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Command Agriculture 2016

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The **Targeted Command Agriculture** is a Zimbabwean agricultural scheme aimed at ensuring food self-sufficiency that was introduced at the start of the 2016 - 2017 farming season following the drought of the previous season. The scheme was introduced as Zimbabwe struggled with economic problems. It was announced in August 2016.

The scheme targeted farmers near water bodies who could put a minimum of 200 hectares under maize per individual. These were found to be 2,000 in total and each farmer was required to produce at least produce 1,000 tonnes of maize. Each participating farmer was required to commit 5 tonnes per hectare towards repayment of advanced loans in the form of irrigation equipment, inputs, and chemicals, mechanized equipment, electricity and water charges. Farmers would retain a surplus product produced in excess of the 1,000 tonnes. The programme will cost \$500 million. Each farmer will be earmarked to receive US\$250,000.

Funders

The scheme was funded by [Sakunda Holdings](#) and not taxpayers contrary to earlier assumptions. Sakunda is believed to have invested \$199 million into the scheme. ^[1]

Abuse of Inputs

In January 2017, three suspects; Tafirenyika Mariga, Hilda Mashamba, and Kumbirai Duku, were charged with fraud after they allegedly sold 33,6 metric tonnes of fertilizers and 30 liters of herbicides meant for 51 farmers in Makonde district, [Mashonaland West Province](#).

On December 9, Christopher Manuwere who represented the farmers teamed up with two members of his group and went to [Windmill](#) Harare depot intending to collect their allocation valued at \$16 800. The State alleges the group had no transport, hence, they went around Windmill premises looking for a truck to hire. In the process, they were told to contact Mariga, whom they contacted and he agreed to transport the inputs to Shubhara Farm in Makonde and he charged them \$650. He was allegedly paid a deposit of \$400 on the understanding that the balance would be paid on delivery of the consignment.

The truck was allegedly loaded and Manuwere was issued with a delivery note indicating that the truck was being driven by Ridzai Dambakushanda. After loading the truck, Mariga allegedly connived with Mashamba to steal the fertilizer. Pursuant to their plan, Mariga phoned Manuwere advising him that it was no longer possible for them to travel in the truck. Mariga allegedly ordered Manuwere and two others

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to go to [Westgate](#) roundabout, where he would pick them up in another vehicle, and they complied. The State alleged that when Manuwere was traveling to Westgate roundabout, Mariga, Mashamba and the driver, Dambakushanda left Windmill with the loaded truck and later sent \$14 to Manuwere through [EcoCash](#) advising him to hire a taxi to the rendezvous.

Mariga and Mashamba allegedly gave the consignment to one Panganai Mariga, who is still at large, to sell it. Duku allegedly sold the fertilizer in [Murehwa](#) and the suspects shared the proceeds among themselves. Manuwere became suspicious after he failed to locate the truck along Harare-Chirundu Road and reported the matter at Harare Central Police Station on December 10, leading the suspects' arrest on January 4 2017.^[2]

On January 11, 2017, Tafirenyika Mariga and Hilda Mashamba were denied bail after the State said they were a flight risk and likely to interfere with investigations, while their alleged accomplice Kumbirai Duku was released on \$200 bail after he told the court he only acted as a broker and facilitated the transaction.^[3]

Rusape

In [Rusape](#), Shepherd Mukaka was sentenced to 7 years in jail by magistrate Shane Kubonera after he was convicted of abusing inputs worth over \$2,000 which were meant for government's Command Agriculture scheme.

The court heard that Mukaka of Verenge high-density suburb approached Command Agriculture officers in Makoni in November 2016 pretending to be a genuine farmer and lied that he owned five hectares in Ward 38, Makoni Central. The district command agriculture team supplied him with inputs for five hectares. Mukaka received 5x25kg bags of maize seed, 32x50kg bags of compound D and 24 x 50kg bags of Ammonium Nitrate for the exercise but reportedly diverted the inputs to other uses. The matter came to light when the district verification team carried out a monitoring and evaluation exercise on all farmers contracted to the programme.

When Mukaka was approached, he took the officers to his relative Farai Mapako's Arrafat farm in Rusape. However, Mapako was alerted that Mukaka used his plot to cover up for his fraud. Mapako approached the verification team and disclosed that the farm they were shown by Mukaka was his. The verification officers approached Mukaka who failed to account for the inputs that he had accessed, leading to his arrest. However nothing was recovered.^[4]

Command Agriculture in 2005/2006

The command agriculture scheme is the second agriculture scheme to be implemented in Zimbabwe in a ten year period. The first Command Agriculture scheme was implemented between 2005 and 2006 and it was called **Operation Taguta / Sisuthi**. In that program, the army was given the task of tilling large amounts of land as it was peacetime and their labor was available. The command agriculture in that season was not successful.^[5]

In 2007 the government introduced the [Farm Mechanisation Scheme](#) which was championed by then

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Reserve Bank Governor, [Gideon Gono](#). That scheme did not succeed as a result of alleged corruption that saw the mechanisation resources distributed largely on political basis, and some of it taken by political elites.^[6]

Alleged advantages

- Major boost for agro-processing and manufacturing industries.
- Reduced import of raw materials
- Ensuring food security
- Increased production per hectare pegged at 5 tonnes per hectare.^[7]

About Pindula

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