

SIMEON BANDA FARMING PROJECT

ONION AND MAIZE PRODUCTION

Dear Maria

I am writing from Chiradzuru at the quarry mine site. I have not yet left. I just hope that things will work and we will have a proper contract. As of now, I am the only mining engineer in the company. No much work happening at present. Soon we will have the drilling machine at site. The company has just bought the drilling equipment, which will be in towards the end of March. Therefore, it is my hope that production will be good. I just also want to participate in the mine planning and blasting activities that will be happening.

The essence of onion production was to generate enough funds for maize production. I presented in the first report of my farming project that I have a big farm in Mzimba, which is maize production.

I want to report that the first onion production project did not succeed because the seeds were overgrown. I sow the seeds on 3rd July; and I was to transplant within two-month period. In October end, I started transplanting but I incurred heavy labour cost so I failed to support the project.

Early December I received the funds for my farming project with great joy and I committed myself to utilise the funds for the best results. The funds came in the time that I was also organising myself to utilise the rainy season for maize production. I understand that the whole funding was committed to onion production. However, I had to take both projects for demand of maize is also high especially from September to March. For each year, the country faces hunger problem so maize becomes so expensive.



Figure 2. onion payment receipt



BUYING OF FARM INPUTS

I started buying farm inputs on 23rd December. I bought four packets of maize seeds and two tins of onions

Figure 1. onion seedlings tins



Figure 4. Maize seeds




Figure 5. Maize seeds


The tin of onion seedlings was costing K67000 each and two tins costed me K134, 000.

The packet of Maize seeds was costing K45000 and four packets costed me K180, 000.

MAIZE PRODUCTION



The rains started early December in most parts of the country. Many people had started planting their crops during this particular time. My home village is in Mzimba that is where I have my customary land. In my village the rains started on the 2nd January; I am not worried because the rainy season extend up to June / July; so I hope for the best. I have 7 acres of agricultural land, which I can utilise during rainy season. My plan for this year was to grow maize the whole piece of land. So far, I have managed to cultivate five acres of land that I have grown maize. Mercy has taken the two acres on which she has grown beans. The planting process took three days from third to 6th January. I have grown the best hybrid seeds that I bought and the other seeds I got from the last years produce. The germination has been so good and impressive.



I applied the first fertiliser on 18th January. I applied eight bags of fertiliser for fast growth; I will be applying the second fertiliser on 15th February. So far, I managed to buy 16 bags of fertiliser thus NPK and UREA despite the exorbitant prices of fertiliser. In the month of July, I met a mining engineer from Zambia who but is staying in Australia that is where he is working. He gave me a lift from Lilongwe to Mzimba, by then I was travelling to funeral of my Aunt. The man was traveling to Likoma. Upon interaction he was then interested in gold mining in Malawi. He asked me to identify the regions the gold mining activities occur in Malawi. I identified the regions and on 18th November, he gave me the transport to visit the sites. On my first trip, I visited Zomba, Balaka and Liwonde. He planned the second trip on 11th December, this time I visited Nathenje in the outskirts of Lilongwe. So far, he was convinced with two sites, the one in Balaka and one in Lilongwe. There was one problem with the site in Lilongwe for there was a big licence. From the two trips, he gave me 1.3million kwacha. He paid me on the second trip. He has also asked me to visit some parts of Kasungu on eighth of February, this coming Saturday. His vision is to bring in machines and perhaps open his gold mining company.

Figure 6. nathenje gold mining area



Figure 7. inside gold mining pit



Figure 8. Gold search in Nathenje

The gold mining activities have been illegal ever since in the country. There have been no clear laws governing the mining activities and politicians lead most of these mining activities. So the order is lacking in the governance of gold mining and other precious stones.

Now he is working on getting the mining license. It is my hope that I may have chance with him too.

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THE STATE OF MAIZE AT THE FARM

The crops have offered good germination and they are three weeks old. All the five acres I have grown Sasakawa; that is one plant per station. I applied fertiliser for growth before the weeding for the ridges were just fresh and there was not much grass. The weeding process started on Monday 27TH January and they have completed yesterday on 31st January. I sent Mercy to take some pictures and videos, which I have shared with you below and in excel. The pictures are not so clear for the phone's camera is not clear.



Figure 9. Maize farm



On 15th February, they will be applying second fertiliser that is top dressing.

ONION PRODUCTION

I bought two tins of onions. One is with Mercy at Jenda in Mzimba where the maize production is also happening.

I sow the seeds for one tin on 11th January and I will be transplanting towards the end of February. I will grow one tin right here in Chiradzuro. The company has a bigger space with plenty water. The area is close to Blantyre so I am sure I will have a good access to the Market. I will give regular updates on the crops as they are advancing in the stages. Here are the primary photos on onion production.



Figure 10. 11th january sowing day





Figure 11. removing weeds



Figure 12. with my team fro the company



Figure 13. Parable of the sower

Lastly, I want to say that the first report and pictorial updates have taken time to be reach you for I wanted to have crops in good shape. You will receive regular updates on both projects as the crops are now growing. I also want to say that I will have the pump in in two weeks' time. I will share with you the pictures and everything necessary.

Receive my great sincere gratitude's.

Kind regards

Simeon Banda