BUNNY WORLD NEWSLETTER
ZICORBA
Zimbabwe's only Collective Voice of Rabbit Farmers
Member of the Livestock and Meat Advisory Council
August 2021

ZICORBA's top honchos meet to refine strategy

ZICORBA's top honchos meet in Zimbabwe's second largest city, Bulawayo, next month to refine the organisation's strategy in readiness for taking the burgeoning local rabbit industry to another level, Secretary General, Mrs. Siphosethu Ncube Moyo said.

Mrs. Moyo said the meeting, which will be held on September 4 and 5, will take stock of the progress made since the organization drafted its first strategy in December 2020, which has ushered a major transformation in Zimbabwe's rabbit farming sector.

"Since we launched ZICORBA in July 2020, the rabbit industry has gone through phenomenal changes, which are a direct consequence of the strategies that we put in place to breathe life back into the cuniculture sector, which had been in a comatose. When we crafted the industry turn-around strategy, we underestimated the response from the industry," she said in an interview with Bunny World.

"The dramatic rebound of the rabbit industry has necessitated a review of strategy to ensure that our plans are in sync with and synergistic to the developments obtaining in the sector," Mrs Moyo said.

The meeting will be attended by President Regis Nyamakanga; Vice President Orbert Nyakabau; Secretary General Moyo; Treasurer Sijabulisiwe Mpofu, Membership Secretary and President of Midlands Chapter, Rejoyce Nyamanhindi; Publicity and Marketing Secretary, Shame Chibvongodze; Presidents of Mashonaland East, Manicaland, Masvingo and Matabeleland South Chapters; Kholiwe Kafungura, Simbarashe Chiwa, Lydia Chimbari and Ntokozo Sibanda.

"At the end of the two-day retreat, we will unveil plans to take the industry to another level. We, at ZICORBA, are humbled by and grateful to rabbit producers in Zimbabwe for the confidence that they have shown in us. We will continue to work hard so that we can take our industry to the proverbial promised land," Mrs. Moyo said.

ZICORBA National Executive Committee members who will take part in a strategic planning meeting in Bulawayo

(Front row from left) President Regis Nyamakanga, Vice President/ Chapter President Mash Central & West Obert Nyakabau, Secretary General/Chapter President Bulawayo Siphosethu Ncube Moyo, Treasurer Sijabulisiwe Mpofu, Publicity and Marketing Secretary Shame Chibvongodze, Membership Secretary/Midlands Chapter President Rejoyce Nyamanhindi;

(Back row from left) Masvingo Chapter President Lydia Chimbari, Manicaland Chapter President Simbarashe Chiwa, Harare Chapter President Godknows Guvamombe, Matabeleland South Chapter President Ntokozo Sibanda and Mashonaland East Chapter President Kholiwe Kafungura

Minister Chadzamira enthused by ZICORBA rabbit initiative

Masvingo Provincial Affairs and Devolution Minister Ezra Chadzamira is enthused by the Zimbabwe Commercial Rabbit Breeders Association (ZICORBA) projects and is urging women in his province to venture into cuniculture production.

The Minister, who visited the ZICORBA Masvingo Chapter President Lydia Chimbari, to congratulate her on her recent election said he had been charmed by Ms Chimbari's rabbitry that he instantly decided to start his own rabbit rearing project.

The Minister acquired five breeding stock from Ms Chimbari's rabbitry to kick-start his rabbit project.

"I am very impressed by what I have seen here at your rabbitry and wish to invite you to work with me in encouraging women in Masvingo to venture into rabbit production. We want the women to tap into your vast experience in rabbit production," Minister Chadzamira said.

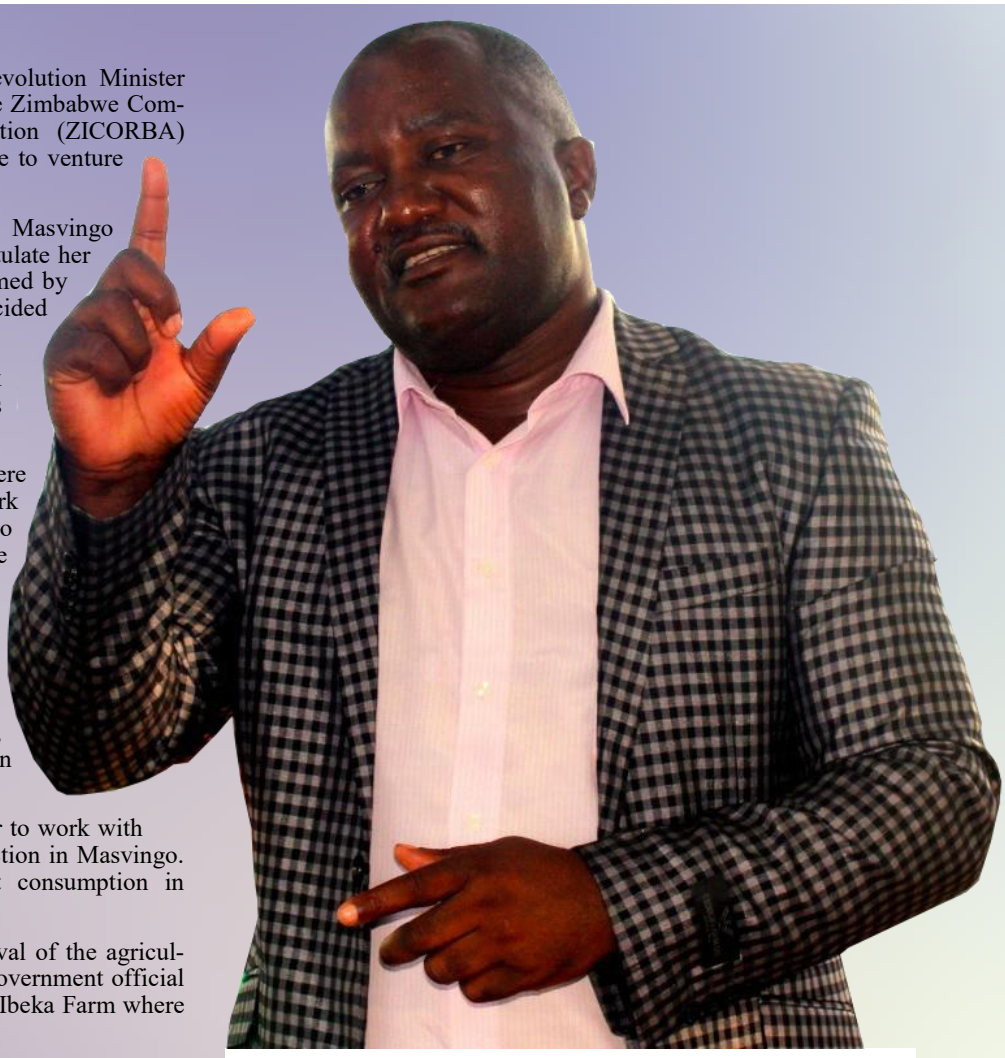
Ms Chimbari, also known as Mai Sigauke, was recently elected President of the ZICORBA Masvingo Chapter. The Gaths Mine, Mashava, employee is a top rabbit producer in the province.

"I feel honoured to be invited by the Minister to work with him in his initiative to promote rabbit production in Masvingo. We hope he will help us promote rabbit consumption in Masvingo town," Ms Chimbari said.

The Minister has been spearheading the revival of the agricultural sector in the province, with the senior government official leading by example at his 120-hectare Cresta Ibeka Farm where he has a thriving winter wheat crop.

Located about 10km west of the ancient city, Cresta Ibeka is now a thriving mixed farm, boasting a fledgling winter wheat crop that is irrigated using a modern computer-linked centre pivot.

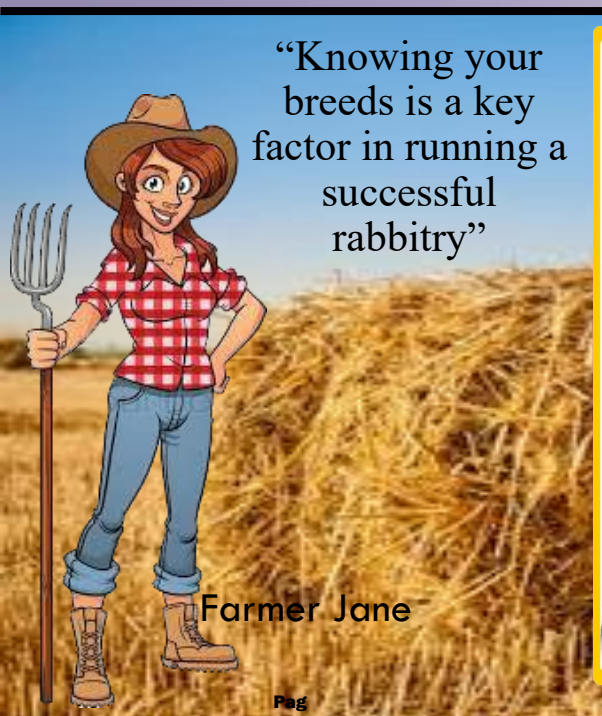
Besides a verdant wheat crop, which the Minister is growing thanks to the Command Agriculture programme, there are also plans to venture into commercial garlic production on about 10ha.



Ezra Chadzamira

Masvingo Provincial Affairs and Devolution Minister

Within the next six months, Minister Chadzamira hopes to have also started production of lucerne grass on about 20ha to feed his hybrid cattle herd. Lurcene can also be used to feed rabbits.



Bulawayo, Manicaland farmers receive pure breeds

ZICORBA members in Bulawayo , receiving New Zealand White pure breeds donated by Raymeg Consultants Private Limited

ZICORBA members based in Bulawayo and Manicaland provinces have received New Zealand White and Chinchilla Giganta pure rabbit breeds, respectively, from rabbit firm Raymeg Consultants Private Limited.

This is part of an initiative by ZICORBA and Raymeg to upgrade the available rabbit gene pool and to ramp up production in the face of a sharp increase in the number of farmers venturing into cuniculture production.

To date, ZICORBA members in Masvingo, Mashonaland East and Midlands have received the pure breeds. The pure breeds were imported from South Africa recently under a government approved and supervised programme.

Raymeg Executive Director, Mrs Paidamoyo Nyamakanga told Bunny World that the distribution of the pure breeds would continue in Mashonaland East, Harare and Mashonaland West provinces in September 2021.

"The programme is aimed at broadening the participation of rabbit farming amongst our people, to improve livelihoods, create employment and to contribute to the country's gross domestic product", she said.

Commercial rabbit production, which is fast gaining ground in Zimbabwe, has significant potential to generate foreign currency earnings for the country. Export markets include China and the Democratic Republic of Korea.

ZICORBA, which is the only collective voice of rabbit farmers in Zimbabwe, is engaging schools, hospitals, hotels, restaurants and eateries in its nationwide campaign to popularise consumption of rabbit meat, because of its immense health benefits.

ZICORBA members in Manicaland, with their Chinchilla Giganta pure breeds donated by Raymeg Consultants Private Limited

Nyirenda lands Mash East Secretary General post

Wisdom Nyirenda,
ZICORBA Mashonaland East Chapter Secretary General

Seasoned entrepreneur and rabbit farmer Wisdom Nyirenda has been elected the ZICORBA Mashonaland East Chapter Secretary General following an election held recently. The position had remained vacant ever since Chapter elections were held late last year, which was crippling operations in the province.

The 34 years old businessman who is the founder and CEO of Be In Technology Zimbabwe (Bitzim), a startup that helps Zimbabweans adopt blockchain technologies by making them accessible and sustainable, was upbeat about his election, promising swift turn around strategies for the province.

"I realize the importance of the post of Secretary General (SG), due to the fact that it encompasses so many roles. A Secretary General has to operate as a main point of contact for the organisation, undertake the task of administration and communications, including competition events, affiliations, memberships, bookings and mailings. As SG I, have the duty of dealing with the day to day running of the chapter, hence I will come up with various strategies needed to make our chapter the best, "he said.

Nyirenda said he wanted to see exponential growth in the rabbit industry as it had the power to financially emancipate most citizens in the country.

"My desire is to see this industry thrive beyond anyone's imagination. I hope that rabbitry in Zimbabwe will come from the shadows of backyard farming and grows to large scale commercial farming where we become big players on a macro and global scale as my ethos and mantra is "Go Big or Go Home!" I do hope that my efforts in this industry will leave a footprint and make a difference in all those around me as I am confident that there are rich financial rewards in cuniculture." Nyirenda said.

Speaking to Bunny World after the results, Mashonaland East Chapter President Kholiwe Kafungura welcomed the election of Nyirenda, highlighting how the move would enable her to focus on policy formulation and implementation rather that the day to day operations of the chapter.

"My desire is to see this industry thrive beyond anyone's imagination. I hope that rabbitry in Zimbabwe will come from the shadows of backyard farming and grows to large scale commercial farming where we become big players on a macro and global scale…"

"I welcome Wisdom to the Mash East provincial executive and hope he will hit the ground running as stated in his election manifesto. Doubling the roles of President and Secretary general was affecting our overall performance as a province, but going forward I see us improving significantly. The new SG comes with vast administrative experience, so we hope to effectively benefit from him as at chapter as well as national level," Kafungura said.

The Mash East SG runs a rabbitry under the name Pearl's Bunnies Estate and recently purchased multiple plots of land in Goromonzi which will eventually house 5000 rabbits in the not so distant future.

Wisdom Nyirenda at his rabbitry in Goromonzi

Mavis Mupingo elected SG for ZICORBA's Manicaland Chapter

Retired health worker and farmer, Mrs Mavis Mupingo, has been elected Secretary General of the Manicaland Chapter of ZICORBA.

The Nyazura farmer emerged the winner of the race in which she was pitted against 20-year-old university student Ronald Baipai. The election, which was held on 27 August 2021, were supervised by Chapter President Simbarashe Chiwa.

Mrs Mupingo is a former committee member of the Pig Producers Association of Zimbabwe. She joined ZICORBA recently after she attended a training in rabbit production, which was conducted by ZICORBA's National Training and Technical Advisor, Mr Garisanai Mudzingwa.

"I feel humbled to represent our province at such a time as this when the association is at its infancy. I hope to grow with it and to represent the cause of rabbit farming to the best of my ability," said the ecstatic Mupingo in an interview after the election.

Mrs Mavis Mupingo

ZICORBA Manicaland Chapter Secretary General

"I have been rearing rabbits at my farm since 2004. At some point I drastically scaled down my stock due to unavailability of market for rabbit meat then and spiraling costs of rabbit pellets. I have resumed rabbit production, having acquired good breeding stock from renowned breeders in Harare and Manicaland. I have 24 kits and hope to increase my stock to commercial levels within the next six months," Mupingo said.

The SG for the Manicaland chapter of ZICORBA is optimistic about the Association. "I foresee an increase in membership, a spike in production, market growth and extensive outreach, training and project management", she said

Mrs Mupingo owns Folkington Farm Lot 1 in Nyazura, Makoni District, where she is engaged in mixed farming including pigs, rabbits, ducks, free range chicken, broiler chicken, maize and other small grains.

Chidy Rabbitry painting Mashonaland West red

New Zealand Red fryers bred at Chidy Rabbitry in Norton, Mashonaland West province

In this issue of Bunny World (BW), we feature an interview with Mr. Clive Chiduuro (CC), the man behind Chidy Rabbitry in Norton, Mashonaland West province in Zimbabwe. Mr. Chiduuro has carved a niche for himself as one of the leading producers of New Zealand Reds in Norton. Below is the interview we did with the Chidy Rabbitry boss:

BW: Who is Clive Chiduuro and how did you start your rabbit farming journey?

CC: Clive Chiduuro is a farmer by calling and an Agronomist by profession. I am a holder of a Bachelor's Science Degree in Agronomy and also a Holder of a Diploma in Agriculture. I started keeping rabbits in 2016 January as a fulfillment of my academic entrepreneurship project at Chibero College of Agriculture. At the completion of my studies, I received USD300, being an award for having the best project. I managed to purchase housing and feed which enabled me to expand my project, thereby thrusting me into mainstream rabbit farming.

BW: Why is rabbit farming important to you?

CC: Rabbit farming is a lucrative enterprise in terms of profit margins as less labour is required. l usually spend less time at the rabbitry per day but I still produce results. The project provides me with side income and also brings food on the table in the form of high-quality protein. Rabbit manure is an essential component of our home garden and this has significantly reduced our dependency on inorganic fertilizer. I see that there is a potential for me to grow in the rabbit industry.

BW: What are the opportunities for rabbit farmers in your province?

CC: The market for rabbits and rabbit meat is growing in Mashonaland West province. The market ranges from restaurants, lodges, new farmers who are in need of breeding stock. Individuals can also engage into value addition with rabbit pelts, urine, heads, rabbit droppings and other value chain products.

BW: What are your hopes and dreams in regards to your rabbit project?

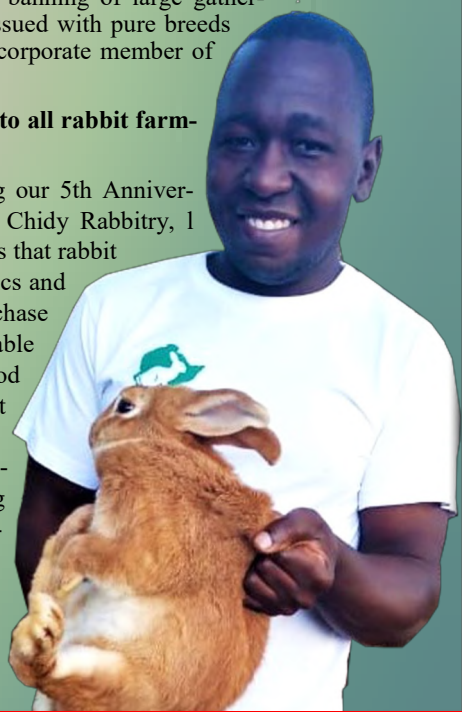
CC: Currently l am keeping single breed which is the New Zealand Red and l wish that by end of year would import new blood lines for New Zealand Red and also to purchase other breeds such as Cinnamon, New Zealand White, Chinchilla Giganta and Californian. I also want to expand my rabbitry from the current five to a 50-doe breeding system, hence the need to invest in new housing. I also have plans of venturing into value addition, focusing on making of rabbit urine fertilizer.

BW: How is ZICORBA assisting farmers in your province?

There are online trainings that are being done. Field inspections of individual rabbitries are also being done by the Secretary of Inspection in the province. Plans to do field days and workshops are in the pipeline as the current COVID 19 pandemics has resulted in the banning of large gatherings. Some farmers were issued with pure breeds by Raymeg Investments a corporate member of ZICORBA.

BW: Your parting words to all rabbit farmers in your province?

CC: As we are celebrating our 5th Anniversary in rabbit breeding as Chidy Rabbitry, l would like to advise farmers that rabbit farming is a game of genetics and good management. Purchase good breeds from reputable breeders who have a good record keeping system that can be there for you. Feeding with the right and adequate feed and keeping records is a vital requirement and remember, always start small and grow



Clive Chiduuro shows off one of his New Zealand Red buck

Zambian government in major rabbit restocking programme

The Zambian government has embarked on a major rabbit restocking programme to bolster cuniculture production in the face of a spike in demand of rabbit meat in the southern African country, a top industry official has said.

Rabbit Farmers Association of Zambia (RFAZ) president Chris Daka told Bunny World in an interview that plans were underway to import pure rabbit breeds from South Africa to help improve the available gene pool.

This development comes on the back of an upward trajectory in rabbit meat consumption in the country.

"Zambians have come to appreciate the health benefits of eating rabbit meat and as a result the local market for rabbit meat is growing like veld fire. Demand currently far outstrips supply," the RFAZ boss said.

The Zambian rabbit industry remained relatively small, held back by inadequate breeding stock, prevalence of diseases and insufficient supply of stock feed.

"We are working on an expansion programme to meet demand. This include importation of the much-needed breeding stock. In this regard, the government is embarking on a restocking of rabbit. As an industry we are busy constructing rabbit housing, and ensuring the availability of adequate feed.

"How to import breeding stock from South Africa during the COVID pandemic is our major problem as borders are closed. Another challenge that we are facing is inadequate supply of rabbit pellets – we only have two companies producing rabbit pellets and these companies don't distribute countrywide.

"We also have a challenge of diseases. Most of our veterinary officers are not trained in handling rabbit diseases," Daka said.

Meanwhile, the RFAZ chief said his organisation was looking at forging strategic partnerships with other associations in Uganda and with ZICORBA in Zimbabwe as African farmers seek greater cooperation to increase their participation in rabbit farming globally

Chris Dhaka,

President of Rabbit Farmers Association of Zambia (RFAZ)

Rabbit Stew

"Besides being tasty, Rabbit meat is suitable for special diets such as those for the aged, heart disease patients, low sodium diets and weight reduction diets"

It's magnifique

Chef Pablo

Ingredients

2 tablespoon oil
1 kilogram rabbit, cut into pieces
3 brown onions (450g), sliced thickly
4 clove garlic, crushed
1 cup (250ml) water
1 litre (4 cups) chicken stock
410 gram can diced tomatoes
5 potatoes (1kg), chopped coarsely
2 carrots (240g), sliced thickly
1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
3 bay leaves
1 teaspoon dried chilli flakes
1/3 cup coarsely chopped fresh mint
1 cup (120g) frozen peas

Method

1 Preheat oven to 160°C/140°C fan-forced.
2 Heat half the oil in large flameproof casserole dish; cook rabbit, in batches, until browned.
3 Heat remaining oil in same pan; cook onion and garlic, stirring, until onion softens.
4 Add the water, stock, undrained tomatoes, potato, carrot, vinegar, bay leaves, chilli and mint to pan. Return rabbit to pan; bring to the boil. Cook in oven, covered, about 2 hours or until rabbit is tender. Add peas; cook, uncovered, 15 minutes and stew is ready.

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