FIRST REPORT

OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON LANDS, LAND REFORM, RESETTLEMENT AND AGRICULTURE

ON

THE STATE OF PREPAREDNESS BY THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR FOR THE 2006/7 SUMMER CROP SEASON

SECOND SESSION – SIXTH PARLIAMENT

Presented To Parliament on Wednesday, 27th September 2006

[S.C. 23 - 2006]

Ordered in terms of Standing Order No. 151

At the commencement of every session, there shall be as many select committees to be designated according to government portfolios to examine expenditure, administration and policy of government departments and other matters falling under their jurisdictions as the House may by resolution determine and whose members shall be nominated by the Standing Rules and Orders Committee. Such nominations shall take into account the expressed interests, experience or expertise of the members and the political and gender composition of 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 or 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

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Your Committee carried out an inquiry into the state of preparedness of the agricultural sector for the 2006/7 summer crop season. In this regard the Committee received oral and written evidence from the three ministers involved in agriculture, NEDPP Taskforce on Agriculture Coordination, Inputs Supply and Food Security, and Anti-Corruption Commission.

Your Committee was informed that starting this year, government has adopted a policy shift with regard to the Inputs Support Programme. The A2 farmers will now be expected to mobilize their own resources and buy inputs on the open market. Government, your Committee was told, will only assist A1 and Communal farmers and farmers contracted for targeted production.

In line with the new policy thrust, the bulk of inputs will be released to the market through the traditional agro-dealer outlets around the country to ensure that farmers get the inputs at their door steps as opposed to the previous situation where farmers were wasting valuable production time queuing up at GMB depots. Thus your Committee was happy to learn during its inquiry that the release of seeds to the market was already underway.

Your Committee was further informed that the situation regarding seeds this season was very positive, as Seed Houses had a confirmed stock of 44 410t for a target hectarage of 1.8 million hectares. Some seed growers were still delivering their seed to Seed Houses. However, your Committee was informed that there was a critical shortage of fertilizers due to a number of factors; foreign currency shortage, machine breakdowns and transport logistics to move raw materials on time. Unless government embarks on a massive import programme of fertilizers and agro-chemicals, farmers will have to make do without fertilizers this summer crop season.

Your Committee also observed that the DDF was not well equipped to meet its tillage set target of 224 820 hectares. Most of its equipment has become obsolete whereas the little available equipment is down due to lack of spares. The ***Acquisition of Farm Equipment and Material Act*** passed in 2004, does not seem to have made any positive dent with respect to boosting the DDF mechanization strength.

Your Committee was dismayed to note that most of the agricultural parastatals are not sufficiently geared up to meet the demands of the agrarian reforms. Their problems range from lack of management competencies, adequate resources and dereliction of functions prescribed in the enabling legislation. The case in point being GMB, which has been operating without a Board and substantive accounting officers for a very long time now, yet GMB is supposed to be the nerve centre of agriculture in this country due to the responsibilities assigned to it by government after the implementation of the Land Reform Programme in 2000.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 It goes without saying that the summer crop season is once again upon us. However, what is important to ask is how prepared is the country for the 2006/7 summer crop season? It is in this regard that your Committee resolved to carry out an enquiry to assess the level of preparedness for the current summer crop season by all stakeholders in the agricultural sector, given delays and problems of a varied nature experienced in the previous seasons.

1.2 In its enquiry, your Committee received oral evidence and written submissions from the following:

(a) Ministers

Hon. J. Made	-	Minister of Agriculture
Hon. D.N.E Mutasa	-	Minister of State for National Security, Lands Land Reform and Resettlement.
Hon. Eng. M. Mutezo	–	Minister of Waters Resources and Infrastructural Development.

(b) NEDPP Taskforce on Agriculture

Mr.S. Pazvakavambwa	-	Co-Chairman
Rtd. Col. C. Katsande	-	Co-Chairman
Mr. Bepura	–	Ministry of Agriculture
Mr. Masveure	–	Ministry of Industry and International Trade.

(c) Anti-Corruption Commission

Commissioner Rtd. Brigadier General E. Madzingira

Commissioner A. Nkomo

1.3 The three Ministers mentioned above explained to the Committee the broader policy decisions and measures taken by government to ensure that the forthcoming summer crop season is a success. On the other hand, the NEDPP Taskforce on Agriculture Coordination, Inputs Supply and Food Security briefed the Committee on the implementation progress and challenges the agricultural sector is facing with regard to the preparations for the 2006/7 summer crop season.

2. FINDINGS OF THE COMMITTEE

Policy Shift

2.1 Your Committee was pleased to note that some of its recommendations it made in its previous reports were taken on board by government as testified by the policy shift adopted by Cabinet with respect to the provision of agricultural inputs and other support services. Starting from this summer crop season, government will wean off farmers from the inputs support programme, which government initiated at the onset of the Land Reform Programme. The new policy thrust will entail farmers mobilizing resources through their own means with minimum assistance from government. This policy shift came about as a realization that a lot of farmers had developed a dependency syndrome even those farmers who could mobilize their own resources. Thus a lot of production time was lost as farmers waited for government to provide them with inputs. However, government will only intervene in deserving cases, especially with respect to A1 and communal farmers. During its inquiry, your Committee received submissions from some A2 farmers who said they still needed government support with respect to the provision of inputs and other support services, since not all A2 farmers were yet able to stand on their own. The argument is that some A2 farmers were allocated farms with state-of-the-art infrastructure and did not incur much in terms of infrastructural provision, yet other A2 farmers were allocated virgin lands meaning that they had to start from scratch. It is in view of such dynamics and circumstances that some A2 farmers are appealing to government to take into consideration such realities before implementing a blanket policy of weaning off A2 farmers from government support programmes.

2.2 Your Committee was also concerned that farmers have not been adequately sensitized about the new policy thrust. As a result, some farmers will sit by hoping that government will provide them with inputs as they have become accustomed to.

2.3 Under the new policy framework, government will this year channel more resources to targeted production with a view to building up the strategic grain reserves (SGR). For this objective, government is targeting 300 000ha for maize and 75 000ha for sorghum. It is expected that with that hectarage for maize, 900 000t will be realized. The strategy is to identify experienced farmers based on their good past performance. These farmers so identified will be funded fully in relation to their inputs needs. A voucher system will be used in order to safeguard against the diversion of inputs into non-productive activities and also to ensure smooth recovery of loans.

2.4 The other strategy adopted by government to ensure food security in the country, is corporate farming concept. The advantage of this concept is that it alleviates the burden of inputs provision and financial resources for government, as the private sector provides its own resources to contracted farmers. Your Committee also heard that government was seriously pursuing the idea of engaging NGOs in the provision of inputs to the poor and vulnerable members of society as a strategy of poverty reduction. In this regard, government is encouraging NGOs to move away from giving food handouts to the poor and vulnerable but instead to provide them with inputs so that they produce their own food. This strategy will empower the poor and vulnerable by making them self-reliant and thus restore some sense of human dignity.

2.5 As a result of the new policy thrust adopted by government, the bulk of the inputs will be released to the market through the traditional agro-dealer outlets throughout the country as opposed to the situation whereby all farmers were queuing up at the GMB depots for inputs. This will ensure that farmers will get inputs at their doorstep in good time to prepare for the summer crop season. The GMB will henceforth only handle inputs for government intervention support programmes and targeted production programme for the strategic grain reserves.

2.6 In tandem with the new policy thrust, government has since scrapped off the fuel subsidy for farmers. As this House may recall, your Committee made this recommendation to government in its first report tabled in this House on the 2nd November 2005. This was as a realization that most of the fuel meant for farmers was being diverted to the black market instead of being used for production on the farms. Thus starting from this agricultural season, farmers will buy fuel on the open market. The challenge now is for government to make the commodity available on the market at the official price so that farming operations are not brought to a sudden halt.

2.7 The other challenge facing government is putting together financing facilities in order to ensure that farmers that have been weaned off from the government inputs support programme get loans on time to buy their inputs. Your Committee was assured that the Ministry of Finance and the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ) were working out appropriate financing arrangements. However, given that the summer crop season is already upon us, your Committee was extremely worried that farmers may not get loans on time to mobilize their resources before the onset of the rain season. Your Committee failed to understand how government expected farmers to access loans from financial institutions without collateral security since they still do not have title deeds to their farms/plots. It is an open secret that banks are hesitant to dole out loans to farmers without some form of security. The Minister of State for National Security, Lands, Land Reform and Resettlement was noncommittal on the issue of leases apart from saying that government was working on the 99-year leases. Your Committee strongly feels that this issue has unnecessarily taken too long to be finalized. **It is your Committee's considered opinion that finalization of security tenure will**

unlock value of the agrarian reform programme and thus achieve the objectives of national food security and export earnings.

2.8 Your Committee was happy to see efforts towards the coordination of agricultural activities and strategies especially at the policy implementation level through the NEDPP Taskforce on Agriculture Coordination, Inputs Supply and Food Security, co-chaired by the secretaries of Agriculture, and Industry and International Trade, respectively. Be that as it may, your Committee noted with great concern that at policy decision level there seems to be lack of coordination judging by contradicting press statements by Ministers. An ideal situation is to have one authority that speaks authoritatively on behalf of government on matters to do with agriculture in the country. It is needless to say that contradicting press statements tend to confuse farmers and other stakeholders in the agricultural sector regarding the actual government policy position.

2.9 Farmers are expected to buy inputs on the open market under the new policy thrust yet the producer prices of agricultural commodities such as maize and wheat remain controlled by government. While testifying before your Committee, the Minister of Agriculture said that government was not going to announce producer prices only to say that farmers will be paid full production costs and a mark-up price. **It is your Committee's considered view that such arbitrariness and ambiguity does not encourage farmers to grow strategic crops, especially food crops whose prices remain controlled by government**. Farmers need to get positive signals from government before they make their decisions as to which crops they are going to grow. Unless government builds this confidence into the system, the country will continue to suffer from food deficit even if the other ingredients such as inputs and water are in place. During the course of your Committee's inquiry, the Minister of Agriculture announced the producer price of wheat pegged at Z$217 913.4/t. As stated above, your Committee feels that if this attractive price had been announced prior to planting, a lot of farmers were going to venture into wheat production. Announcing "super prices" after production will only serve to benefit a few farmers who take the risk. As a result, this will unfortunately create a small elite class of farmers. If government expects the A2 farmers to buy inputs on the open market after having borrowed bank loans at market interest rates, then an ideal situation would be that these farmers should be allowed to sell their produce where they can get better returns. Similarly, it should be those farmers that benefit from government inputs support programme who should sell their produce to GMB at government-regulated prices.

3. AGRICULTURAL INPUTS AND SUPPORT SERVICES

Maize Seed Situation

3.1 The Secretary for the Ministry of Agriculture Mr. Pazvakavambwa, who also chairs the NEDPP Taskforce on Agriculture Coordination, Inputs Supply and Food Security, assured your Committee that there was adequate maize seed in the country to cover a target hectarage of 1.8 million hectares. He said the Seed Houses assured his Taskforce that there was 36 550t of hybrid seed and 7 860t OPVs in stock, which gives a total of 44 410t. The positive seed situation also applies to other crops such as wheat, sunflower, sorghum, soya beans and other crops whose production is targeted under the NEDPP strategic plan. The seed situation in the country is summarized in the table below.

Company	**Maize (t)**		**Wheat (t)**	**Sunflower (t)**	**Sorghum (t)**	**Soya Bean (t)**
	Hybrid	**OPV**				
Seed Co	20 000		8 000			7 000
Pannar	7 000		1 000	63	20	384
Pioneer	4 500					
AGPY	1 600	2 400	180		15	60
Pristine	50	1 500				
Agriseeds	3 000	1 000				
ARDA	400	1 800	3 200		150	1 020
NTS						
Prime		1 160				120
	36 550	**7 860**	**12 380**	**63**	**185**	**8 584**

Source – NEDPP Taskforce on Agriculture

3.2 Besides seeds already in stock as mentioned above, your Committee was further informed that some farmers were still delivering seeds to the Seed Houses. The co-chairpersons of NEDPP Taskforce on Agriculture Coordination, Inputs Supply and Food Security told your Committee that the bulk of maize seed has already been released into the market through the traditional agro-dealership networks in line with the new government policy thrust. Whilst your Committee welcomes and indeed commends this positive development, it is worried that seed packs for government support programme are still yet to be distributed to GMB depots.

Fertilizer Situation

3.3 The fertilizer situation with regard to the forthcoming summer crop season is in dire straits. A combination of factors was cited as prime causes of this state of affairs. The co-chairman of the NEDPP Taskforce on Agriculture Coordination, Inputs Supply and Food Security, Retired Colonel Katsande, who is also the secretary for the ministry of Industry and International Trade, informed your Committee that production of fertilizer was mainly affected by lack of foreign currency allocations by the central bank to the fertilizer industry. He said for a 6 month period beginning July this year to March 2007, the fertilizer industry had requested foreign currency provisions to the tune of US$41.5 million to import raw materials and spares in order to achieve a target production of 478 750t of fertilizers. However, as late as end of August when your Committee conducted its inquiry, the industry had only been allocated US$2.4 million. The target capacity production of the industry is summarized below.

Company	**July – Dec 2006**	**Jan. – Mar 2007**	**Total**
Granulated – ZFC + Windmill	187 000	87 000	255 000
Blends –ZFC +Windmill + Farmers World	93 775	51 150	144 295
AN production	84 000	42 000	126 000
AN in Compounds	(34 595)	(12 580)	(47 175)
AN Sales	49 405	29 420	78 825
Total	**330 180**	**148 570**	**478 750**

Source – NEDPP Taskforce on Agriculture

3.4 The situation has been further compounded by the breakdown of a transformer at Sable Chemicals, which is used for the electrolysis process in the production of ammonium nitrate. Your Committee was told that the transformer is not locally available and that it would take 6 months to have it repaired in South Africa. As a result of this predicament, your Committee was informed that this will further push down the production capacity of fertilizer at Sable Chemicals to about 7 000t per month, at a time when production was expected to go up to 12 000t.

3.5 Your Committee was also told that apart from the afore-mentioned constraints, fertilizer production has been affected by the shortage of raw materials such as potash, super phosphates, and coal and transport logistics to move raw materials on time.

3.6 The Minister of Agriculture informed your Committee that while the fertilizer situation was very critical, he said government had put in place an import programme to offset the deficit. Be that as it may, your Committee was worried that deadlines would be missed given the scarcity of foreign currency and the transport logistics challenges. In light of the fact that the onset of the summer crop season is just a few days away, it means, therefore that farmers will have to make do without fertilizers. It goes without saying that this will adversely affect targeted production and thus leave the country in a vicious cycle of food insecurity and further erode the envisaged economic gains under the NEDPP strategy.

3.7 Your Committee was informed that business people with their own free funds can import fertilizer provided they also have import licenses or permits, which are obtained from the ministry of Industry and International Trade. The Secretary for the ministry of Industry and International Trade said his ministry did not control the price of agricultural inputs imported with free funds but only plays a monitoring role to ensure that the product meets specified standards. While this is a welcome development, your Committee believes that this will not make a positive dent, at least for this season, given import logistics and the time left before the onset of the summer crop season. As a lasting solution, your Committee believes that the inputs manufacturing industry needs to re-establish long-term credit facilities and arrangements with their external raw material suppliers as they used to do before the implementation of the Land Reform Programme. As long as the inputs manufacturing industry waits to be allocated foreign currency by the central bank (RBZ), then the inputs supply problem will be with us for a long time to come.

Chemicals situation

3.8 The situation regarding agro-chemicals is not any better either. Your Committee was told that the agro-chemical industry is heavily dependent on imports due to lack of technological capacity and know-how in the country. Due to the foreign currency crunch that the country is currently grappling with, the agro-chemical industry did not get adequate resources to stock up chemicals for the requirements of the forthcoming summer crop season. Your Committee was further told that due to the escalation of farm labour costs, there has been an upsurge in the use of chemicals such as herbicides and this demand has not been matched by adequate resource allocations to make the agro-chemicals available in the country. Mr. Pazvakavambwa informed your Committee that with respect to the livestock health industry, the situation was somewhat better.

4. TILLAGE SUPPORT SERVICES

Tillage Situation

4.1 The situation regarding the tillage equipment calls for urgent attention by government. The Minister of State Water Resources and Infrastructural Development informed your Committee that most of the DDF tillage equipment has become obsolete. This has been exacerbated by the fact that DDF has not been recapitalized for a very long time resulting in the dilapidation of its equipment. Compounding this problem was the fact that DDF was charging sub economic rates for its services and hence it was not able to recover costs in order to maintain its fleet. As of end of August this year, the strength of DDF in terms of tillage equipment was:

Item	**Total Available**	**Working Equipment**			**Required Implements**	**Shortfall**
		CMED	**DDF**	**Total**		
Tractors	620	32	368	400		
Ploughs	500	0	212	212	212	
Disc Harrows	179	0	93	93	200	**107**
Planters	161	0	72	72	200	**128**

Source – Ministry of Water Resources and Infrastructural Development

4.2 Your Committee was informed that for its equipment rehabilitation programme, DDF required a budget of Z$1.386 billion. However, with the available equipment, DDF is projecting a target output of 224 820 hectares at a cost of Z$299.2 million for a 6 month period starting from August to January 2007as tabulated below.

Service	**Tractor Units**	**Output/ Tractor/ Month/ ha**	**Aug**	**Sep**	**Oct**	**Nov**	**Dec**	**Jan**	**Total**
Ploughing	212	60	12 720	12 720	12 720	12 720	12 720	12 720	**76 320**
Discing	93	150	13 950	13 950	13 950	13 950	13 950	13 950	**83 700**
Planting	72	150	10 800	10 800	10 800	10 800	10 800	10 800	**64 800**
Total									**224 820**

Source – Ministry of Water Resources and Infrastructural Development

4.3 As you may recall, this House passed the ***Acquisition of Farm Equipment and Material Bill*** in 2004, with a view to harnessing equipment left behind by the former farm owners in order to increase productivity on the farms. Equipment problems faced by DDF aside, your Committee strongly believes that equipment acquired through the afore-mentioned legislation would suffice to meet the mechanization needs of the present farmers. Your Committee wonders what really happened to this equipment. The Minister of State for National Security, Lands Land Reform and Resettlement gave a very disturbing account of this equipment. He informed your Committee that some of this equipment was either smuggled to neighbouring countries, stolen or unaccounted for, dilapidated and yet some was still locked up in warehouses. He told your Committee that the issue with respect to equipment locked up in warehouses was referred to the Attorney General's Office for finalization. Your Committee was dismayed with such glaring slow pace of the wheels of justice given the fact that the ***Acquisition of Farm Equipment and Material Bill*** was passed two years ago. The other issue, which dismayed your Committee, is the fact that nobody seems to have a clear inventory of this equipment.

5. INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY OF AGRICULTURE PARASTATALS

5.1 Your Committee strongly believes that if the agrarian reforms were to succeed, then the departments and parastatals mandated with implementing the programme should be sufficiently geared up for the task. The Minister of Agriculture assured your Committee that all the agriculture parastatals are undergoing a restructuring exercise in line with the demands of the agrarian reforms. Some of these key major departments and parastatals are ARDA, GMB, Agri-Bank, CSC, AMA, TIMB, DDF and ZINWA. Your Committee intends to carry out a thorough inquiry regarding the institutional capacity of these parastatals. However, suffice to say now that indicators on the ground point to some glaring problems ranging from management competencies, inefficiencies, and lack of adequate resources to downright dereliction of functions prescribed in the enabling legislation.

5.2 Your Committee is extremely dismayed that most of these parastatals have been operating without Boards for a very long time. Needless to say that this is a flagrant violation of the enabling legislation that created these parastatals. As a result of this state of affairs, these parastatals have failed to implement critical policy decisions let alone putting their books in order. This point was clearly demonstrated by the Second Special Report of the Public Accounts Committee on Parastatals tabled in this House in June this year.

5.3 The situation at the Grain Marketing Board (GMB), which has been the sole distributor of agricultural inputs and buyer and distributorof grain since the implementation of the Land Reform Programme, is in a sorry state to say the least. Given the strategic role that government assigned to the GMB with respect to national food security, inputs distribution and cereal products marketing, it is perhaps true that this is one parastatal that is expected to be the nerve centre of agriculture in the country. Revelations about the goings on at GMB belie this fact. The Anti-Corruption Commission informed your Committee that management systems at GMB are in shambles. Apart from the late distribution of inputs there are no checks and balances to ensure that inputs are not diverted to speculative activities. Your Committee heard also that farmers are paid very late for their produce leaving them with very little time to prepare for the next cropping season. It goes without saying that this has a demoralizing effect on farmers to produce food for the nation. The Anti-Corruption Commission noted that most of the problems bedeviling GMB stem from the fact that the parastatal has been operating without a Board for a very long time and that senior management posts are held by acting officers.

5.4 The Anti-Corruption Commission further informed your Committee that after conducting a systems review exercise at GMB it made recommendations on how GMB can improve its management systems and service delivery to its clients. However, deadlines agreed upon with GMB management have since expired without the Commission’s recommendations implemented.

5.5 As you may recall, this House passed a bill in 2005 to re-establish the Agricultural Marketing Authority (AMA) in a bid to reorganize agricultural commodity marketing policies in order to benefit the farmer. Unfortunately, AMA has not been set up to this day. Your Committee fails to understand the haste with which this bill was passed, by so doing raising the expectations of farmers. Similarly, the Ministry of Water Resources and Infrastructural Development raised hopes of this House and farmers alike when it announced the idea of establishing the Irrigation Development Authority (IDA) to expedite the development of irrigation infrastructure in the country given the fact that the country is prone to periodic droughts. It is your Committee's view that such policy implementation delays and failures do not augur well for the success of our agriculture.

6. CONCLUSION

In view of the evidence that your Committee gathered, it was clear that the country would face a severe shortage of fertilizer and chemicals for the current summer crop season, unless government takes swift measures to import the shortfall as a matter of urgency. However, your Committee was pleased to note that there was a marked improvement with regard to the seed situation this year as compared to the previous seasons. While the policy shift regarding the inputs support programme is a welcome move, your Committee feels that there are some policy inconsistencies that still need to be attended to. Thus your Committee is making the following recommendations.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 That government should channel resources towards the local inputs manufacturing industry instead of the importation of inputs. Bilateral agreements between Zimbabwe and friendly countries, to the maximum extent possible, should strive to bring in raw materials as opposed to final products in order to benefit the local industry in line with the goals of import substitution policy as envisaged under the NEDPP strategy.

7.2 That the policy shift should make a distinction between farmers who benefit from government inputs support programme and those farmers who use their own resources to buy inputs on the open market. Thus government should allow A2 farmers to sell their produce where they can get better returns and hence recover their production costs since they are now expected to buy their own inputs on the open market. It should be those farmers who benefit from government inputs support programme that should deliver their grain to GMB at controlled prices.

7.3 That government should review its stance on the issue regarding producer prices in line with the expectations of farmers and other stakeholders. Farmers and financial institutions need to know price indicators of agricultural commodities before they venture into full production of strategic crops. Thus pre-planting, producer and post harvest prices should be announced within a stipulated time-frame so that farmers can plan their programmes in advance and these prices should be attractive enough so as to incentivize more farmers to venture into strategic crops.

7.4 That while the Committee is happy that seeds have been released to the market, government should put in place monitoring mechanisms to ensure that retailers profiteer on inputs beyond the reach of farmers and also guard against artificial shortages created by seed houses as they seek to create export quotas in order to hedge against inflationary pressures.

7.5 That boards of all agricultural parastatals should be appointed as a matter of urgency. Needless to say that it is illegal in terms of our laws for parastatals to operate beyond a stipulated time-frame without boards.

7.6 That equipment still in warehouses should be audited and distributed equitably without any further delays in order to alleviate the problem of mechanization. Thus the Minister of Lands, Land Reform and Resettlement should enforce the provisions of the ***Acquisition of Farm Equipment and Material Act*** and ensure that all culprits who violated the provisions of the afore-said Act are brought to book.

7.8 That the 99-year leases should be finalized as a matter of urgency to enable A2 farmers to borrow loans from banks using their land as collateral security since they have been weaned off from government inputs support programme. This will see the active participation of financial institutions in the agricultural sector.

7.9 That the inputs manufacturing industry should move away from the dependency syndrome whereby it is relying on the RBZ for foreign currency provision. Individual companies should negotiate with their external raw material suppliers for long-term credit facilities and financial arrangements as they used to do before the implementation of the Land Reform Programme.

7.10 That there is need to have one authority that speaks on behalf of government on matters to do with agriculture in order to avoid policy contradictions. Every care should be taken to ensure that commodity discourse on the viability of crop sub-sectors is not confused with policy, whose custodian is the Minister of Agriculture.