



From the Governance pen

I appreciate and welcome showers that have fallen country-wide. Although some areas still need more rain, I think we have received above average falls. In this vein, I would like to urge all farmers to capitalise on the good rains and enhance their crop and livestock production. Namibia is a dry country and it is very rare that we receive such rainfall. So whatever we do, let us make the best use of it.

It is now some 13 years that the NNFU has been in existence, and as any other organisation, we have to be dynamic and take up challenges, especially regarding our objectives and targets. We started right after Independence to create a platform for black farmers to air their aspirations in their farming endeavours. We have succeeded to some extent, although these years were characterised by confrontation between the two agricultural unions. Now is the time to take up another dimension because of the call by many officials to us to narrow the gap between the two unions and become one. Congress supported this idea and currently the working relationship between the two is one of cooperation and mutual understanding.

There are issues where we may differ but all in all, that is what should prevail to realise the dream of one day having one national union, because farming is farming, whether one

is a communal or a commercial farmer.

Another issue that has been on our agenda for a long time is access to credit and support services. Agribank is there to support production but it leaves a lot to be desired. Much still needs to be done. The NNFU should stand up and demand tailor-made and specific programmes which would address the needs of our community.

We have to learn from the experience of other countries on the issue of collateral because this stands in the way of small farmers who want to access credit. Agribank is a developmental bank. It should be pro-poor and understand the needs of its clients. In this regard, there is a need to devise mechanisms that would see people being helped without collateral being a barrier and being able to recover its money at the same time. This is high on our agenda and we have to start working on some kind of proposal in this regard.



While I appreciate the current trend where black

farmers are entering the commercial farming sector through Affirmative Action Loans, black farmers are eagerly waiting to buy farms. With the good rains the country has received, now is a good time for farmers to access credit to increase their stock.

When the government started the resettlement process, there were certain objectives that the programme wanted to achieve. I do not know, however; whether we are still on track and whether the programme is still addressing issues of land reform. Are we resettling the right people? If not, we need to pause, look back and see whether this is what we wanted to do. I think we need to redefine our objectives and look into the whole issue of how we target the beneficiaries. Maybe it is time we called for a land conference to take stock and evaluate the resolutions and see where we failed.

The Permanent Technical Team made useful recommendations and its document provides the basis for a conference, which I think we need in order to be able to refocus.

Organised marketing is high on our agenda this year. This issue calls for a national workshop where we can draw up a national policy document on how to market livestock in communal areas. At present, this is a problem that needs to be addressed as a matter of priority.

Policy Education & Advocacy

THE GREEN SCHEME INITIATIVE

Background

National governments at the 1996 World Food Summit in Rome, Italy agreed that due to the world's growing population, they should take drastic steps in addressing the issue of food security.

The African Union, through the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) stressed the need for national governments to allocate more resources to agricultural development for them to achieve food self sustainability. This can be achieved through irrigation, which would not only make the country achieve food security but also help alleviate poverty.

Irrigation for food production though remains very low compared to other countries in the SADC region and also compared to the country's potential of 45 000 hectares. But due to its small population of 1.8 million, 45 000 hectares in Namibia could play a significant role especially because that opportunity lies within the rural areas.

So far, only 8 000 hectares are under irrigation, which led to the country adopting the Green Scheme Initiative, whose ultimate aim is to see all the 45 000 hectares under irrigation by the year 2030. The target Namibia has set itself however is to develop half of the total land to be irrigated by 2015 and complete it by 2030.

Although this opportunity exists, communal farmers are not involved in either small scale or commercial irrigation.

Purpose of the Green Scheme

This initiative was introduced to create an enabling, commercially viable environment through an effective public-private partnership to stimulate private investment in the irrigation sub sector as well as to settle small scale irrigation farmers.

The aims of the Green Scheme

- Encourage the development of small-scale irrigation based agronomic production,
- Increase the contribution of agriculture to the country's Gross Domestic Product and,
- Promote human resource and skills development.

NB: The next article, which will appear in the newsletter of the second quarter, will give more details on the operations of the Green scheme. It will look specifically into the opportunity for small scale farmers, the selection procedure, training and the financial implications of getting involved.



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In addition to this, we have Livestock Marketing Advisors in communal areas, who should be put to good use.

We also need to look into emerging commercial farmers who find themselves caught up between the two agricultural unions. The majority believe that they belong to the NNFU. But we need to see how they can be accommodated because it remains difficult to represent two different groups which have different needs. We are looking at devising a structure that will better address the needs of emerging farmers.

The issue of the Red Line is a sensitive one as it remains something that cannot be removed overnight. We are

however, happy that there are developments indicating that something is being done and although it will take a while, we should all understand that it is in the interest of the whole country.

My final message to NNFU members is that farming is a business and it should be treated as such. If farmers want to make a meaningful contribution to the country's economy, they should treat farming with a business mind and not as a leisure activity.

There is no rest; it will take hard work for your farming endeavours to make a difference in the economy.

Business Advice

The NNFU Livestock Marketing Advisor Training Programme

Although most regions in Namibia have been blessed with good rains, farmers in some parts of the Kunene Region are not as jubilant as those in the rest of the country. The northern part of the Kunene Region from the Okangwati area to the Epupa Falls still remains very dry. Likewise, some areas in the south-western parts like Sorri-Sorris have received less than 50 mm of rainfall. We at the NNFU hope you will still get your chance to enjoy the rainfall that the rest of the country has seen.

In this article, we will focus on the NNFU Livestock Marketing Advisor Program. As you all know, the NNFU, with the assistance of Oxfam Belgium, has been training Livestock Marketing Advisors (LMAs) for the past 4-5 years. The objective of this programme is to create a pool of resource people at community and Farmers' Association level, who can give advice to farmers. After being selected by their farmers' associations, the advisors attend two sessions of a week long intensive training. While the first week focuses on livestock marketing and other topics related to marketing, the second one deals with livestock production. Most of the second week of training is spent on-farm to enable the trainees to gain as much practical experience as possible.

After the training, the trainees are expected to undertake a number of activities including:

- Organising village meetings with the assistance of Farmers' Associations (FAs);
- Liaising with FAs to organise livestock auctions in the area;
- Advising farmers on marketing and other related issues and also
- Liaising with Agricultural Extension officials with regard to information dissemination.

The programme has been very successful in some parts of the region, where the Livestock Marketing Advisors organise marketing events at Farmers' Association level. Due to the fact that they now have a better understanding of the marketing chain of different products such as beef, mutton and lamb, advisors are able to bargain for better

prices on behalf of farmers at auctions. Apart from this programme, other marketing channels are also being used for different products. In this case, slaughter-ready animals are taken directly to abattoirs rather than going through an auction, thus eliminating the use of "middlemen".

In other regions, the impact is not yet as visible as desired because there are a few challenges that need to be addressed. However, the fundamental key to the success of the Livestock Marketing Advisor programme is to have a functional Farmers' Association at local level, which facilitates livestock marketing.

The role of the LMA is not limited to livestock marketing alone, but includes livestock production in general. An LMA is a jack of all trades if you like, who also assists farmers with basic advice on among others, supplementary feeding, breeding and animal health. In the areas where the bull and ram schemes are implemented, the LMA can be of great value to farmers in giving them advice on the best breed suited for the area and for the market as well.

We at the NNFU would therefore like to urge Farmers' Associations and the community at large to utilise the LMAs at their disposal because they have been trained to provide you with a service. More information on LMAs in your area can be obtained from your Farmers' Associations, Cooperative offices or from the NNFU office. We would also appreciate your feedback on the performance of these LMAs.

But before I sign off, here are a few useful tips on livestock production:

- Good rains are usually accompanied by outbreaks of diseases, so take necessary precautions and **vaccinate your livestock**. Consult your Veterinary Office about the diseases to vaccinate against in your area.
- The beef prices are at an all-time high – Live weight: N\$16/kg for weaners and carcass weight N\$15/kg for C-grades. If you have **animals to market**, this is the **time**.
- And remember; the **bull to cow ratio is 1:30**.

News flashes for December 2005 – March 2006

NNFU Executive Retreat in Swakopmund (12 – 16 December 2005)

The NNFU Executive Committee (Exco) had its annual retreat for 2005 in Swakopmund with the aim of taking forward the resolutions of the National Council meeting 2005. A change from the past was that the Exco also invited regional chairpersons of NNFU affiliates to contribute to the discussions. The outcome of this retreat was a visualised plan of action detailing activities, indicators, time frames and responsible persons for the implementation of

the plan. The Exco retreat was supported financially by the FOS-Belgium office in Windhoek. At the same time FOS has made funds available for the implementation of the proposed pilot activities pertaining to the institutional development of the Erongo Regional Farmers' Union and its affiliates.

NNFU annual planning session (10 – 12 January 2006)

The annual planning session of the NNFU was held in early January 2006 and was attended by all Secretariat members.

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As is the custom, the planning session started with a reflection of the past year's activities and was followed by proposed activities for the current year. Some of the most important activities for 2006 include the National Council meeting in August or September 2006, the visit of AFDI and Young Farmers' Union from France between May and June 2006 and the NNFU's public information week during August 2006 to coincide with the French mission.

Other planned activities include the NNFU/NAU visit to France to study the concept of an Agricultural Chamber in June/July 2006 and an NNFU/NAU visit to South Africa's Eastern and Western Cape to share that country's experiences on land reform, equity and shareholding schemes to mention but a few. The intention is to invite representatives of Ministries of Lands and Settlement, Agriculture, Water and Forestry, Environment and Tourism and Agribank to be part of the study tour. This trip will be supported by the German Technical Development agency, GTZ. From the look of things, this will be a very busy year indeed.

Mahangu Marketing Scheme Evaluation workshop (13 – 14 February 2006)

The NNFU, Agronomic Board, MSTT and other stakeholders have been involved in the promotion and commercialisation of mahangu in the last four years. This has resulted in collective marketing schemes for smallholder farmers in the Northern Communal Areas (NCAs). The NNFU together with its affiliates namely Regional Cooperatives and Marketing Promoters is responsible for the implementation of these activities. The evaluation workshop was aimed at assessing the progress made during the 2005 marketing campaign and to prepare an action plan for the 2006 marketing season. These efforts are supported with financial assistance from the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry, NASSP, the Agronomic Board, the MSTT and the NNFU through its Policy Advocacy Programme funded by Oxfam Spain, Oxfam Canada and the Spanish Government through the Spanish Cooperation.

Livestock Marketing Workshop south of VCF - Otjiwarongo (15 – 17 February 2006)

The NNFU and the Meat Board of Namibia have been involved in establishing regional marketing committees in regions south of the Veterinary Cordon Fence (VCF) since 2004. This conference in February was an attempt to bring together all regional marketing committee members in order to share experience with regard to livestock marketing in their respective regions. The meeting was attended by amongst others Mr Kahijoro Kahuire, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry, the Department of Veterinary Services and DEES staff especially from Omaheke and Otjozondjupa Regions. A major decision taken was for the Meat Board, the NNFU and the MAWF to convene a conference on livestock marketing in communal areas and also to look into drafting policy directives to guide livestock

marketing in communal areas in the light of problems that are being experienced currently. This workshop was funded by the Meat Board and the NNFU through its Livestock Marketing Advisors Training programme supported by Oxfam Belgium and the European Union.

Oshikoto Livestock Development Project (OLDeP) – Livestock Marketing Conference Ongwediva (01 – 02 March 2006)

The NNFU (represented by its Chief Executive Officer, Mr Vehaka Tjimune) attended a livestock marketing conference and presented a paper on the NNFU's experiences in the area of livestock marketing, especially in the northern communal areas. A presentation was also made by OLDeP on some of their initiatives in Onyuulaye in the north. The conference made a number of resolutions elaborating on an action plan to be further debated and internalised by various role-players in their programmes and action plans. The NNFU's participation in this conference was made possible by the Livestock Marketing Project, funded by Oxfam Belgium / EU.

International Networking Small-scale Farmers' Network and FOS partners' conference in Johannesburg, SA. (12 – 14 March 2006)

The NNFU and its Mozambican counterpart, UNAC in conjunction with FOS Belgium, organised a meeting of small-scale farmers, farm-workers' unions and Non Governmental Organisations working with farmers and farm-workers' organisations in SADC. The meeting, which took place in Johannesburg, was aimed at creating a platform for the different role-players to exchange information and to develop strategies for information sharing on a regular basis. A day of the conference was dedicated to the small-scale farmers to reflect on the role they play in the region and how they can strengthen their voice and position. At the end of the day long meeting, the small-scale farmers resolved to network closely, share information, develop collective positions and advocate for their positions. The meeting identified three institutions namely, UNAC (Mozambique), NASFAM, (Malawi) and NNFU to be focal points for the network.

This undertaking was financed by the French Embassy/ French Mission for Cooperation in Windhoek.

SACAU meeting (15 – 17 March 2006)

NNFU has been a member of the Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions (SACAU) since 1996. This year's SACAU meeting was hosted by Agri-SA and National African Farmers' Union (NAFU) outside Pretoria. Various representatives from international and regional bodies attended and made presentations to the Annual General Meeting. The NNFU also managed to establish contacts with Mr Roberto Longo, a Policy Coordinator from IFAD, who expressed keen interest in networking with the NNFU on issues affecting small-scale farmers at both national and regional level.

