

### **2012 Agro Initiative Zimbabwe Launch Press Release**

TechnoServe Zimbabwe will be launching the 2012 Agro Initiative Zimbabwe business-plan competition on Monday, 16th April 2012 at the Crown Plaza Hotel in Harare.

Agro Initiative Zimbabwe is a business plan competition, implemented by TechnoServe Zimbabwe, targeted at existing medium-sized Zimbabwean businesses with creative and sustainable ideas in agriculture and agri-business. AIZ supports innovative ideas that demonstrate the inclusion of smallholder farmers/rural communities such as out-grower or contract-farming models and have the potential to influence wider industry development.

TechnoServe Inc, is a private non-profit international development organization headquartered in Washington, DC, USA. It has offices in over 34 countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia. Its mission is business solutions to poverty. TechnoServe seeks to help entrepreneurial men and women in the developing world build businesses that create income, opportunity and economic growth for their families, communities and countries.

TechnoServe Zimbabwe was established and registered as a Private Voluntary Organisation in 2011 under its host ministry, the Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprise Development. TechnoServe Zimbabwe runs several programmes across the agriculture value chain, including the business-plan competition, Agro Initiative Zimbabwe.

Agro Initiative Zimbabwe (AIZ) was launched by TechnoServe on 29 April 2011 and is aimed at supporting creative and sustainable ideas in agriculture. The design and implementation of AIZ was developed through a consultative process, with input from over 200 professionals from key sectors, including business executives, economists, and leading figures in agriculture and finance

Winners of Agro Initiative Zimbabwe will receive a \$25-50,000 capital prize to implement their initiative and a package of technical assistance tailored to the needs of their business. The technical assistance may be provided by TechnoServe, local or international consultants and might include: small farmer business training; structuring contracts between business and farmers; developing and implementing quality assurance mechanisms; risk management approach; or further capital raising assistance to expand model.

Five innovative and creative ideas in agriculture won the AIZ 2011 competition in five different categories of agriculture:

Staples category - **Peak Trading**

Peak Trading is a Harare based organisation whose idea is the establishment of a Mobile Buying Unit for farmers located far from the traditional buying points. Peak Trading is currently buying grains and other agriculture products from over 100 rural farmers spread across the Mashonaland provinces at competitive prices using professional buying methods.

High Value Crops category - **Better Agriculture**

Better Agriculture is a technical and consulting business which provides inputs, extension services and a market to over 155 farmers in the Honde Valley area growing tobasco chillis.

Agro Processing category - **Zimbabwe Coffee Mill (ZCM)**

ZCM works with more than 200 farmers in the Manicaland province. The organisation buys raw quality coffee from small scale farmers, roast it and sell it to the local and regional markets thus providing a premium to the small scale farmers through value addition.

Livestock African category – **African Breeders Services TCM Ltd (ABS TCM Ltd)**

ABS is experienced in bovine genetics and artificial breeding technology. The company will establish decentralised low overhead, small but efficient feed mills producing quality livestock feed. ABS is currently working with 50 small scale farmers in Nyazura and Rusape sourcing maize and soy from them, with the intent of processing it and selling the high quality, reasonably priced feed to them.

Other category - **Passella**

The organisation has contracted farmers in the Umzinyathini and Duncal Irrigation schemes in the Bulawayo and Matabeleland South provinces to grow rose geranium high value crop. The crop will be grown and sourced from the farmers who will receive extension services and a market; and potentially input credit from Passella.

The AIZ 2012 competition has been made possible through generous support from Delta

Corporation and DFID Zimbabwe.

In addition, many other individuals and organizations have supported the competition, through participation on the advisory panel, as judges, or as AIZ ambassadors. Deloitte and Touche Toumahatsu and PricewaterhouseCoopers, two of the largest international accounting firms, will also support Agro Initiative Zimbabwe by carrying out the preliminary judging process of the business plan competition. An independent panel of judges will also be established, comprised of a number of Zimbabwean experts in the financial and agriculture sectors, who will be responsible for selecting winners in the final judging process.

Contact TechnoServe Harare Office for more details.

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