

TIMB, the Icon of Zimbabwean Tobacco Excellence

The Tobacco Industry and Marketing Board (TIMB) is an icon of excellence in facilitating the sustainable production of Zimbabwean flavour tobacco.

The regulatory and advisory statutory Board whose functions include controlling and regulating the growing, marketing, processing and exporting of tobacco in Zimbabwe facilitated the production and orderly sale of 211 million kilograms of tobacco in 2021.

Currently, Zimbabwe is the fourth largest tobacco producer in the world after China, India and Brazil.

The proportion of tobacco in quality ranges 1-3 increased from 7% in 2019 to 9% in 2020. Looking ahead, TIMB is promoting superior production where 95% of Zimbabwean tobacco is in quality ranges 1-3 by 2025.

Through the Government's Tobacco Value Chain Transformation Strategy, the Board targets an annual production of 300 million kilograms per annum. The aim is to produce a US\$5 billion industry by 2025 to complement the National Development Strategy 1 and the President, His Excellency Dr E.D Mnangagwa's transformational Vision of achieving a prosperous and empowered upper middle-income society by 2030.

TIMB decongested the tobacco sales floors by licensing five decentralized tobacco selling points which are Karoi, Mvurwi, Bindura, Marondera and Rusape. To sell the golden leaf, tobacco growers no longer have to travel to Harare from all tobacco growing regions but they can sell in their regions cutting transport costs and increasing convenience.

This augments government's devolution process and has created employment and led to the growth of these towns' economies.

Tobacco normally supports up to 165 000 households, accounts for more than 50 percent of agricultural exports, provides 25% to agriculture GDP and 21% of annual export earnings.

In 2021, TIMB set up an Inspectorate Department whose mandate is to curb all illegal activities in the tobacco industry. Inspectors have been deployed in all tobacco farming regions. They detect and investigate all suspected illegal activities.

To date, over 200 people have been convicted and fined because of side marketing. A Statutory Instrument on the side marketing of tobacco with stricter penalties is being crafted to bring to book those responsible for side marketing under the mantra zero tolerance against side marketing.

TIMB partnered with a Non-Governmental Organisation, Eliminating Child Labour in Tobacco (ECLT) Foundation, to establish a Technical Working Group with all tobacco players, the Ministry of Public Service, Labour & Social Welfare and the National Employment Council to curb child and forced labour in tobacco production in Zimbabwe.

This technical working group has done research on child and forced labour in Zimbabwe, crafted terms of reference and immensely educated tobacco growers on definitions of child and forced labour and how to end it. The inaugural annual report on work done to end child labour will be published mid-2022.

Working with the Sustainable Afforestation Association, Forestry Commission and the Federation of Young Farmers Zimbabwe through the Enhanced Tree Planting Program the Board has also managed to reduce the carbon footprint of tobacco on the environment. Over 20 000 hectares of eucalyptus camaldulensis trees have been planted in all tobacco growing regions i.e. Manicaland and Mashonaland East, West and Central. This specific tree species has high calorific value suitable to cure tobacco.

Acting against deforestation, child and forced labour speak to sustainable tobacco production, our way of fighting climate change and protecting children from exploitation and abuse.

TIMB has grown immensely in the past few years. We have exclusive relationships with tobacco companies from the world over and lately we expanded our portfolio of services. As regulator we have grown into a land use company in order to help every tobacco stakeholder grow and provide even more possibilities.

The Board has more than a thousand affiliates globally. It promoted partnerships with China on tobacco production and access to markets in China through Tian Zi Tobacco Company. The Government then introduced ease of doing business reforms focusing on trading across borders by shortening turnaround time or document processing time and reducing the cost of licensing.

The tobacco sector has potential to anchor the Zimbabwean economy and the TIMB provides huge opportunities for growth through value addition targeted to increase from the current 2% to 30% of produced tobacco.