



**SPEECH**

**BY**

**THE PRESIDENT, HIS EXCELLENCY**

**DR.E.D.MNANGAGWA**

**AT THE LAUNCH OF THE PRESIDENTIAL RURAL HORTICULTURE  
SCHEME**

**MANGWE DISTRICT, MATABELELAND SOUTH PROVINCE**

**15 DECEMBER 2021**

I am greatly honoured to be here in Mangwe District, Matabeleland South Province, to officially launch the Presidential Rural Horticulture Programme. This event marks yet another milestone in my Administration's quest to revitalise the horticulture sub-sector in line with the benchmarks outlined in the National Development Strategy-1 (NDS-1) and the Agriculture and Food Systems Transformation Strategy. It is also a testimony of my Government's commitment to implement people-centred programmes that leave no-one and no place behind, especially for our rural communities.

Horticulture is an important sub-sector of Agriculture, with the potential to considerably contribute to our country's Gross Domestic Product through exports, given our comparative advantages in the production of fruits, flowers and vegetables.

To this end, the Second Republic is rejuvenating the sector through improved production and productivity efficiencies across the Horticulture value chain. Leveraging on our vast God-given land, conducive climatic conditions and hard-working trait of our people, the rebound of the sector is inevitable.

The Presidential Rural Horticulture Scheme is, thus, part of an array of my Government's efforts to turn around the economic fortunes of our rural communities. It will enable communities to play a more active part in the ongoing, irreversible economic development agenda.

The programme will see the drilling and equipping of one borehole in each of the country's 35 000 villages. A total of 9 600 boreholes will equally be drilled for schools, while each ward will receive two boreholes for Youth Horticulture Projects.

To realise these set milestones, my Government has availed the requisite resources to capacitate ZINWA with additional, dedicated borehole drilling rigs and equipment.

In the broader context of the scheme, each village will be empowered with a nutrition garden such as the one I have toured, here at Jinjika Village. Over and above this, a wide range of fruit trees and sweet potato vines will also be distributed to households. The schemes will be supervised by qualified Agritex Extension Officers. This programme is expected to lift over 1.8 million households from poverty into prosperity, through increased household incomes as well as the creation of employment and empowerment opportunities.

Guided by the Whole of Government Approach, I exhort Ministries, Departments and Agencies to play their part in accelerating the realisation of the programme targets. This entails replication of this model across the length and breadth of our country.

It is my expectation that Village Heads, Headmen and Chiefs, will provide the requisite leadership to communities for the successful implementation of this programme. Women, youth and people with disabilities must be involved as active participants and beneficiaries of the programme. Our mantra that ‘**Nyika inovakwa nevene vayo**’ must continue to inspire villages, rural townships, social institutions, growth points and wards to develop the localities, brick by brick stone upon stone. It is you, the people of Mangwe District, Matabeleland South Province, who have the primary responsibility to build this District and the Province as whole.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen;**

The Presidential Rural Horticulture Programme recognises that lifting many into prosperity goes hand-in-hand with strategies that drive economic growth, reduce inequality, while improving the health, education and wellbeing of our people.

The need to concurrently tackle climate change cannot be overemphasised. As such, the ongoing construction of various dam projects across the country is envisaged to also insulate the agriculture sector and economy at large against the adverse effects of climate change. Dams under construction include; Tuli-Manyange Dam here in Matabeleland South, Gwayi-Shangani Dam and Ziminya Dam in Matabeleland North, and others throughout all provinces of the country.

I also commend the ongoing complementary work being done by various development partners and private sector players in the rehabilitation and maintenance of irrigation schemes across the country. The ongoing programmes and activities will undoubtedly help build resilience and adaptation capacities, especially for small holder farming communities.

These developments are also set to propel the country to achieve the target to put at least 350 000 hectares of land under irrigation.

In the context of the ongoing development of rural industry systems, it is important for the Presidential Horticulture Programme to create the needed critical mass for local value addition and industrial beneficiation. To this end, effective management and coordination systems should be urgently implemented to ensure the seamless aggregation of horticulture products at village level.

Complimentary plans must be put in place to set up industry facilities and other ancillary infrastructure to reduce post-harvest losses. The development of local factories and handling facilities such as the Mutoko Fruit and Vegetables Processing plant in Mashonaland East Province is a case in point.

Such facilities are set to unlock our country's potential to export value added horticultural products into regional and international markets, also taking advantage of market opportunities offered by the African Continental Free Trade Area.

The anticipated increased investment in our rural areas should be designed to trigger a multiplier effect in the areas of research and development, beneficiation, warehousing, as well as transport and logistics, among other aspects. This will help further stem rural to urban migration as our rural areas become highly attractive for our talented professionals and technocrats to stay, live and work.

In this regard, I exhort the Ministry of Agriculture to urgently capacitate and equip beneficiary communities with the relevant agricultural, business and entrepreneurial skills, as well as market linkages that will improve farm level competitiveness.

This will ensure that our small-holder farmers run their horticulture enterprises productively and profitably.

**Ladies and Gentlemen;**

The intricate link between women, youth, and sustainable rural development cannot be over emphasised. Against this backdrop, I commend women and the youth for remaining champions of development, more so against the background of the adverse effects of the illegal sanctions and the COVID-19 pandemic. Their hard-honest

work, dedication and resilience has seen them becoming the backbone of the agriculture sector.

With the continued unity of purpose, peace, as well as the unwavering resolve to produce for your families and communities, the attainment of a Prosperous and Empowered Upper Middle Income Society by 2030 |will undoubtedly be realised.

Meanwhile, I urge us all to remain vigilant following the recent resurgence and spikes of the COVID-19 pandemic. Let us not panic, my Government is monitoring the situation and stands ready to make timely decisions. I urge those who are yet to receive their vaccine doses to get vaccinated. We can only be safe until everyone is safe.

Finally, I commend the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Rural Development, its agencies, ARDA and ZINWA for their focus with regards to the establishment of these horticulture projects. However, more work lies ahead; this is just but the beginning.

I also congratulate Chief Hobodo, Village Head Jinjika: and your community for implementing the Presidential Horticulture Programme. I wish you great success in other development projects and initiatives.  
**Amhlope, Makorokoto, Congratulations.**

With these remarks, it is now my honour and privilege to declare the Presidential Rural Horticulture Programme officially launched.

**God bless you all.**

**God bless Zimbabwe.**

**I thank you.**