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2026



1 ZIMTRADE SPEARHEADS HALAL STANDARDS INITIATIVE WITH ABATTOIR VISITS



Renwick Wachenyuka

ZIMTRADE THIS month hosted a specialised business delegation on Halal certification to assess local abattoirs and meat-processing facilities as Zimbabwe moves to strengthen compliance and improve access to export markets in the Middle East.

The initiative forms part of Zimbabwe’s broader strategy to expand meat exports and address certification challenges that have limited access to international markets.

Growing demand from Governments and consumers across the world for improved food safety, hygiene, traceability and ethical production standards has increased the importance of certification for businesses seeking entry into international markets.

Halal certification has become an important requirement in several premium markets, particularly in the Middle East and parts of Asia.

Recent international food safety incidents have reinforced the importance of compliance.

This year, the European Union’s Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed issued warnings on Vietnamese food exports after products were found to contain undeclared allergens, illegal additives and unapproved ingredients.

In South Africa, BM Foods Manufacturers recalled ready-to-eat hummus products after traces of *Listeria monocytogenes* were detected, highlighting the commercial and operational impact of food safety failures.

As Zimbabwe positions itself to increase meat exports into Middle Eastern markets, these developments underline the need for local producers to strengthen standards and certification systems.

The UAE imports more than US\$3,5 billion worth of meat and edible meat offal annually, presenting opportunities for Zimbabwe’s livestock sector.

However, local exporters have faced challenges accessing these markets due to compliance and certification requirements.

To support industry readiness, ZimTrade facilitated visits by experts from internationally recognised Halal certification bodies to selected local facilities.

The delegation carried out on-site assessments at abattoirs and meat-processing plants to evaluate existing systems covering hygiene, traceability, slaughter procedures and documentation.

The exercise aimed to assist businesses in understanding and meeting requirements applied in markets such as the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Malaysia.

During the visits, experts worked with management teams to identify compliance gaps and outline practical measures for improvement.

Focus areas included internationally recognised food safety management systems such as FSSC 22000 and HACCP, which are increasingly considered necessary for Halal certification.

Local facilities were also assessed against standards applied by Halal-certified abattoirs already supplying Middle Eastern markets, with guidance provided on sanitation, temperature control, contamination prevention, pest management and product traceability.

The delegation also highlighted the growing importance of animal welfare in international meat trade.

Modern Halal certification frameworks place emphasis on humane handling during transportation, holding, slaughter and processing as part of broader quality and compliance expectations.

Traceability systems were identified as another key component in building buyer confidence and strengthening supply chain transparency, enabling exporters to respond effectively to food safety concerns and maintain market credibility.

For Zimbabwean exporters, certification remains an important factor in improving competitiveness, supporting market access and strengthening long-term participation in international trade.





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LOCAL COMPANIES TO EXPLORE OPPORTUNITIES IN ZAMBIA'S SERVICES SECTOR



ZIMBABWEAN COMPANIES

in the agriculture and building and construction services sectors are set to participate in a Services Business Mission to Zambia from 9-11 June 2026.

The mission, organised by ZimTrade, intensifies efforts to grow the country's services exports and strengthen regional trade ties.

During the programme that will be held at the InterContinental Hotel in Lusaka, over 30 Zimbabwean companies will engage potential buyers, partners, and investors in Zambia.

The initiative targets export-ready firms in agriculture services as well as building and construction-related services, including SMEs and women- and youth-led enterprises with the capacity to supply the Zambian market.

The mission follows a successful exploratory visit conducted last year which identified strong business opportunities for Zimbabwean companies in Zambia's building and construction sector.

ZimTrade has expanded the programme to include

agriculture services as part of broader efforts to diversify Zimbabwe's export base and increase participation in regional services trade

ZimTrade Chief Executive Officer, Mr Allan Majuru, said the business mission forms part of broader national efforts to increase services exports, deepen regional integration and support Zimbabwe's economic transformation agenda through export-led growth.

"This initiative reflects Zimbabwe's broader objective of increasing services exports and positioning local companies to play a larger role in regional value chains.

"As the country advances industrialisation and export-led growth under Vision 2030, markets such as Zambia provide an important platform for Zimbabwean firms to commercialise their expertise, expand their regional footprint and generate foreign currency earnings.

"Zimbabwe has developed strong capabilities in agriculture and construction-related services, and our focus is to create sustainable export opportunities that support business growth, job creation and greater participation of women and youth-led enterprises in international trade.

"Zambia offers a strategic gateway into the wider Southern African market and this mission is designed to help local companies convert regional demand into long-term commercial partnerships," said Mr Majuru.

The Zimbabwe Services Business Mission to Zambia is expected to generate export orders, establish new business leads, gather market intelligence on Zambia's services sector, and contribute towards the diversification of Zimbabwe's exports.

Participating companies will engage in business-to-business meetings, market engagements, and networking sessions aimed at creating long-term commercial partnerships.

ZimTrade will also facilitate the programme through coordinated matchmaking and on-the-ground support during the mission.

Zimbabwe and Zambia continue to enjoy strong bilateral trade relations, with Zambia increasingly becoming an attractive destination for Zimbabwean exporters due to its growing demand for professional services, infrastructure development, and agricultural solutions.

The upcoming mission is expected to strengthen economic cooperation between the two countries while positioning Zimbabwean service providers to tap into opportunities within the wider Southern African region.





3

WE CAN TURN ZIMBABWE'S HERITAGE INTO EXPORT OPPORTUNITIES



Pelatia Choto

ZIMBABWE'S indigenous herbs are increasingly gaining recognition as high-potential export products, offering an opportunity to transform traditional knowledge and biodiversity into sustainable economic value.

From medicinal plants and herbal teas to essential oils and natural wellness products, indigenous herbs are emerging as a growing segment within global health, wellness, cosmetic, and nutraceutical markets.

For Zimbabwe, the indigenous herbs sector presents an opportunity to diversify exports and empower rural communities, preserve indigenous knowledge systems, and promote sustainable utilization of natural resources.

With proper coordination, investment in standards, and strategic market development, indigenous herbs could become an important contributor to the country's value-added export portfolio.

As international consumers continue to shift towards natural, organic, and ethically sourced products, Zimbabwe is well-positioned to leverage its rich biodiversity and cultural heritage to

compete in these niche markets.

However, unlocking this opportunity will require deliberate investment in quality standards, certification systems, traceability, and value addition.

In line with these efforts, ZimTrade in partnership with Ecopia Group conducted a series of stakeholder engagements and training sessions from 12–15 June 2026 with actors across Zimbabwe's indigenous herbs and essential oils value chain.

Ecopia Group is an Ethiopian-based social enterprise and strategic consultancy with operational experience in African heritage commercialization, digital systems integration, international coordination, and cross-border market development.

The organisation supports strategic planning, stakeholder mobilisation, digital platform development, intellectual property coordination, and the integration of continental creative trade systems.

The engagements by ZimTrade and Ecopia Group brought together producers, processors, regulators, and development partners to discuss best options for commercialising indigenous herbal products while preserving African heritage and ownership of intellectual property.

A key focus of the discussions was the importance of positioning indigenous herbs not merely as raw commodities, but as premium heritage products backed by strong compliance systems and authentic African storytelling.

Stakeholders highlighted that global buyers are increasingly demanding proof of origin, sustainability, ethical sourcing, and product safety before entering into trade agreements.

The trainings also underscored the critical role of certifications and internationally accepted standards in improving export competitiveness.

Participants explored the importance of Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), organic certification, phytosanitary compliance, traceability systems, and laboratory testing in accessing regional and international markets.

Industry experts noted that while Zimbabwe possesses abundant indigenous plant resources and traditional knowledge, there remains a need to formalise production systems and strengthen quality assurance mechanisms to meet the requirements of export markets in Europe, Asia, the Middle East, and North America.

Ecopia Group further introduced its approach centred on African ownership of intellectual property, cultural assets, and digital trade systems.

The organisation promotes "data sovereignty," a framework through which African countries and enterprises retain ownership and control of their cultural content, digital systems, and trade data while participating competitively in global markets.



depends on more than increasing production volumes. International markets require assurance that products meet established standards throughout the production and supply process.

This places greater emphasis on coordinated systems that link production, monitoring, testing and regulatory supervision.

For Zimbabwe's honey sector, this includes strengthening the ability to prevent contamination, monitor chemical and veterinary residues, maintain production records and respond effectively to technical requirements from importing authorities.

The Training of Trainers model is intended to create stronger connections between national regulatory requirements and production-level implementation within beekeeping communities.

Through district-level support structures, producers will have improved access to technical guidance aimed at strengthening compliance across the value chain.

Development of national technical evidence also formed an important component of the exercise.

Geo-referenced sampling and honey profiling activities were introduced to support the establishment of a clearer national understanding of production zones, product characteristics and potential residue risks.

Such information is expected to support the development of a National Residue Monitoring Plan that reflects local production realities while aligning with international compliance expectations.

Reliable data also strengthens Zimbabwe's ability to engage importing authorities and respond to technical assessments conducted during market approval processes.

Traceability remains another critical area for export market access.

Buyers require products to be traceable from production and collection points through aggregation, processing, storage and final dispatch.

For a sector that includes a significant number of smallholder producers, achieving this standard requires stronger producer registration systems, record keeping, batch identification, sampling procedures and improved communication across the value chain.

Cooperation between producers, processors, laboratories and regulatory institutions will be important in supporting compliance outcomes.

The programme is also expected to contribute towards creating clearer pathways for producers to transition from informal and local sales channels into structured and regulated markets.

Government and support institutions are expected to benefit through strengthened technical capacity to coordinate compliance systems, supervise implementation and support export development efforts.

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ZIMTRADE STRENGTHENS NATIONAL HONEY COMPLIANCE SYSTEM FOR EXPORT MARKET ACCESS



Kudakwashe Tirivavi

ZIMBABWE HAS stepped up efforts to strengthen compliance systems in the honey value

chain following the rollout of Training of Trainers under the Zimbabwe Bee for Empowerment and Export Project (ZIMBEE), as the country advances preparations to access regulated export markets.

The programme, implemented by ZimTrade across Manicaland, Mashonaland East and Matabeleland North provinces, forms part of a coordinated national effort to improve food safety controls, strengthen traceability systems and build institutional capacity to support honey exports.

The intervention is designed to support Zimbabwe's progress towards honey allowlisting, also known as whitelisting, a process required by some international markets before products can qualify for export.

Market access increasingly depends on a country's ability to demonstrate effective systems for quality assurance, residue monitoring and regulatory oversight across the value chain.

Training focused on building a pool of technical officers capable of supporting producers and businesses at district and community level.

Participants were drawn from public institutions including the Department of Veterinary Services, agricultural extension services and forestry-related structures.

The officers received training to strengthen their capacity to guide beekeepers, aggregators and processors on issues such as quality production practices, traceability, sampling procedures, residue monitoring and official compliance controls. The approach recognises that export readiness



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EXPORT CLUSTERS ARE RESHAPING RURAL EXPORT PRODUCTION



Melisa M Ncube

RURAL PRODUCTION

systems in Zimbabwe are undergoing gradual transformation as

export clusters create new pathways for small-scale producers to participate in international trade through coordinated production, improved compliance and stronger market linkages.

For many years, rural communities with productive capacity remained largely disconnected from export markets due to fragmented production, limited volumes, inconsistent quality and weak access to certification and logistics systems required by international buyers.

Individual producers often struggled to meet market requirements relating to traceability, product consistency and export documentation.

Through the Export Cluster Development Programme, ZimTrade is working to address these constraints by organising producers into coordinated production systems designed to improve export readiness and strengthen participation in formal markets.

Rather than supporting isolated production activities, the cluster model groups producers around common production standards, technical support

Beyond the Midlands horticulture cluster, similar models are being implemented across several value chains.

Honey clusters in areas such as Chikomba and Nyanyadzi are receiving support for organic certification and improved compliance systems to strengthen access to premium markets.

Horticulture clusters in different parts of the country are focusing on export-oriented products including avocados, bananas, citrus, flowers, strawberries and spices, with emphasis placed on coordinated production and market readiness.

The handicrafts sector is also benefiting from cluster development.

Rural artisans are receiving support to improve product quality, standardisation and market positioning while preserving traditional skills and adapting products to changing international demand systems, market requirements and export coordination mechanisms.

The approach is helping create production ecosystems capable of supplying international markets more consistently.

The impact of this model was recently demonstrated

during a ZimTrade Board visit to the Midlands Peas Cluster, one of Zimbabwe's developing horticultural export clusters producing sugar snap and mange tout peas for the United Kingdom market.

The visit provided an opportunity to assess production progress and engage stakeholders on measures required to strengthen competitiveness and sustainability within export-oriented rural industries.

The Midlands cluster reflects broader changes taking place within rural production systems.

Where producers previously operated independently and supplied informal markets, cluster members are increasingly producing under coordinated schedules aligned to export demand, supported by shared technical guidance and quality management systems.

This shift is becoming more important as international markets place greater emphasis on compliance and supply reliability.

Export competitiveness is no longer determined by production volumes alone. Buyers increasingly require suppliers that can

demonstrate consistency, traceability, quality assurance and compliance with market standards.

For individual smallholder producers, meeting these requirements independently can be difficult due to costs associated with certification, record keeping, aggregation and logistics.

Export clusters create opportunities to share resources, improve coordination and reduce barriers to market entry.

Under the cluster model, producers receive support in areas that directly influence export performance, including good agricultural practices, grading standards, harvesting protocols, post-harvest handling and market compliance.

Additional systems such as cold chain management, aggregation centres, logistics coordination and market intelligence are also becoming integrated into rural production areas.

The result is a gradual shift from rural production focused mainly on output towards production systems designed around market requirements and export sustainability.



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4 UNLOCKING HONDE VALLEY'S VALUE CHAIN POTENTIAL



Pamela Surumete

MORE EMPLOYMENT

opportunities, improved incomes and stronger market access are expected to emerge for farming communities in Honde Valley under a value chain development initiative designed to strengthen Zimbabwe's agricultural exports.

The Honde Valley Value Chains Development Project, implemented through a partnership between ZimTrade, and PUM Netherlands Senior Experts, a Dutch organisation that provides technical support to businesses in developing economies, is supporting smallholder farmers and agribusinesses to move beyond production and participate in more structured and competitive export markets through improved quality systems, value addition and stronger market linkages.

For many households in Honde Valley, agriculture remains the main source of income.

However, limited access to markets, certification systems and value addition opportunities has often restricted producers to lower-value sales despite strong production potential.

The project seeks to address these challenges by strengthening production systems and helping farmers align with export market requirements.

Support is being directed towards improving production practices, strengthening processing capacity, enhancing quality management systems and expanding access to international markets.

Smallholder farmers remain at the centre of the intervention.

Training programmes, technical support and improved access to production inputs are expected to strengthen productivity while creating opportunities for farmers to participate more effectively in organised export systems.

Farmer organisations and cooperative structures are also receiving support to improve coordination, strengthen bargaining power and build collective capacity to meet export demand.

The programme targets four agricultural value chains with strong growth potential in Honde Valley, that is bananas, coffee, tea and avocados.

These sectors already contribute significantly to the local economy and continue to present opportunities for expansion in export markets.

Zimbabwe's export performance highlights the growing potential within these sectors.

In 2024, avocado exports generated approximately US\$13,2 million, while coffee and tea exports contributed around US\$22,4 million, reflecting sustained international demand.

Coffee and tea have long supported livelihoods in Honde Valley, while bananas and avocados continue to attract interest due to expanding regional and international markets.

Beyond increased production, the project is creating opportunities for communities to benefit from value addition and local enterprise development.

Processing agricultural products closer to production areas creates opportunities for additional income streams and employment.

Bananas can support production of dried fruit products, flour, puree and beverages, while avocados create opportunities in products such as avocado oil, cosmetics and processed foods.

Coffee offers further potential through roasting, packaging and specialty product development.

By-products from coffee production may also contribute to additional income opportunities through organic fertilisers and related products.

The project is also encouraging stronger connections across value chains by promoting shared systems in areas such as post-harvest handling, certification, quality management and branding.

These coordinated approaches can improve efficiency and reduce production costs for participating businesses.

Additional opportunities are expected to emerge in processing, transport, logistics and agri-based enterprises, creating employment prospects particularly for women and young people within the community.

Efforts are also underway to strengthen Honde Valley's identity as a source of quality agricultural products by promoting production systems that support traceability, sustainability and market confidence.



SUSTAINABLE SOURCING



QUALITY ASSURANCE



GLOBAL STANDARDS



MARKET ACCESS



STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

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POSITIONING ZIMBABWE'S ESSENTIAL OILS SECTOR FOR INTERNATIONAL MARKETS



Tatenda Machirori

ZIMTRADE, IN partnership with PUM Netherlands, recently undertook a sector development

exercise for Zimbabwe's essential oils industry from 21–30 April 2026.

The initiative was designed to strengthen the competitiveness of local producers and processors by addressing operational inefficiencies, enhancing product quality, and aligning industry practices with evolving global market requirements.

The programme reflects growing recognition of the sector's potential to contribute meaningfully to export diversification, value addition, and inclusive economic growth.

Zimbabwe possesses a rich variety of indigenous oil-bearing resources that provide a strong foundation for the development of high-value cosmetic, skincare, fragrance, and wellness products.

Natural resources such as marula, baobab, Kalahari melon, mongongo, mafura, and moringa oils

are increasingly sought after in international markets due to rising consumer demand for natural, organic, and ethically sourced ingredients.

Global beauty and wellness trends are also creating increased demand for products specifically formulated for African hair and skin, presenting Zimbabwe with an opportunity to position itself as a supplier of premium niche ingredients with authentic African origins.

While several Zimbabwean enterprises have already made progress through investments in advanced extraction and processing technologies, a significant portion of the sector remains constrained by structural challenges.

Many small-scale and cluster-based producers continue to face difficulties accessing finance, technical expertise, modern equipment, and efficient operational systems.

These limitations have affected production scale, product consistency, and the ability of enterprises

to meet stringent export market requirements.

As a result, despite the country's strong resource base, export performance in essential oils remains relatively modest and concentrated within a limited number of regional and international markets.

Nevertheless, international market opportunities for Zimbabwe's essential oils industry remain substantial.

Demand is growing steadily across Europe, Asia, North America, and regional African markets for traceable and sustainably produced ingredients used in cosmetics, food flavouring, aromatherapy, and wellness products.

International buyers are increasingly prioritising suppliers that can demonstrate quality assurance, ethical sourcing practices, sustainability, and compelling origin stories linked to community impact and environmental stewardship.

In response to these trends, ZimTrade has continued to support market access initiatives through targeted programmes focused on standards compliance, logistics optimisation, export readiness, and buyer linkages, with particular emphasis on women-led enterprises and inclusive participation.



The sector development exercise combined field visits and technical consultations across the essential oils value chain.

These engagements were aimed at assessing production systems, identifying operational bottlenecks, and recommending practical interventions to improve efficiency and competitiveness.

Attention was placed on formulation control, process optimisation, and ensuring batch-to-batch consistency, all of which are critical requirements for export-oriented production.

Stakeholders identified several priority areas requiring urgent attention.

These included the need for more reliable sourcing of quality raw materials, stronger supplier development systems, improved formulation discipline, and better batch tracking and documentation practices.

Participants also highlighted the importance of

adopting scalable manufacturing technologies suitable for growing enterprises, strengthening compliance with Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP), improving inventory management and production planning, and implementing robust quality assurance systems, testing protocols, and sustainability measures.

These findings are expected to inform tailored recommendations that promote innovation while ensuring the responsible and sustainable use of Zimbabwe's indigenous plant resources.

The programme concluded with a two-day technical workshop focused on capacity building and knowledge transfer.



The workshop was structured around three core pillars: international quality standards and regulatory compliance; global market requirements and buyer expectations; and practical technical solutions to production challenges.

Participants received training and guidance on GMP frameworks, cosmetic regulations, product stability and safety testing, and efficient production system design.

Sustainability was also a central theme throughout the workshop, with discussions covering resource efficiency, waste minimisation, environmentally responsible packaging, and sustainable sourcing practices.

In addition to technical compliance, the workshop explored strategies for positioning Zimbabwean essential oils within premium international market segments.

Emphasis was placed on leveraging traceability, community impact, women's empowerment, and authentic product origin as differentiating value propositions capable of enhancing market appeal and competitiveness.

These factors are increasingly valued by global consumers seeking products that combine quality with social and environmental responsibility.

The sector development exercise for Zimbabwe's essential oils industry forms part of ZimTrade's

broader Essential Oils Development Project, which seeks to build technical and business capacity across the sector, strengthen linkages between local producers and international buyers, support compliance with export standards and regulations, and improve access to research, testing, and innovation platforms.

Through these interventions, the programme aims to drive higher product quality, increased value addition, stronger and more resilient supply chains, and improved export readiness among Zimbabwean producers.

Over the longer term, the expected impact extends beyond export growth alone.

A stronger and more competitive essential oils industry has the potential to support employment

creation, stimulate rural industrialisation, encourage innovation, and increase foreign currency earnings for Zimbabwe.

The sector also offers opportunities for greater participation by women and youth through community-based production systems and value-added processing activities.

The collaboration between ZimTrade, PUM Netherlands, and local industry stakeholders demonstrates the importance of coordinated partnerships in driving sector transformation.

Addressing structural challenges and equipping enterprises with the tools and knowledge required to meet global benchmarks, allows the initiative to lay the foundation for sustainable and inclusive growth within Zimbabwe's essential oils industry.



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VALUE ADDITION OPENS NEW EXPORT OPPORTUNITIES FOR TRADITIONAL GRAINS



Kingston Gwatidzo

ZIMBABWE'S traditional emerging as one of the country's most strategically important agricultural value chains, driven by rising global demand for climate-smart crops, health-conscious food products, and naturally gluten-free alternatives.

Through targeted value addition, improved processing capacity, and stronger market positioning, traditional grains such as sorghum, millet, rapoko, and pearl millet are increasingly being recognised not only as food security crops, but also as commercially viable export commodities capable of generating substantial foreign currency earnings.

As international markets shift towards sustainable and nutritious food systems, Zimbabwe is well positioned to leverage its long-standing production knowledge and favourable agro-ecological conditions to expand exports of value-added traditional grain products.

This transition from subsistence-oriented production to commercially driven agro-processing presents a significant opportunity for rural industrialisation, employment creation, and enhanced

participation in regional and global trade.

The global market for ancient and traditional grains has experienced sustained growth over the past decade, boosted by changing consumer preferences and increasing awareness of the nutritional benefits associated with these crops.

According to international market intelligence estimates, the global ancient grains market was valued at more than US\$7 billion in 2024 and is projected to continue expanding strongly over the coming years, driven by demand from North America, Europe, Asia, and the Middle East.

Sorghum and millet-based products are incorporated into health foods, breakfast cereals, bakery products, snacks, beverages, and plant-based food formulations.

A major driver of this growth is the expanding gluten-free food industry.

Traditional grains naturally contain no gluten, making them attractive alternatives for consumers seeking healthier diets or managing gluten intolerance and celiac disease.

The global gluten-free products market exceeded

US\$8 billion in 2024, with demand continuing to rise across premium retail and health-conscious consumer segments.

This creates direct export opportunities for Zimbabwean processors capable of producing high-quality, traceable, and packaged traditional grain products.

Value addition remains central to unlocking the full commercial potential of the sector.

Rather than exporting raw grain in bulk form, where margins are comparatively low and competition is intense, Zimbabwean producers have an opportunity to move into higher-value processed products.

Traditional grains can be transformed into flour, instant porridge mixes, breakfast cereals, baking blends, malt products, beverages, snack products, energy bars, and fortified nutrition products for regional and international markets.

The economics of value addition are particularly compelling.

Processed grain products command significantly higher export prices than unprocessed grain, whilst also reducing post-harvest losses and improving shelf life.

Milling and packaging traditional grain flour, for example, can increase product value several-fold compared to raw grain exports.

In export markets, premium health-focused brands retail millet and sorghum flour products at prices substantially above conventional maize meal and wheat flour products, particularly when products are positioned as organic, non-GMO, high-fibre, or nutritionally fortified.

Zimbabwe's traditional grains sector also benefits from a strong sustainability narrative that aligns closely with global climate adaptation priorities.

Sorghum and millet varieties are highly drought tolerant and require significantly less water than maize and wheat, making them particularly suitable for production under increasingly erratic climatic conditions.

As global buyers and consumers place greater emphasis on environmentally sustainable supply chains, the climate resilience characteristics of traditional grains provide Zimbabwean exporters with a powerful market positioning advantage.

Regional export opportunities are equally significant. Countries within the Southern African Development Community (SADC) continue to experience growing demand for processed grain products, particularly within urban retail markets where consumers are seeking healthier and more diverse food options.

Zimbabwe's geographic proximity to key regional markets provides logistical advantages for exporters targeting supermarkets, wholesalers, and institutional buyers across Southern Africa.

Beyond regional markets, demand for traditional grains is expanding rapidly in Europe and North America, where consumers are actively seeking ancient grains as part of broader wellness and nutrition trends.

International food manufacturers are incorporating sorghum and millet into breakfast cereals, gluten-free bakery products, and plant-based foods.

In the United States and Europe, sorghum flour and millet-based snacks have recorded strong growth in specialty retail outlets and online health-food platforms, creating opportunities for export-ready Zimbabwean brands.

The beverage industry also presents substantial opportunities for value-added traditional grain products.

Sorghum is widely used in the production of traditional and commercial beverages, including malted drinks and gluten-free beer products.

The global gluten-free beer market continues to expand, supported by consumers seeking alternative beverage options and increased innovation by food and beverage manufacturers.

Zimbabwean processors can therefore position value-added sorghum products not only within food markets but also within industrial beverage supply chains.

Another rapidly expanding market segment is nutritional and fortified foods.

Traditional grains are rich in iron, fibre, magnesium, antioxidants, and essential minerals, making them increasingly attractive for school feeding programmes, health supplements, and fortified food products.

Development agencies, institutional procurement programmes, and health-focused food manufacturers are placing greater emphasis on nutrient-dense crops capable of addressing food security and malnutrition challenges.

The commercial potential of traditional grains extends beyond food applications alone.

Millet and sorghum derivatives are increasingly being utilised in livestock feed formulations, bio-based industrial products, and speciality starch applications.

This diversification broadens the overall market base and strengthens the long-term resilience of the sector.

However, fully unlocking export competitiveness will require continued investment in quality management systems, modern processing technologies, packaging standards, and certification frameworks.

International markets increasingly demand traceability, food safety compliance, and consistent product quality.

Export-oriented processors therefore need to align production systems with internationally

recognised standards such as Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP), ISO food safety systems, and organic certification where applicable.

Branding and market positioning will also play a decisive role in determining export success.

Traditional grains are no longer viewed internationally as subsistence crops, but rather as premium “superfoods” associated with wellness, sustainability, and healthy lifestyles.

Zimbabwean exporters that effectively position their products within these premium consumer segments stand to capture significantly greater value in international markets.

The socio-economic implications of expanding the traditional grains value chain are substantial.

Increased processing and export activity can stimulate rural industrialisation, support the growth of small and medium enterprises, and generate employment across production, aggregation, transport, packaging, and manufacturing segments of the value chain.

For smallholder farmers operating in semi-arid

regions, traditional grains also provide a more climate-resilient income stream relative to water-intensive crops.

The promotion of traditional grains further aligns with Zimbabwe’s broader food security and agricultural transformation objectives.

Strengthening domestic processing capacity and increasing export participation can help the country improve rural livelihoods, reduce dependence on wheat imports and build greater resilience against climate-related agricultural shocks.

ZimTrade continues to support the development of export-oriented value chains by facilitating market linkages, promoting value addition, and strengthening the competitiveness of Zimbabwean products in international markets.

Through targeted interventions focused on processing, branding, standards compliance, and export readiness, traditional grains are increasingly positioned as a strategic export opportunity capable of contributing meaningfully to Zimbabwe’s economic growth and export diversification agenda.





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LESSONS FROM MAURITIUS FOR ZIMBABWE'S SERVICES EXPORT GROWTH

Learning. Adapting. Competing Globally.

WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM MAURITIUS



STRONG POLICY & INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT



INVESTMENT IN SKILLS & INNOVATION



DIVERSIFICATION INTO HIGH-VALUE SERVICES



GLOBAL CONNECTIVITY & MARKET ACCESS



PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS FOR GROWTH



KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR ZIMBABWE

- ✓ Build a competitive services ecosystem
- ✓ Focus on quality, standards & innovation
- ✓ Leverage digital transformation
- ✓ Develop global partnerships
- ✓ Position Zimbabwe as a trusted services partner

OUR VISION: A GLOBALLY COMPETITIVE ZIMBABWE THROUGH SERVICES EXCELLENCE

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LESSONS FROM MAURITIUS FOR ZIMBABWE'S SERVICES EXPORT GROWTH



Shingirai Masara

MAURITIUS IS widely regarded as one of Africa's more successful economic transformation stories, having built a diversified economy anchored on strong institutions, openness to trade, manufacturing, tourism and services.

Over time, the country has shifted from a largely agriculture-dependent structure to a services-led economy, with the sector now contributing approximately 64 to 68 percent of gross domestic product. Zimbabwe, which still relies heavily on agriculture and mining, continues to hold significant untapped potential in services exports.

A review of the Mauritian experience offers practical lessons that could support the country's efforts to expand and formalise its services sector as a driver of growth and foreign currency earnings.

Structural transformation

Shifting towards a services-led economy Mauritius deliberately pursued a long-term transition from an agriculture-dominated economy before the 1980s to a diversified services economy.

This shift was gradual and supported by consistent policy direction and institutional reform.

For Zimbabwe, a similar approach would require a clearly defined national services strategy aimed at increasing the sector's contribution to GDP over time.

This would begin with a comprehensive audit of existing capabilities in financial services, information and communication technology, tourism and education services.

Based on such an assessment, measurable targets for services sector growth could be established, supported by sector-specific roadmaps designed to guide implementation across priority sub-sectors.

Developing financial services as a core economic pillar Mauritius has developed a financial services sector that contributes around 13 to 14 percent of GDP directly, rising to approximately 25 percent when indirect effects are included, and supporting over 36 000 jobs.

The country has also positioned itself as an international financial centre serving markets in Africa and parts of Asia, supported by a stable regulatory

environment and tax-efficient structures.

For Zimbabwe, strengthening financial services would require stabilising the monetary and regulatory environment to build investor confidence.

A credible and predictable policy framework remains central to the development of a competitive financial hub.

The establishment of a dedicated financial services regulatory framework, with clearly defined mandates like Mauritius' dual-regulator model, would strengthen oversight and improve market confidence.

This would need to be complemented by the development of tax-efficient investment structures capable of attracting regional and international capital.

A structured medium to long-term growth strategy for financial services could support sector expansion, with emphasis on sustainable finance, digital transformation and improvements in the ease of doing business.

Zimbabwe's geographic position within Southern Africa also presents an opportunity to position the country as a regional gateway for financial services.

Building a competitive tourism and hospitality export sector

Mauritius has developed a tourism-linked services sector that extends beyond accommodation to include transport, retail, travel services and other supporting industries.

The country has also diversified into niche segments such as eco-tourism, health tourism, business tourism and education tourism.



Zimbabwe already possesses strong natural tourism assets, including Victoria Falls, Hwange National Park and Great Zimbabwe, which provide a solid base for growth in tourism exports.

Expansion opportunities exist in developing niche tourism products such as health and wellness tourism supported by medical infrastructure, education

tourism linked to regional academic demand, and business tourism driven by conferences, trade exhibitions and investment forums.

Improving supporting infrastructure, including accommodation standards, transport systems and travel services, would be key to increasing visitor spending and extending length of stay.

Policy incentives for tourism investment would further support sector growth, similar to Mauritius' use of targeted policy support to strengthen accommodation and food services.

Leveraging ICT, digital services and business process outsourcing



Mauritius has actively developed ICT-enabled services and business process outsourcing, including call centres, back-office operations and data centres, supported by ICT parks and special economic zones.

These services are expected to remain important drivers of economic growth in the coming years. Zimbabwe can build on this model by developing dedicated ICT parks and innovation hubs in cities such as Harare and Bulawayo, supported by reliable infrastructure and a conducive business environment.

The establishment of ICT-focused special economic zones could help attract investment through targeted incentives, simplified regulatory processes and improved utility services.

Investment in broadband connectivity and digital infrastructure would be essential to improving competitiveness in global outsourcing markets.

Zimbabwe's strong literacy levels and English speaking workforce provide an advantage in targeting international business process outsourcing opportunities.

Additional growth potential exists in fintech development, which has become a key focus area within Mauritius' regulated digital services sector.



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