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**MINISTRY OF LANDS, AGRICULTURE
AND RURAL RESETTLEMENT**

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Background Context

Youth account for 60% of Zimbabwean's population (Zim-Stat 2013). Youth in agriculture offer a dynamic workforce that is innovative, have a high up take of technological know-how and the ability to take on significant level of risk. The agricultural sector presents huge opportunity for the creation of employment to absorb the youth and ensure achievement of food security for future generations. Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Social Economics Transformation (ZIMASSET) 2013 -2018 aims to empower the society and grow the economy. This will result in the creation of 2.2 million jobs. The Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, and Rural Resettlement's Draft Comprehensive Policy Framework call for youth main streaming in agriculture.

In view of the above the Ministry established this section (Youth Desk) in order to empower the youth. It is also noted that the agricultural sector is yet to fully exploit the potential of the youth and it remains largely unattractive. The situation is exacerbated by perception of agriculture as a last carrier of last resort, one of drudgery and low monetary benefits. Information on access to markets, factors of production including land and financing remain extremely limited hindering adequate engagement of youth in agriculture.

Global population is expected to increase from 7 billion to 9 billion by 2050, with youth (15-35) accounting for about 14% of this total (ILO, 2014). With the rapidly rising population, there is an equal increase in demand for food hence worsening the global food insecurity especially in rural communities. As a result food insecurity has been anchored within the Post 2015 Sustainable Development Goals, has Goal 1-Ending poverty in all its forms and Goal 2- Ending hunger to achieve food and nutrition security and promote sustainable agriculture (SDG, 2030). It is indeed a welcome move by some agro-firms like Seed-CO to support youth in agriculture through availing scholarship fund for them. The Youth in Agriculture Strategy is being crafted in order to make this effort a reality.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- Correcting the poor branding of agriculture and correcting a perception of agriculture as an unattractive career option for the youth
- Facilitating revitalizing of agriculture at the primary, secondary and higher education levels with special focus on agricultural colleges.
- Mentorship: To introduce mentorship programmes to guide the youth on way of making a living from agriculture with special focus on college graduates from agricultural institutions and school leavers.
- To support country level efforts at developing an enabling for youth participation at all levels of the agriculture value chain.
- To address compelling evidence of ageing farmer population in the country which must be addressed to facilitate sustainability in agriculture production. The average age of a farmer in Zimbabwe is 55years and life expectance averages between 55-60 years.
- To help reduce Zimbabwe import bill for maize, cooking oil frozen chicken and meat and also help in reducing the continuous rising of food items.
- To address the poor image of persons involved in agriculture, especially in the rural communities need to be changed. The youth are the ideal catalyst given their greater prosperity and willingness to adapt new ideas, concept and technology which are all important to changing the way agriculture is practiced and perceived-Youth Desk runs social platforms such as Whatsapp and Facebook pages (Agrarian Youth Desk Bulletin). The group has 256 participants who are leaders in their on right.
- Increase employment
- The YD provides alternatives for the engagement of youth to reduce high crime rate like stock theft and other social problems.
- To help reduce rural to urban migration.
- Mainstreaming youth living with disability in agriculture.
- Promoting gender mainstreaming and empowerment of girl child in agriculture.
- Kicking HIV,AIDS,Cancer and such related disease out of agriculture and the nation at large.
- Supporting agricultural college graduates and students
- Encouraging skilled youths abroad to contribute towards agriculture and economic growth through any possible and legal means.

PRINCIPLES

- ❖ The Youth Desk is driven by the principle that each and every citizen of Zimbabwe should have availability of and access to adequate, safe and nutritious food to eat at all times (1996 World Food Summit)
- ❖ The Youth Desk believe that young people should feed the nation with huge investment on agricultural production and productivity.
- ❖ The Youth Desk believe that a hungry stomach is a source of violence and conflict. Food security for all people is a pathway towards national peace, stability and economic development.
- ❖ Patriotism, Discipline and Entrepreneurship are three pillars of production and productivity.
- ❖ Inclusivity is a vehicle for economic empowerment

To sum up Youth Desk stand guided by the vision of His Excellency the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe Cde E.D Mnangagwa. In his inauguration speech on the 24th of November 2017 he said, **“Above all, we must always remember and realize that we hold and run this country in trust. It belongs to future generations whose possibilities must never be foreclose or mortgaged as a result of decisions of expediency we might selfishly make today out of fear of difficult choice and decision that has to be made”**

“ The many skilled Zimbabweans who have left the country over the years for a variety of reasons must now come into the broad economic calculus designed for our recovery and take off,” President E.D Mnangagwa 2017.

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