



# GAPWUZ

**GENERAL AGRICULTURE AND PLANTATION WORKERS' UNION OF ZIMBABWE**

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To provide good quality efficient service through empowering, protecting and advancing the living and working conditions of agricultural workers.

## **GAPWUZ UPDATE TO ITS STAKEHOLDERS IN THE WAKE OF COVID- 19**

GAPWUZ seeks to notify all its stakeholders on the recent developments that have taken place in Zimbabwe and the impact it has to the farm workers in the face of coronavirus. The union informs its stakeholders that Zimbabwe has been placed under a 21 days national lock down by the Government as a preventative measure against COVID-19. The lock down starts from the 30<sup>th</sup> of March to the 19<sup>th</sup> of April 2020 which then changes the union's previously communicated days of returning to office (14<sup>th</sup> of April 2020).

Another development is the announcement by the Government of Zimbabwe and the gazetting of SI 83 of 2020 which classifies Agriculture industry under essentials services meaning farm workers for the first time have been classified under essential services. A position we agree to and support because we work in ensuring food security during such a crisis period and the times. The union however is worried on the current state of occupational health and safety standards on farms. Currently there is an absence of a health and safety Statutory Instrument (SI) in the agriculture industry to guarantee workers safety. GAPWUZ, since 2014 has been pushing for the gazetting of the OSHE SI. It believes now is the best time for all parties to put that OSHE SI in place to help farm workers since an agreed document is already there in the hands of National Employment Council for Agriculture (NECAIZ).

GAPWUZ also notes with concern the recent gazetting of SI 81 of 2020 on minimum wages. The regulation excludes farm workers who are providing equally essential services (SI 83 of 2020) in the industry which the government has classified as essentials from the national minimum wage of ZWL 2 549.74. Farm workers have been relegated to survive on a minimum wage set in February 2020 of ZWL550.00 during this difficult period. Vulnerability among farm workers is therefore very high hence the union is calling for a wage review for all the sectors.

Another concern of GAPWUZ is on the respect of workers' rights during the physical absence of trade union officials as well as NEC Agents. As a trade union, we urge that employers in the meantime and as always to be strictly prohibited from any act of workers' rights abuses and violations. Any employee dismissed or whose rights are violated would be deemed to be unfairly dismissed under whatsoever circumstances in the wake of COVID 19.

We are also concerned that our members work 8 hours per day and six days per week leaving them with no time to look out for food. It is high time that all employers be compulsorily obliged to provide

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**All correspondences to be addressed to the general secretary**

a standard food hamper of the basic commodities as a right considering that employers were voluntarily providing in the agriculture industry.

In the midst of this crisis, women farm workers are further pushed into precarious living and working conditions. Social norms that put a heavy caregiving burden on women and girls are likely to cause their physical and mental health to suffer and impede their access to sources of livelihoods hence they risk losing their jobs. More so food may become scarcer during a public health emergency, forcing households to engage in negative coping mechanisms, such as consuming less food. Where women eat last and least, this can lead to additional health complications, including increased susceptibility to COVID-19.

We welcome and support productivity, decent work, health living and all initiatives of the government as well as the wellbeing of the farm workers in Zimbabwe.

*An Injury to One Is an Injury to All*

