

DECEMBER 2024 SPECIAL EDITION



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YEAR 2024 HIGHLIGHTS





ZIMBABWEAN YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS GET RECOGNITION

By Enia Dube

THE EAGLES' NEST Youth Export Incubation program has become an important event in Zimbabwe's push to grow its export sector and empower young people.

Organized by ZimTrade and sponsored by EcoBank, the Programme, shortened as Eagles Nest is unlocking innovation and export potential in young entrepreneurs, which contributes to Zimbabwe's economic growth.

The Program's Season 4, which ended recently highlighted the importance of using Zimbabwe's rich culture and natural resources to create unique exports.

During the year-long capacity building interventions, young Zimbabweans were equipped with the skills and knowledge to take part effectively in export markets, with some already assisted to create business networks with leading buyers in the region.

From the interventions, youth-led small businesses like Ona Naturals, Amadhoda Beard Care, and Kings Leather are success stories of Zimbabwean entrepreneurs who are making an impact in international markets.

These businesses, inspired by Zimbabwe's heritage, are proving that Zimbabwean cultural products have a place in the global economy.

The Eagle's Nest program aims to equip young Zimbabweans with the skills and knowledge to build export-ready businesses.

The program focuses on innovation, sustainability, and social impact, ensuring participants are prepared for the global market.

Participants receive practical training in marketing, branding, financial literacy, and digital marketing, as well as specialized sessions on export financing and strategic business planning.

In addition to training, the program provides mentorship and access to resources to help participants navigate global trade.

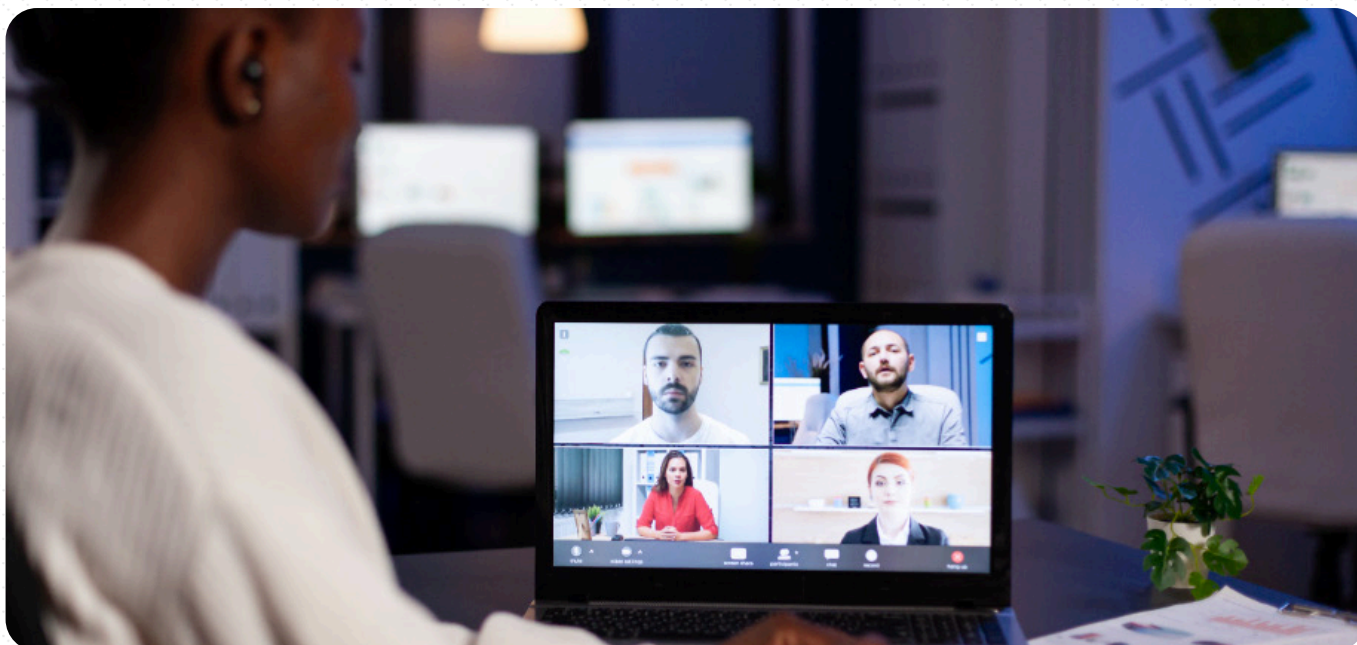
This includes exposure to international markets through trade missions and opportunities to connect with industry experts and potential partners.

The Eagles' Nest 2024 Finale highlighted Zimbabwe's potential to make an impact on the global trade scene, with youth at the forefront.

Through training, mentorship, and access to export networks, the program is empowering young entrepreneurs to create sustainable businesses and contribute to the growth of Zimbabwe's export sector.

As Zimbabwe focuses on innovation, cultural heritage, and the next generation of business leaders, it is well-positioned to build a thriving export sector that will drive economic growth and increase its presence in global markets.

The Eagle's Nest program remains a catalyst for Zimbabwe's export-driven future, where young people will play a leading role in shaping the economy and driving international trade success.



2 KEY INSIGHTS FROM ZIMTRADE'S HALAL CERTIFICATION SEMINAR

By Gugulethu Mpofu

ZIMTRADE RECENTLY hosted a training program under the theme “Qala, Tanga” (Start, Begin), a powerful call to action emphasising the importance of taking the first step and embarking on a journey of growth.

The program, specifically targeted at Zimbabwean meat producers, equipped them with the knowledge and skills necessary to access lucrative international markets, particularly in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Malaysia.

A key focus of the training was to address the critical importance of Halal certification in accessing these demanding markets.

While often associated with religious requirements, Halal certification has evolved into a powerful global standard, signifying adherence to rigorous quality, safety, and ethical practices.

In today's increasingly discerning consumer market, where ethical sourcing and transparent production processes are highly valued, Halal certification transcends religious boundaries and acts as a powerful marketing tool, enhancing the appeal and competitiveness of Zimbabwean meat products on the international stage.

The training provided a comprehensive overview of Halal principles, covering a wide range of topics, including the intricacies of the certification process and the key international standards set by organizations such as the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

This in-depth knowledge equips participants with the necessary tools to navigate the complexities

of Halal compliance and successfully enter these demanding markets.

Following the training, a rigorous evaluation process will be conducted to assess the readiness of Zimbabwean meat producers and local certifiers to meet the stringent requirements of international Halal standards.

This evaluation will focus on critical areas such as facility assessments, rigorous supply chain integrity checks, and ensuring compliance with all necessary documentation.

Successfully navigating this process and obtaining internationally recognized Halal certifications will allow Zimbabwean meat producers to gain access to high-demand markets like the UAE and Malaysia.

This will boost exports and contribute significantly to the diversification of Zimbabwe's economy and create new opportunities for growth within the meat industry.

The training program, aligned with the “Qala, Tanga” theme, represents a significant step forward in positioning Zimbabwean meat producers for success in the global market.

The emphasis on quality, safety, and ethical practices, while adhering to international standards, will allow Zimbabwe to enhance its reputation as a reliable supplier of high-quality meat products, attracting a wider range of discerning consumers.

This initiative not only empowers individual businesses but also contributes to the broader economic growth of the nation, underscoring the importance of taking that initial step and embarking on a journey of sustained growth.



3 ZIMBABWE STAMPS ITS PRESENCE AT HAVANA INTERNATIONAL TRADE FAIR

By William Gaviyau

ZIMBABWE MADE its debut at the 40th Havana International Fair (FIHAV) from 4-6 November, a significant milestone for the country. This marked Zimbabwe's first appearance into the Caribbean's largest multisectoral trade fair, held at the renowned EXPOCUBA Fairgrounds in Havana, Cuba.

FIHAV is a major player on the global trade scene, bringing together companies from over 50 countries to showcase their products and services across a vast 19,400 square meters of exhibition space.

The participation in FIHAV allowed Zimbabwe to expand its global reach, forge new trade partnerships, and showcase the diverse range of goods and services the country offers.

Zimbabwe's presence at FIHAV signalled the country's target to broadening its international trade partnerships, building economic resilience, and increasing its visibility on the world stage.

This participation is expected to open doors for new collaborations with Cuba and other participating nations, aligning perfectly with Zimbabwe's broader export development goals.

One of the most significant takeaways from FIHAV 2024 was the strengthening of bilateral and multilateral relationships.

Zimbabwe's participation provided a valuable platform for engaging in discussions focused on economic cooperation and enhancing existing ties with Cuba and other international partners.

Furthermore, Zimbabwe's presence at FIHAV significantly boosted its global visibility, placing

the country firmly in the spotlight of international trade and investment circles.

This newfound prominence positions Zimbabwe as a dynamic player in the global market, actively pursuing new opportunities and fostering innovative partnerships beyond traditional trade routes.

Strengthening bilateral relations is crucial for creating a more favourable environment for trade.

Leveraging diplomatic channels to negotiate favourable trade terms and streamline bureaucratic processes will make it easy for Zimbabwe to facilitate smoother and more efficient trade interactions with Cuba.

EDITORIAL TEAM

Danai Majaha,
Karen Mukwedeya,
Enia Dube,
Shepherd Chisada,
Tenson Wunganai (Graphic Designer)
Tatenda Machirori,
Nozipho Maphala,
Dorcas Makotore,
Kudakwashe Tirivaviri,
William Gaviyau,
Natalie Fanciko and
Gugulethu Mpofu.



4 EXPORTING HIGH-VALUE ORGANIC PRODUCE

By Natalie Franciko

THE GLOBAL demand for organic produce is booming, driven by growing consumer awareness of health, sustainability, and environmental concerns.

Zimbabwe, with its fertile land and favourable climate, has the potential to become a significant player in this lucrative market.

However, tapping into this market requires meeting stringent organic certification standards that guarantee the integrity and quality of organic products.

Europe remains the largest market for organic products, with strong consumer demand and strict regulations.

The European Union's (EU) new organic regulation, implemented in 2022, emphasizes harmonized standards across member states, focusing on fairness and sustainability.

This includes stricter import rules, requiring exporters to align with EU production standards, and a strong emphasis on traceability and control throughout the supply chain.

To successfully enter the European and other key organic markets, Zimbabwean farmers need to understand and meet the specific certification requirements.

This necessitates investing in training and capacity building programs, such as ZimTrade's Horticulture Export Masterclass and the Marketing and Branding for International Competitiveness (MBIC) courses.

These programs provide valuable insights into organic production practices, certification processes, and market access strategies.

Collaboration with organizations like ZimTrade and the Standards Association of Zimbabwe (SAZ) is crucial to ensure farmers meet international standards and access valuable resources like trade fairs.

Leveraging digital platforms for organic produce marketing can also connect farmers with global buyers, increasing their visibility and market reach.

Key certification bodies like Global GAP and ECOCERT play a crucial role in verifying organic production practices.

Global GAP, while not exclusively focused on organic farming, provides a strong foundation for food safety and sustainability, which is widely recognized in many markets.

ECOCERT specializes in organic certification and is recognized in major markets worldwide. Zimbabwe boasts a diverse agro-ecological landscape, making it well-suited for cultivating a wide range of high-value organic crops.

This includes horticultural products like avocados and mangos for European and Asian markets, premium vegetables like green beans and peppers for the European market, and spices like ginger and turmeric for the Middle Eastern and Asian markets.

Furthermore, Zimbabwe has the potential to cultivate and export specialty crops like quinoa, chia seeds, and amaranth, which are highly sought after in health-conscious markets. Organic oilseeds like sesame and sunflower seeds, as well as aflatoxin-free groundnuts, also hold significant export potential.

The country can also capitalize on its natural resources by cultivating and processing organic essential oils from plants like lavender and eucalyptus.

Embracing organic farming practices, meeting international certification standards, and leveraging its unique agricultural advantages, is essential for the country to position itself as a significant player in the global organic market.

This will contribute to economic growth and also promote sustainable agricultural development within the country.



5 EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES: BAONA ROOTS COOPERATIVE IN MUDZI DISTRICT

By Tatenda Machirori (Opinion)

NESTLED IN the heart of Mudzi District is Kotwa, which provides residence to the Baona Roots Cooperative.

This Cooperative is a group of 10 women who have come together to aggregate baobab found in abundance in the area and have the intention to value add into various products.

The 10 women are all a part of CAMFED's CAMA network which aids in building and improving lives of women in marginalized communities. The 10 women are between the ages of 20 to 26 years, with a shared mandate to learn and improve their livelihoods as well as their communities.

In assisting the young women, CAMFED has been providing the necessary financial resources for the project, while HIT is providing equipment for processing and ZimTrade is providing technical skills training and market linkages and coverage.

Through facilitation by ZimTrade, the cluster has participated at the largest exhibition on the

continent, the Intra-Africa Trade Fair, held in Egypt in 2023.

During the fair, the cluster engaged with potential business partners across the continent, with most buyers pointing the top quality of their products.

This remarkable initiative is transforming the lives of its beneficiaries and the entire community at large.

It represents a beacon of hope for sustainable development, employment, and infrastructure upliftment in the region.

At the core of the Baona Roots Cooperative mission is community development.

Through collective effort and shared resources, the cooperative members are working hand in hand to create a positive impact on the local community.

By focusing on sustainable practices and empowering community members, the cluster initiative is paving the way for a brighter future for all.

One of the key benefits expected from the cluster is the generation of employment opportunities.

The cooperative will provide a platform for individuals to earn a livelihood through various roles within the value chain, from harvesting to processing and marketing of baobab products.

By building a processing plant, this initiative will be creating sustainable jobs as this will be a long-term project.

The cluster will not only enhance economic stability but also foster a sense of pride and empowerment among community members.

Infrastructure development is another significant area where the cluster is making a difference.

Through development of essential infrastructure such as processing facilities, storage units, and transportation networks, the cooperative is strengthening the backbone of the community. Improved infrastructure not only supports the growth of the baobab industry but also enhances overall connectivity and access to markets, thereby catalyzing economic growth in the region and province.

The success of the Baona Roots Cooperative in Mudzi will serve as a testament to the power of collaboration, innovation, and community-driven initiatives.

Through harnessing the collective potential of the members, the cooperative is unlocking new opportunities for sustainable development and social progress.

Further to this, the focus on community development, employment creation, and infrastructure development means the cluster is nurturing a brighter future for generations to come.

The baobab cluster in Mashonaland East Province, Mudzi District exemplifies the transformative impact that cooperative efforts can have on rural communities.

With its dedication to community development, job creation, and infrastructure enhancement, the cluster can stand out as a shining example of how grassroots initiatives can drive positive change on a provincial level.

As the cooperative continues to grow and prosper, its ripple effects will undoubtedly be felt far and wide, enriching the lives of all who are touched by its vision of empowerment and progress.





6 MANICALAND ENTREPRENEURS TRAINED TO BE EXPORT READY

By Dorcas Makotore

OVER 70 entrepreneurs from Mutare received export awareness training from the 16-17 of April 2024 at Manica Skyview Hotel in Mutare.

ZimTrade, in partnership with Mercy Corps organized a 2-day Export Awareness Workshop for business groups who are being assisted under the Mercy Corps Urban Resilience Program in Mutare.

The Urban Resilience initiative by Mercy Corps provided a business start-up package for individuals in Mutare to help them establish income-generating enterprises or to develop their existing businesses, with the aim of alleviating poverty in the urban areas of Mutare.

These business start-up packages were based on the individuals' business ideas, innovation, value addition as well as the readiness of the entrepreneurs to take their businesses to the next level in terms of development.

The main objective of the Export Awareness workshop was to capacitate the entrepreneurs who were able to participate in the Urban Resilience program, to equip them with essential business knowledge as they target the export market.

The workshop aimed at conscientizing entrepreneurs about export processes and markets so that they can export formally.

Amongst the participants were companies in the horticultural sector, value addition, clothing and textiles, food processing, poultry and services.

One of the companies under the program, Nut-co, a producer of peanut butter has since begun exporting to Mozambique with other businesses aiming to follow suit.

The two days training workshop covered several business and export related topics.

A ZimTrade consultant engaged for the training

took participants through an intensive, eye-opening workshop.

The trainer gave participants insights on business etiquette and professionalism where the need for communication, respect, honesty, and networking in business was emphasized.

The group was also trained in the aspects of foundations of export marketing, where market opportunities, market tactics, market entry and opportunity analysis strategies were discussed.

Another critical discussion was on export documentation including a Commercial Invoice, CD1 forms, Consignment Note, Export Permit, Phytosanitary Certificate, and a Bill of Entry.

Businesses were also encouraged through ZimTrade's facilitation, to register under the trade agreements to which Zimbabwe is signatory.

Another major highlight of the workshop was a discussion on market entry and opportunities, where the group learnt about gap analysis, competition, benchmarking and making use of the opportunities which exist in the global market.

Participants were encouraged to think bigger rather than having a narrow view of markets.

Entrepreneurs should make use of the international market opportunities that exist for their products and services.

The discussion also went into capitalizing digital marketing platforms to promote Zimbabwean brands in the global space.

The training workshop emphasized the importance of collaboration and partnerships in business.

Presentations from ZimTrade, Ministry of Women Affairs, Community Small and Medium Enterprises Development and Banc ABC all contributed to the discussion on business development for export.

Manicaland being close to the Mozambican border, the participants were encouraged to promote exports to Mozambique while also looking into expanding to other regional and international markets.



7 BUHERA BASKET WEAVERS GET CERTIFIED

By Dorcas Makotore

ZIMTRADE FACILITATED for the FairTrade certification of 257 basket weavers in Buhera who are operating under the Self-Help Development Foundation (SHDF).

The FairTrade Certification is a globally recognized standard that guarantees products meet stringent social, environmental, and economic criteria.

Administered by the World Trade Organization (WTO), this certification aims to create equitable trading conditions for producers in developing countries, empowering them to achieve sustainable livelihoods and engage in environmentally sound practices.

The Buhera baskets cluster, one of ZimTrade's export development clusters recently attained Fair Trade certification from the World Fair Trade Organisation (WFTO) after a series of independent audits from the international organisation.

Buhera is one of Zimbabwe's baskets weaving communities located in Manicaland Province in South-eastern Zimbabwe.

The Buhera baskets cluster is registered as Maoko- Izandla Heritage Association under the Zimbabwe Co-operative Societies Act.

The popular Buhera baskets are a stunning example of Buhera women's ancient weaving tradition passed from generation to generation.

These baskets are made from ilala palm leaves harvested through sustainable practices in communities in Zimbabwe.

Each basket is meticulously woven using locally sourced, sustainable materials that not only guarantee durability but also convey a story of cultural preservation and environmental consciousness.

No two baskets are ever the same as these baskets are handwoven by skilled women who are passionate about making them.

Each handwoven, distinctive, and environmentally friendly basket has a unique narrative to tell.

The FairTrade certification attained by the Buhera baskets cluster is expected to open global market opportunities and allow the cluster to export to different countries including Europe.

Consumers know and trust Fairtrade as it is the most widely recognized ethical label in the world.

The European Union, USA, UK, Germany and France are among the most important regions for fair trade products.

These markets often prefer fair trade products and attribute a monetary value to intangible ethical principles.

Such markets are usually willing to pay more for products whose production preserves the environment, respects social conditions or helps developing countries.

FairTrade products are often sold at a premium to enable producers to cover the cost of sustainable production.

FairTrade certification ensures that producers receive a guaranteed minimum price for their goods, protecting them against market volatility.

This stability allows farmers to cover the costs of sustainable production and invest in their communities.

The certification also enforces strict standards to protect workers' rights, including safe working environments, reasonable work hours, and the freedom to join labour unions without fear of reprisal.

Environmental sustainability is another cornerstone of FairTrade certification. Producers are encouraged to minimize the use of harmful chemicals, manage waste responsibly, and promote biodiversity.

The WTO FairTrade Certification has zero toler-

ance for child labour and forced labour, ensuring that all production processes are ethical and humane.

Achieving WTO FairTrade Certification involves a rigorous process.

Producers or producer organizations apply through recognized certification bodies.

An initial audit by independent auditors assesses compliance with FairTrade standards.

Upon successful completion, certification is granted, allowing products to bear the FairTrade label.

Regular audits ensure ongoing adherence to these standards, with non-compliance resulting in corrective actions or loss of certification.

For producers, FairTrade certification provides a stable income, allowing them to invest in their communities and improve their living standards.

It also ensures safer working conditions and access to social programs funded by the FairTrade premium.

For consumers, the certification empowers them to make ethical purchasing decisions.

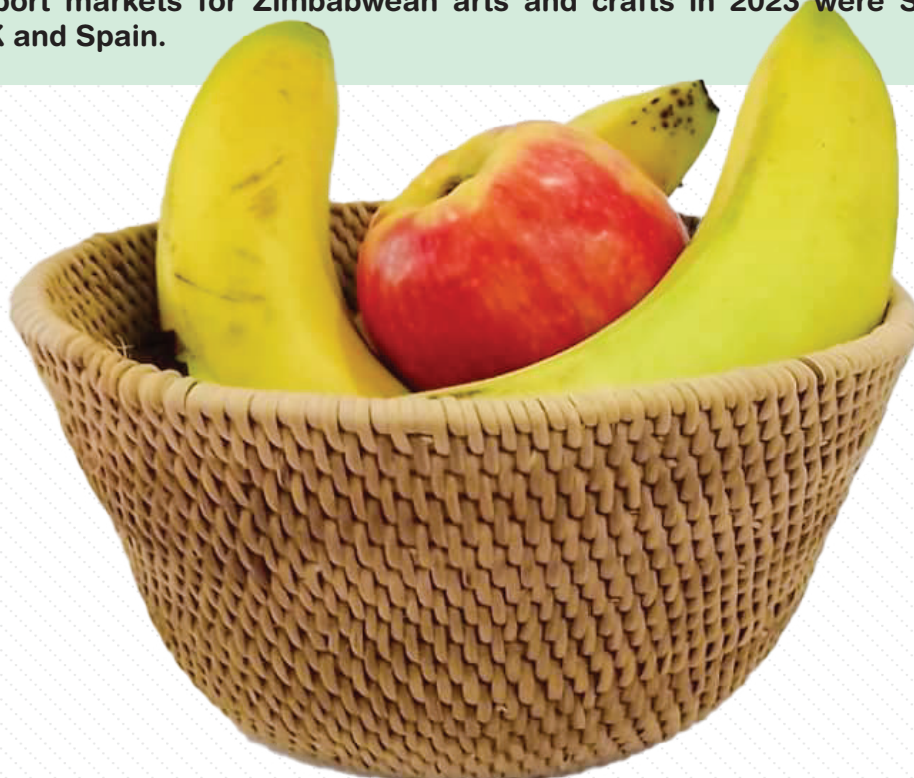
When consumers buy FairTrade-certified products, they contribute to sustainable development and the fair treatment of workers and producers, fostering a more equitable global economy.

The global arts and crafts trade is on an upward trend with world imports being US\$ 36.3 billion in 2023, an eight percent increase from US\$33,8 billion in 2022.

Major global importers of arts and crafts products in 2023 were USA, China, Austria, UK and Switzerland.

In 2023, Zimbabwe exported crafts worth US\$ 10.1 million, a 14 percent increase from US\$8,8 million recorded in 2022.

Major import markets for Zimbabwean arts and crafts in 2023 were South Africa, USA, China, UK and Spain.





8

WE CAN TAP INTO FLORICULTURE MARKET

THE CURRENT growth in agriculture follows deliberate efforts by President E.D. Mnangagwa, who has championed the integration of smallholder and rural farmers into mainstream agricultural production.

The Second Republic is focusing on enhancing the export potential of horticultural products, ensuring that local farmers have access to both regional and international markets.

Over the past few years, there has been a concerted push to transform the agricultural sector, which historically had large disparities with well-established white farmers dominating areas of high-value production.

Implementing policies that support the inclusion of smallholder and rural farmers, has allowed the Second Republic to pave the way for these groups to penetrate markets that were previously inaccessible.

This approach has addressed historical imbalances and encouraged economic growth through diversified and inclusive agricultural development. Of all sectors, horticulture has seen a remarkable transformation.

The Government's initiatives have led to the establishment of numerous village-focused programmes across the country, aligning with the National Development Strategy 1 (NDS1).

These production programmes are designed to boost rural economies and combat poverty by providing sustainable agricultural opportunities.

Through strategic partnerships with organizations such as ZimTrade – national trade development and promotion, and the Agricultural Marketing Authority (AMA), with support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, efforts

have been made to ensure production is market-led and export-oriented.

The success of these initiatives is evident in the blooming flower industry, where smallholder and rural farmers are actively participating.

Districts like Marondera and Goromonzi have become key players in floriculture, benefiting from their proximity to Harare, which serves as a hub for exporting flowers to international markets.

Focusing on high-end flower varieties that thrive in Zimbabwe's climate has allowed local farmers to compete with established exporters from other countries, such as Kenya.

This shift has enabled smallholder and rural farmers to participate significantly in the floriculture sector, which was once dominated by more established farms.

Whilst floriculture as an industry has seen significant growth in Zimbabwe, the global market has also been growing, providing further opportunities for farmers that are considering taking part in the industry.

The global flower industry is a blooming and billion-dollar business, with total market value standing at over US\$49,8 billion in 2023, according to Future Market Insights.

■ Market size and demand

The global market for cut flowers has seen steady growth in the past few years, from US\$8,6 billion in 2019, to US\$9,9 billion in 2023, according to Trade Map..

The top importer in 2023 was the United States of America, which sourced total of US\$2,6 billion from across the world.

Other significant importers, which are already

sourcing other horticultural products from Zimbabwe, are German, and Netherlands, accounting for US\$1,28 billion, and US\$1,12 billion respectively.

Other leading importers are United Kingdom, France, Japan, and Russia.

Apart from targeting existing markets, there is room to leverage on experience of leading exporting countries from the continent.

Figures available on Trade Map show that Kenya is the leading exporter in Africa, recording US\$667,5 million last year, followed by Ethiopia and Nigeria with US\$231,1 million and US\$146,1 million respectively.

■ Floriculture markets developments

For over 200 years, the heart of the global cut flower trade has been the Netherlands.

The Royal Flora Holland auction house in Aalsmeer, near Amsterdam, presents a dynamic and highly organized marketplace.

The auction house is the leading international cooperative and marketplace for floriculture. Royal Flora connects players in floriculture and imports and re-exports almost 40 percent of flowers from around the world.

However, newer players are providing alternative markets, with some buyers now purchase on the internet as the auction has evolved.

Producers in regions like Africa are also shifting the dynamics of production, with some targeting direct market access instead of intermediary auction floors.

■ Supply chain

Meeting the world's demand for flowers involves an intricate supply chain, involving workers, farmers, wholesalers, airlines, cargo ships, traders, florists, and supermarkets.

Flowers must be transported swiftly using a cold-chain system which is a series of refrigerated facilities on farms, lorries, planes, and boats. This keeps the flowers in a dormant state, ensuring freshness.

Time is very critical in transporting flowers as every extra day spent traveling causes flowers to lose 15 percent of their value.

Airline transport is usually faster and is most preferred when compared with sea transport and other alternative forms of transport.

■ Market requirements

Phytosanitary certificates must accompany imports of flowers.

Phytosanitary certificates are issued by the

responsible authority in the exporting country and provide confirmation that the flowers to be exported conform to regulatory health/hygiene standards.

Depending on the destination, flowers fall into different export regulation categories.

Some of the flowers fall under prohibited category, where one cannot export unless they obtain a scientific research license or an exception (derogation).

Others are prohibited (pending risk assessment), which means they require risk assessment by the regulatory authority.

On the other hand, some flowers fall under regulated and notifiable, regulated, and unregulated, which means they either need a phytosanitary certificate and advance notification of landing; require a phytosanitary certificate but may not need advanced notification; or are materials that can be exported without conditions respectively.

There are also standards that apply to fresh cut flowers and flower buds, foliage, leaves, branches and other parts of plants suitable for bouquets or for ornamental purposes.

The standards define the requirements for these products when they are displayed for sale, put on sale, sold delivered or otherwise marketed at the wholesale stage within the Community either by traders or directly by the producers, and when they are imported from a country outside the Community or exported to such a country.

Producers are urged to comply with internationally recognised standards to improve pricing such as: GLOBAL G.A.P; MPS-ABC – environmental certificates and Fair Trade International.

Packaging and presentation are also issues to consider.

Each unit of presentation must contain flowers of the same genus, species or variety and of the same quality class and which have reached the same stage of development.

However, mixtures of flowers and mixtures of flowers with foliage of the same quality class but of different genus, species or variety are permitted provided they are marked.

In terms of labelling requirements, every stacking cart must be accompanied by a fully and correctly completed consignment note containing all required information about the stacking cart.

In addition, every packaging unit needs to be labelled with product and supplier information, namely: Supplier number; Variety name; packaging unit; grading marks and supplier name among others.



9 A TRANSFORMATIVE WEEK FOR SME'S IN EXPORTS

By Kudakwashe Tirivavi

THE ZIMBABWE Export Week, held from 15-17 October 2024 was a successful programme for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises seeking to expand their reach and compete on the global stage.

This re-imagined Exporter's Conference, as it had previously been known, offered Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) opportunities for growth, networking, and international exposure.

For example, the Buyers' Seminar, held on 16 October, provided a platform for direct engagement, which presented invaluable insights into the demands of international markets and fostered fruitful business-to-business (B2B) relationships.

Buyers shared their specific needs, logistics preferences, and partnership opportunities with participating SMEs.

Local small businesses, including exporting, received feedback on Zimbabwe's unique areas of competitive and comparative advantages.

For example, farmers learnt that Egypt is one of the competing source markets for sweet potatoes. Farmers however were presented with opportunities in the current supply structure, global demand spikes during Egypt's off-season, from March to June, which coincides with Zimbabwe's harvest. This knowledge empowered farmers to plan better and tap into the lucrative export market.

Another key highlight of the Buyers programme was also the series of buyer company visits, where SMEs from across Zimbabwe had the chance to showcase their capabilities to leading buyers from neighbouring countries and beyond.

Buyers from Mozambique, Zambia, South Africa, Namibia, Angola, the United Kingdom, and Botswana witnessed firsthand the companies' operations and capabilities to meet market demands.

Many buyers commended Zimbabwe's ability to supply their needs, having previously sourced goods and services from distant countries. This experience encouraged the buyers to look within Zimbabwe and Africa for solutions, making them ambassadors for promoting intra-African trade with the upcoming AFCFTA.

These developments are expected to benefit SMEs now and in the future.

During the company visits, ZimTrade also invited representatives from AfreximBank and the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ) to ensure SMEs received maximum support during the week.

With buyers, AfreximBank, and RBZ present, companies felt recognized and motivated to explore international trade opportunities. This shift in mindset toward export orientation is crucial for Zimbabwe's goal of reaching US\$14 billion in exports by 2030.

Another highlight was the Google Hustle Academy SME Workshop Series, held in Bulawayo. The workshop provided SMEs with crucial tools and strategies to succeed in the digital era.

Participants learned how to optimize their business strategies and use artificial intelligence to improve productivity, enhancing their competitiveness and market reach.



10 MAXIMISING EXPORTS OF LEATHER AND LEATHER PRODUCTS

By Kudakwashe Tirivavi

ZIMBABWE has an export target of US\$14 billion by 2030, and diversification of export markets and products is key to achieving this goalpost.

To achieve this target, President E.D Mnangagwa's Second Republic is focusing on broadening the country's export base beyond traditional goods, to include value-added products, which can create a robust foundation that can drive substantial export growth.

One of the sectors that has since been identified as having huge opportunities for export growth is the leather industry, with value-added products, known for their quality and craftsmanship, including items such as footwear, handbags, belts, upholstery, automotive leather, and leather clothing and accessories.

These leather products, especially exotic leather, present a unique opportunity for growth, considering the growing global market for leather, which is estimated around US\$200 billion annually, according to Trade Map.

The leather sector is prioritised within the National Development Strategy 1 (NDS1), with strong potential to enhance the production of value-added goods and increase exports.

The Government is already implementing the Zimbabwe Leather Sector Strategy (2021–2030) whose target is to reduce the country's dependence on raw hide exports, focusing instead on creating high-value products such as footwear, leather garments, and accessories.

To date, there are several initiatives that have been

rolled out to support the leather sector, aligning with the country's target to unlock opportunities for local businesses, particularly small enterprises, to increase their leather production and develop high-quality, value-added products.

These initiatives include technical assistance, training, and infrastructure support for small-scale leather producers, who play a significant role in the sector.

National trade development and promotion organisation, ZimTrade, is also working closely with groups of producers, with some of the youth-led enterprises under the Eagles' Next Youth Export Incubation Programme, facilitated to exhibit at international exhibition in Africa and beyond.

ZimTrade is also working with Netherlands-based PUM and Germany-based SES experts to improve production efficiency of local manufacturers so that they ready for regional and international markets and produce competitive products.

These targeted programmes are improving access to global markets and secure a foothold in this lucrative leather industry.

According to Trade Map, the United States is currently the world's top importer of leather, followed closely by Germany, France, Japan, China, Italy, the United Kingdom, Hong Kong, Netherlands, and South Korea.



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