From ready to govern to preparing to govern
Movement for Democratic Change (MDC)
August 08, 2008

The Movement for Democratic Change is and remains a people's project, with the strategic objective of completing the business of the struggle for national liberation. Over the next few days, we will provide the various policy position of the party, indicative of our readiness and preparedness to govern in accordance with the best interests of the majority of our people. Our struggle is not merely a struggle against, but it is most importantly a struggle for an ideal.

With this alert, we provide our policy position on the Land Question in Zimbabwe and also provide how we will attend to the issue.

In this alert, please find our Lands and Agrarian Reform Policy, and our Agricultural Recovery Strategy.

Lands and agrarian reform policy

Resolving the land question once and for all to ensure that no Zimbabwean will ever go hungry again

Vision

A New Zimbabwe where the land conflict is resolved once and for all and land as a finite economic development resource, is equitably distributed and productively utilized making Zimbabwe the regional bread-basket in land use and agricultural production.

Values for MDC Land Reform Policy

The MDC's core values on land reform are:

1. Food security and job creation.
2. Equity and equality
3. Transparency
4. Accountability
5. Justice
6. Fairness
7. Integrity
8. Sustainability and productive land use

The MDC Land Policy

The MDC's Land Reform Programme will be based on the matrix that recognizes the country's unfortunate colonial history of plunder and wastage and the need to deal with historical injustices. In this regard, the MDC takes note of the acquisitions of land that have been done by the Zanu PF regime between 2000 and 2006. That land reform was chaotic and outside the rule of law.

That being the case, the MDC must rationalize the situation by ensuring that there will be no return to the pre-2000 status nor will the present regime of wastage, corruption, under utilization and multi-ownership be preserved.

To undertake this rationalization, the MDC will through an Act of Parliament establish a Land Commission whose mandate is to:

- Carry out an independent audit of land to establish the physical and legal status of all holdings.
- Based on the principle of allocating land to all Zimbabweans irregardless of one's political affiliation, gender and/or race; one-man-one farm; need and ability, implement and coordinate a rational and participatory all inclusive and well planned resettlement programme.
- Design and define the recommended minimum and maximum land holdings per region.
- Ensure the enactment of laws that guarantee the ownership of one household per one land holding.
- Introduce an equitable Land Tax to discourage land wastage and multiple farm ownership
- Carefully manage the transition to a people driven and human centred land market.

Agro-Industrial Transformation

The MDC recognizes the fact that the acquisition of land is not an end in itself and therefore recognizes that the ultimate economic liberation of Zimbabwe will only occur after the destruction of the dual enclave economy and the transition of our country into a modern industrial State.

Thus fundamental to our land policy is the need to free the country from direct reliance on land and agriculture but an industry and technology and software. In short, the complete transformation of our country to a New Zimbabwe.

Agrarian Reform

While Land Reform is regarded as a programme for the transfer of control, ownership and tenure of agricultural land, agrarian reform necessarily has much broader scope, seeking to restructure the entire agricultural sector and industrialize the rural areas to make them productive and wealth generating.

- The MDC will embark on a rapid agricultural recovery programme that will ensure the restocking of the national herd.
- The MDC government will have a deliberate policy to support communal and small-scale farmers and women to become productive members of the farming community and to ensure food security

Agricultural Institutions

The MDC Government will:

- Expand and upgrade all agricultural training institutions in the country.
- Encourage and support the role of women and youth in agriculture

Compensation

The MDC government recognizes that there should be just and equitable compensation to all farmers whose land was acquired since the year 2000. However, the Zimbabwean economy does not have the capacity to offer the just and equitable compensation while at the same time driving the economy forward.

In this regard, the MDC government will internationalize the issue of compensation so that multilateral institutions and bilateral countries inextricably connected to the Zimbabwe crisis will bring in their resources to adequately compensate the erstwhile land owners. It is important to note that the international community has previously made binding understandings as far as such support is concerned.

Land Tenure

Zimbabwe has a varied tenure system covering four main areas: -

- Communal
- Resettlement
- Small scale commercial farming areas
- Large scale commercial farming areas

The MDC recognizes this reality on the ground and therefore takes land tenure reform as a continuous and ongoing process not as a once off activity. The MDC Land Commission will investigate the situation in respect of farmland, communal lands, forestry, and all commercial land holdings and recommend a reform process in all areas of the country including land tenure systems. However land under the MDC government will be held under one law for all forms of ownership, state, communal and private with some government protection for communal farmers. The MDC will ensure that there is comprehensive land legislation in place that allows both for private ownership of land secured through title deeds.

Agricultural Recovery Programme

The MDC has developed an Agricultural Recovery Program to ensure a rapid recovery of the agricultural sector as in as short a period as possible. Key elements of the program are: -

- Identification of the areas with good agricultural productivity, focusing mainly in the communal, the resettlement areas and small-scale commercial farmers. This will be for the production of both maize and small grains.
- Plan for the provision of inputs such as seed, fertilizers, and draught power to the identified farmers.

- A comprehensive strategy to re-establish all veterinary controls and systems for animal health. This is essential to facilitate the resumption of exports on a secure basis.
- Facilitation of private sector partnerships for the production of all key agricultural commodities.

For successful implementation of the Agricultural Recovery Programme, MDC recognizes that consultation with and active participation by the various stakeholders will be crucial. The stakeholders include but are not limited to farmer's organizations, input suppliers, seed growers, NGOs, agricultural experts, traders, financial institutions, millers and other agro processors.

Agricultural Institutions

Realizing that a sophisticated agricultural industry is achieved only by a supportive institutional infrastructure, the MDC government will invest resources to rehabilitate and reform public marketing agencies, research and teaching institutions and public agro-based financing institutions.

Research

The MDC government will maintain the Agricultural Research Council as an independent, non-political body. The Council will advise government on all aspects relating to agricultural research (new breeds, seed varieties, GMOs etc, will recommend the provision of grants for research by central government, and will also solicit grants from agriculture associations and development partners. Government grants would be tied to agricultural research to benefit the small-scale resettled farmers who may not be able to afford research output of their own.

Training

All agricultural training institutions will be placed under independent councils selected from the agriculture industry. These institutions will be expanded in order to ensure that there are adequate numbers of trained personnel to take the many opportunities to be created in the farming sector by the land and agriculture programmes. Government will support agricultural training through the same facilities that are available to students at universities and colleges. These activities will be the responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture.

Extension Services

The MDC government will provide basic extension services to all farming communities through a system of extension agents who will work with local farm communities and research establishments. Particular regard will be paid to extension services in small-scale resettlement and communal farming areas. Private sector firms with interests in the agriculture industry will be encouraged to support extension services to commercial farmers.

Marketing Services

The Grain Marketing Board will remain a part of central government but will be required to operate on commercial principles and will no longer hold a statutory monopoly over grain and oilseed marketing. However, the GMB will be required to maintain a network of depots throughout the country and to act as residual buyer of food grains and oil seeds. It will also be required to maintain strategic stocks of basic foods and to provide storage facilities to the private sector.

Local, regional and international commodity trading plays a crucial role in triggering socio-economic development and wealth creation in Zimbabwe. The MDC government will play a non-interventionist, regulatory role in ensuring a competitive pricing environment that creates conditions conducive to investment in the sector, putting in place, however, mechanisms that will protect vulnerable groups.

Agricultural Recovery, Zimbabwe 2008-2013

Guidelines for the Recovery Strategy, Introduction

Agriculture is the backbone of the economy of Zimbabwe. Exports of tobacco, beef, cotton, horticulture and sugar have always provided the much need foreign currency that supported the rapid economic growth in the first 15 years of independence. The industry food and textile relied heavily on agriculture for inputs. Further, agriculture relied on a well managed and effective agricultural input program that was based on a self sustaining retail system enabling most farmers to access inputs on time.

Strategy

Zimbabwe's agriculture would need a two fold strategic plan that could stabilize the agricultural sector in the first year (2008/09) and subsequent 5 years (2009-2013).

I. Review of the current general state of agriculture in Zimbabwe, crop, livestock and horticultural production in both rural and resettlement areas:

1. Review the current input delivery system to both rural and resettled farmers in former commercial farmland. The input delivery system is currently dominated by government.
2. Review the current commodity marketing systems especially the role of government and the Grain Marketing Board and impact on productivity of the sector.
3. Review the state of agricultural research and extension. These were key to technology generation and dissemination that supported growth and development of the sector.
4. Review the current rural retail network for sustainable distribution of inputs to farm communities
5. Review the state of agricultural infrastructure such as irrigation and tobacco processing units and horticultural greenhouses
6. Identify solutions and make recommendations for adoption and implementation by the new government

II. Recovery:

Two parallel strategies would need to be implemented, a) short and, b) medium to long term for agricultural recovery.

II. a. The short term strategy would be for the 2008/09 season. The current season (2007/08) failed due lack of inputs and drought. This creates a need for immediate revival of production and stabilization of the sector in the 2008/09 cropping season.

The objective is to ensure that farmers have access to inputs of required quantities and quality at the correct timing. The main objectives are however as follows:

1. Liaise with input suppliers and establish their capacities to produce and supply adequate quantities of seeds and agrochemicals.
2. Review and identify key input retail networks that increase access farmers' access to inputs.
3. Review and identify effective distribution networks that will deliver inputs to retail networks by mid to end September 2008.
4. Develop an input marketing and distribution monitoring system to ensure inputs do not find their way to the informal markets.
5. Develop a subsidized input pricing system that enables every farmer to access inputs through the retail system. No free inputs. Farmers could pay a subsidized price supported by donor. 20% of the current donor food aid could provide such subsidy.
6. Institute a land preparation support scheme to ensure that land is adequately prepared in time for the farming season.
7. Identify and support areas for irrigation schemes to ensure agricultural productivity all year.
8. Identify and recommend collaboration between NGOs and the extension service to provide immediate support to farmers in the immediate season
9. Develop immediate modalities for support of horticultural and tobacco production
10. Recommend a commodity pricing system that is consistent with world markets.

II. b. Medium to long term, (5 year strategic plan) that also looks at land reform and support for the agricultural input industry.

The objective is to ensure sustainability of productivity in the next 5 years. The main objectives are:

1. Review the current land reform and its long term impact of agricultural productivity and social security.
2. Review and recommend a need for a land commission that will oversee the land rationalization of land ownership in Zimbabwe
3. Develop and recommend guidelines to a sustainable land tenure system that is acceptable to all Zimbabweans to do away with current dual production system of rural and commercial farming.
4. Develop and recommend a system of input subsidy that is phased out over a period of 5 years.
5. Develop and recommend systems and ways to increase farm productivity in rural areas.
6. Review the current capacity of inputs suppliers, seed producers, fertilizer manufacturers and wholesale and retailers in providing a permanent and sustainable supply of such inputs.
7. Recommend measures of support to inputs industry to increase capacity