short-term contracts as opposed to permanent contracts because they realised more money this way as they charged whatever amount they wanted for a piece job. Farmers said because of this phenomenon, farm workers often hold them to ransom especially at the critical stage of their farming operations and had to pay huge amounts of money. Farmers said this was not sustainable and would destroy agriculture if left unchecked.

4.4 Joint Committee's Observations

- 4.4.1 Notwithstanding the provisions of the Constitution and Labour Relations Amendment Act, respectively, your Joint Committee noted with concern the multiplicity and fragmentation of both the farmers unions and farm workers unions. This has robbed the Agricultural sector of one authoritative voice as all and sundry purport to represent the sector thereby creating confusion. The plethora of unions has contributed to NEC negotiation delays. For instance, the farmers unions represented on the NEC Board are not agreed among themselves on the new figure for farm workers wage since they represent farmers from different backgrounds and with different interests. Your Joint Committee would have preferred a situation whereby the agriculture sector spoke with one authoritative voice so as to maintain a semblance of order in the sector.
- 4.4.2 Your Joint Committee also observed that disputes between farm workers and their employers over termination of contracts were mainly due to lack of understanding of what a contract is. Most of these contracts were of a verbal nature. At the commencement of a contract, farm workers were given the impression that they had been employed permanently only to be dismissed arbitrarily without terminal benefits.
- 4.4.3 Most farmers were ignorant of statutory instruments that govern the conditions of service for farm workers and the agricultural sector in general.
- 4.4.4 While some farmers said they were providing supplementary services to their farm workers over and above the gazetted wage, such as school fees, drugs and medical bills, food rations and small plots to grow their own food, your Joint Committee observed that this was on the good will on individual farmers not a statutory requirement.

- 4.4.5 Your Joint Committee also observed that farmers unions have been incapacitated by lack of funding to organise and disseminate information to its members, be it on new technologies and statutory requirements or any other information for that matter.
- 4.4.6 While there are farm health workers in the farming community, your Joint Committee observed that they were not trained and equipped with adequate resources to effectively discharge their duties.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

Your Joint Committee is recommending the following measures and hopes that the relevant ministries will take its recommendations seriously and move with speed to address policy gaps identified by your Joint Committee.

5.1 Low Wages and the Collective Bargaining Process

- 5.1.1 That over and above NEC minimum wages, the Tripartite Negotiating Forum (TNF) should set a minimum wage across all the sectors indexed on the Poverty Datum Line (PDL).
- 5.1.2 That the Minister of Public Service Labour and Social Welfare should intervene and proclaim an interim wage in the event of a deadlock between employers and farm workers representatives at the NEC, pending wage agreements so as to alleviate the plight of farm workers.
- 5.1.3 That NEC Agriculture and GAPWUZ should give feedback to their members on the status of wage negotiations so that they are always well informed.

- 5.1.4 That the multiplicity of farmers unions and farm workers unions should be discouraged because they contribute to delays in the NEC negotiations.

5.2 Social Facilities and Amenities

- 5.2.1 That government, through the Ministry of Rural Housing and Social Amenities, should built schools, clinics and rural service centres in resettlement areas or alternatively convert farm houses for such purposes in the interim.
- 5.2.2 That NSSA should set aside a special fund, which will be used to build decent houses for farm workers since they contribute to NSSA.
- 5.2.3 That government should give tax incentives to those farmers that have taken it upon themselves to build decent houses and providing other social amenities to their farm workers.
- 5.2.4 That instead of relying on Farm Health Workers, the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare should set up clinics in resettlement areas and ensure that these clinics are manned by properly trained and equipped personnel.

5.3 Security of Tenure and Retirement Policy

- 5.3.1 That Government should identify farms, which have not been occupied and allocate plots to farm workers so that they build their own permanent homes in order to deal with the problem of housing and security of tenure especially after retirement or termination of contract.

- 5.3.2 That government should expedite the issuance of the 99-Year Leases as this will give assurance to farmers about their security of tenure and thus spur them to invest in their farms whole-heartedly and hence raise productivity and improve the welfare of their workers.
- 5.3.3 That the Ministry of Public Service Labour and Social Welfare should carry out a thorough situational analysis to determine the exact number of farm workers who were affected by the Land Reform Programme.
- 5.3.4 That government should facilitate the payment of severance packages to ex-farm workers by their former employers.
- 5.3.5 That government should come up with a deliberate policy to assist farm workers in acquiring registration documents such as birth certificates and national identity cards.
- 5.3.6 That government should facilitate the repatriation of those farm workers who want to go back to their countries of origin.
- 5.3.7 That government should come up with a clear policy regarding the eviction of ex-farm workers resident on farm compounds, who do not want to work on the farms.

5.4 Distribution of Loans and Inputs

- 5.4.1 That the disbursement of loans and agricultural inputs should be done timeously in order to enable farmers to meet their targets.
- 5.4.2 That the 99-Year Leases should be restructured in such a way that they are marketable to the banks and other lending financial institutions as adequate collateral security.

- 5.4.3 That banks should take risks such as droughts into account and give farmers a reprieve in such eventualities.

5.5 Shortage and High Cost of Labour

- 5.5.1 That government should avail financial facilities to farmers to acquire equipment so that they mechanise their operations instead of relying on manual labour.
- 5.5.2 That farmers should strive to give a uniform wage so as to avoid distortions in labour costs.

5.6 Irrigation Infrastructure

- 5.6.1 That government should assist farmers with the provision of irrigation infrastructure in order to utilise water from dams currently lying idle, to ensure that farms are productive all year round.

5.7 Farmers Unions

- 5.7.1 That government should reconsider giving grants to farmers unions so that they are able to organise and disseminate information to their members and also for the training of their members on proper farming methods and practices so as to raise levels of agricultural productivity.
- 5.7.2 That farmers unions should consider forming an apex body, which will speak authoritatively on matters to do with agriculture. This will bring about a

semblance of order and accountability and thus assist government in its planning and also attract the participation of the private sector in agriculture.

6 CONCLUSION

Based on what it saw on the farms, it is your Joint Committee's considered opinion that if government does not put in place aggressive policies to address the afore-mentioned challenges, the country might be sitting on a time bomb in terms of food security and the economy in general. Your Joint Committee, therefore, calls for government to adopt a holistic approach to address these challenges and thus raise agricultural productivity, which in turn will go a long way in improving the welfare of farm workers because the two are inseparable.