

Tobacco Chronicle

A Shasha Tobacco Newsletter

Tobacco farming: A livelihood rooted in hope!!



September crop transplanting in progress at Samuel Dzuaka's Gomo farm in Guruve

Tobacco farming is a source of livelihood for many people in Zimbabwe, and its contribution to the rural economy is immense. It is a livelihood rooted in hope, as tobacco farmers prepare for the 2026–27 season at various stages of production. This hope remains strong despite the challenging 2025–26 season, marked by erratic weather patterns and unfavourable prices. Tobacco farmers are optimistic that the new season will bring better prospects. Some farmers are already transplanting their irrigated crop, while others are focused on seedling production. Their efforts reflect a determination to succeed, even amid forecasts of a potential Super El Niño. At Shasha Tobacco, we stand with tobacco farmers every step of the way as the 2026–27 season progresses. Together, we remain hopeful for a more successful and rewarding season.



Tobacco farmers urged to embrace sustainable production practices



Mr Ajento (left) and Mr Pausiri (right), posing with one of the award winners

Tobacco farmers were urged to embrace sustainable production practices by Shasha Tobacco Operations Director Augustine Ajento at a growers' engagement event held on 4 September at St Boniface Business Centre in Magunje, Hurungwe.

In his keynote address, Mr Ajento reflected on the challenges faced during the 2025–26 season and encouraged farmers to remain steadfast and resilient. He urged them to uphold Agricultural Labour Practices and adopt a firm “No to child labour” stance, emphasizing the importance of ensuring that all school-age children attend school. Mr Ajento also called on farmers to embrace environmental stewardship by adopting production methods that conserve natural resources.

Particular emphasis was placed on the use of sustainable curing fuels to help reduce deforestation and carbon emissions.

The event, attended by TIMB, CBZ Risk Advisory Services, Econet Insurance, FBC and First Mutual, also recognised Shasha Tobacco's outstanding Mashonaland West farmers for the 2025–26 season. High-performing, top-performing and long-serving growers received prizes including walking tractors, ox-drawn ploughs and fertilizer.

The day concluded with a four-team football tournament and netball exhibition match. Tengwe emerged victorious after competing against Shasha, St Boniface and Mahwada.

Super El Niño: Water and soil moisture conservation key to successful crop

Weather forecasts suggest a potential super El Niño, bringing below-normal rainfall, high temperatures, delayed rains and prolonged dry spells, increasing the risk of drought and heat and water stress in tobacco crops. Supplementary irrigation will be essential where available, while farmers without irrigation should prioritize water- and soil-moisture-conservation practices to support tobacco crop growth and productivity.

Water conservation captures rainfall and improves infiltration, whereas soil-moisture conservation retains water in the soil and reduces evaporation. Key water and soil-moisture conservation practices in tobacco production include timely land preparation, tied ridging, potholing and appropriate ridge orientation.

Land preparation

Thorough and timely land preparation is fundamental to soil-moisture conservation. Timely land preparation enhances the retention of residual soil moisture. Deep ploughing, where appropriate, can further improve soil porosity and water-storage capacity by alleviating compaction and increasing the depth of the effective rooting zone.

Tied ridges

Tied ridges are transverse embankments constructed between parallel tobacco ridges to form small basins across the tobacco field. Established at 0.5 – 3 metre intervals, depending on soil type, slope and agronomic recommendations, they reduce runoff and erosion while improving water infiltration and soil moisture availability.

Potholing

Potholing involves excavating small basins or holes to harvest rainwater, reduce runoff, and improve soil-moisture infiltration. Potholes are commonly established between tobacco rows under the twin-ridge system, or between plants on a ridge, provided care is taken to avoid root disturbance, plant damage, and soil displacement. **Cont on page 4**



Potholing between twin ridges of tobacco

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Ridge orientation

The orientation of tobacco ridges is an important consideration in controlling runoff and improving water retention. Ridges should be constructed in a manner that reduces the velocity of runoff and promotes the infiltration of rainfall into the soil.

On sloping land, ridges should generally be aligned approximately 45° to the direction of the slope, where appropriate, to intercept runoff and reduce the loss of water from the field. This configuration can improve rainfall infiltration while limiting soil erosion and the removal of valuable topsoil.

Ziva murimisi wako

Agronomy Field Manager: Innocent Chako, 0772 113 431

Central region: Regional supervisor - Kenias Mahuda, 0777 666 732

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Simbarashe Takawira, 0775 784 194: Muurwi Central | 2. George Chishiri, 0775 330 993: Muurwi Chiweshe |
| 3. Tashinga Hondongwa, 0774 521 667: Centenary | 4. Alfred Patya, 0777 862 299: Centenary-Everton |
| 5. Clever Kampasure, 0777 884 109: Bindura-Shamua | 6. Fungai Kennedy, 0773 527 966: Dotito |
| 7. Monica Chatukuta, 0784 536 034: Madziva | 8. Gilbert Maswiswi, 0773 692 305: Mt Darwin |
| 9. James Marumbwa, 0777 364 738: Matepatepa | |

Mash East/Manicaland region: Regional supervisor - Timothy Shito, 0772 856 135

- | | |
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| 1. Collen Nyamugara, 0773 523 068: Rusape | 2. Joseph Ghandi 0782 025 068: Headlands |
| 3. Phillemon Muchemwa, 0785 333 478: Macheke | 4. Blessed Chigombe, 0780 019 730: Marondera |

Mash West region: Regional supervisor - Reuben Chaparapata, 0779 894 741

- | | |
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| 1. Clapperton Muchesa, 0778 316 594: Tengwe | 2. Usufu Dhai, 0776 652 854: Bakwa |
| 3. Moreblessing Chakawa, 0771 249 528: Kazangarare | 4. Elmon Sihona, 0778 773 887: Zvipani-Makande |
| 5. Stanford Gwavaza, 0775 831 962: Mahwada | 6. Simon Chatsama, 0778 903 109: Huyo |
| 7. Adolf Taruvinga, 0774 873 833: St Boniface | 8. Jeremiah Gwema 0782 288 483: Mwami-Chibara |
| 9. Davison Mutindi, 0775 830 403: Vuti | |

Mash West/Guruve region: Regional supervisor - Kudzaishe Gurajena, 0774 364 757

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Onsimas Chiyangwa, 0776 017 460: Pote | 2. Esther Gondo, 0778 451 878: Nyamahape |
| 3. Rungano Simbo, 0787 781 212: Mauya | 4. Wiilam Saidi, 0775 468 500: Mhangura |
| 5. Nicholas Marondera, 0776 441 494: Doma | 6. Doesmatter Phiri, 0784 991 391: Lionsden |
| 7. Tirivanhu Zindoga, 0773 496 146, Mudhindo | 8. Frank Chigora, 0782 800 900: Mutorashanga |
| 9. Abioma Chaora, 0713 174 090: Darwendale-Mhondoro | 10. Tonderai Mandizvidza, 0774 159 811: Guruve |

Shasha Ziyenda nakuyenda!!!!

Effective tobacco seedbed management for healthy seedlings

After germination and seedling emergence, meticulous seedbed management is essential for producing healthy, uniform tobacco seedlings. Key practices include proper watering, weed control, timely top-dressing fertilizer application, pest and disease management, clipping and hardening.

Watering

Water is essential for uniform seedling growth and development. It should be applied evenly across the seedbed, with the volume adjusted according to soil type and seedling growth stage. Both under-watering and over-watering should be avoided. Dry seedbed soil may indicate inadequate watering, while algae growth is commonly associated with excessive moisture.

Weed control

Seedbeds should be kept free of weeds throughout the production period. Weeds compete with tobacco seedlings for nutrients, moisture, light and growing space, thereby reducing seedling vigour. They should be removed by hand-pulling, taking care to avoid disturbing or damaging the seedlings.

Top-dressing fertilizer application

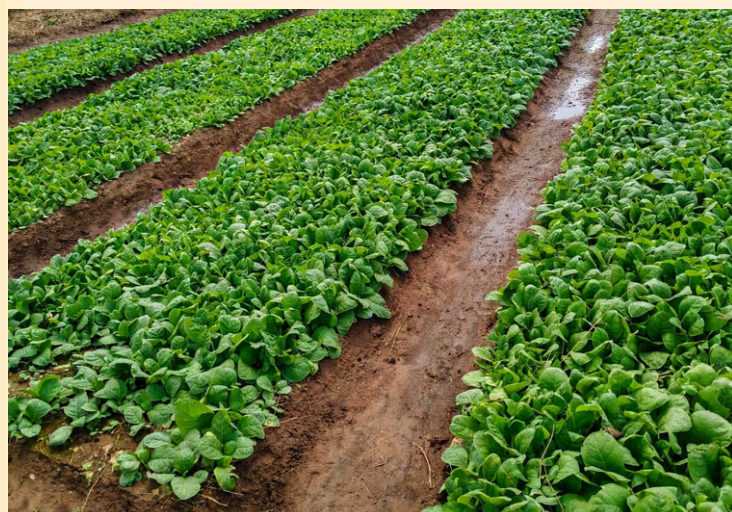
Top-dressing fertilizer should be applied when the seedling leaves reach-

-approximately 3 to 4 cm in diameter. Ammonium nitrate (AN) or calcium nitrate (CN) may be used. The application can be divided into three weekly treatments as follows:

Fert	Total	1st wk	2nd wk	3rd wk
AN	10 g/m ²	2.5 g/m ²	5 g/m ²	2.5 g/m ²
CN	20 g/m ²	5 g/m ²	10 g/m ²	5 g/m ²

Pest and disease control

Pests and diseases should be managed through the timely application of registered insecticides and fungicides, strictly according to the recommended spray program and label instructions. These products are generally applied preventively to minimize the risk of infestation and infection. Appropriate personal protective equipment and all required chemical-handling precautions must be observed during application. **Cont on page 6**



A well managed tobacco seed in Mhangura area

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Clipping

Clipping involves removing part of the leaf area to regulate seedling growth and improve uniformity. Taller seedlings are clipped to allow shorter seedlings to catch up, resulting in a more even stand. Clipping also supports the hardening process. Good hygiene is essential to minimize the risk of transmitting diseases between seedlings. Deep clipping should be avoided during the early stages of growth, as it may restrict stem elongation.

Inputs distribution!!!!



Shasha Tobacco yakatotanga kuunza mafetereza nemishonga yekumunda zuemwaka wa 2026-27 kuvarimi vayo vanorima nemvura yemudenga mushure mekupedza kupa varimi vanodiridzira. Mafetereza arikupihwa nzuimbo

dzakasiyana siyana kuchitanga nzuimbo dziri ku Mash Central kouya Mash East, Manicaland kuchizopedzirisa Mash West. Gore rino plastic ne shinda (twine) zuri kuuya pamwe chete nema fetereza uye pane mbeu yechibage. Varimi garai makateya nzeve varimisi venyu vanoridza huwi kamafetereza achinge ave kuuya kwenyu. Mafetereza arikutakurwa ne Shasha Logistics, shamwari parwendo.

Hardening

Hardening is the process of improving the drought tolerance of tobacco seedlings before transplanting. In conventional seedbeds, this is achieved by gradually withholding water, which promotes stronger root development and increases carbohydrate accumulation in the seedlings. Seedlings should be hardened for a minimum of 14 days, although a 28-day period is preferable where conditions permit. Once hardening begins, watering should be stopped completely. However, seedlings may be watered before 10 a.m. if they become severely wilted. Effective hardening is essential for promoting rapid establishment and achieving good plant stands after transplanting.



Embracing crop diversification for more resilient livelihoods

Tobacco production is a business that should consistently deliver profits, enabling farmers to strengthen both their economic security and social well-being. For successful tobacco growers, profitability should be reflected in improved livelihoods and a better quality of life. However, despite the crop's commercial value, farmers should avoid becoming overly dependent on tobacco alone.

Diversifying into other crops can provide an important source of food and additional income. Tobacco farmers are encouraged to grow cereals such as maize, together with legumes and pulses, to meet household food requirements and reduce reliance on purchasing food after the tobacco-selling season. Producing their own food can also help farmers retain more of their tobacco income.

Farmers are further encouraged to invest in water resources to support irrigation and enable year-round production. Horticultural crops and other field-based cash crops can complement tobacco and create alternative income streams, helping farmers build more resilient and sustainable enterprises.



Eliasi Chiponda, a Shasha Tobacco farmer diversified into potato production

In support of crop diversification, Shasha Tobacco is providing maize seed as part of its 2026–27 land-input package. Although the allocation may not fully meet the maize-seed requirements of every contracted farmer, it represents Shasha Tobacco's commitment to promoting diversification and strengthening the long-term sustainability of tobacco-growing communities.



Maize seed as part of land-input package

Hutsanana hwakakosha panguva yekugadzira nhondo dzefodya



Mihomba yenhondo dzefodya ine hutsanana

Varimi ugefodya vanokurudzirwa kuita hutsanana hwemhando yepamusoro panguva yekugadzira nhondo kuitira kutaputa kupararira kwezvimbu nezvirwere. Nzuimbo yekugadzira nhondo dzefodya inofanira kuve neruzhowa kuitira mhuaka ne vanhu zuisapinde, vanhu vanofanira kupinda nepamusuwo mumwe chete.

Pamusuwo wenzvimbo yekugadzira nhondo dzefodya panofanira kuve nemvura nesipo zekugeza maoko uye panofanira kuve nemvura ine mishonga yekuti wese anenge achipinda anonyika shangu dzake. Izvi zuakakosha pakutapudza kupinda kwezvirwere nzuimbo yekugadzira nhondo dzefodya.

Nzuimbo yakakomberedza mihomba yenhondo inofanira kunge yakachena isina masora. Huswa hunenge hwabuiswa mumihomba haufanire kuiswa munzira dziri pakati pemihomba, panogona kuita makonye anoruma fodya (cutworms).

Pakugera fodya panoda hutsanana zvekare, chigero chinofanira kunyikwa mu copper oxychloride mushure mekugera ndima yakareba mita imwe chete kuitira kuti chigero chisafambise zvirwere mumihomba yenhondo.

Zuidimbu zuemashizha zvinenge zvagerwa zvinofanira kubuiswa mumihomba nemunzira kutira kuti zvisachengete zvimbu kana kuora.

Hutsanana hunosanganisira pakuisa mishonga, zvipfeko zvekuzvidzivirira zvinofanira kushandiswa uye mishonga iyi inofanira kuchengeterwa pakakodzera. Varimi vanokurudzirwa kusarasa marara nezvigubhu zvinenge zuapera mishonga munzuimbo dzekugadzira nhondo dzefodya.



Shasha Tobacco (Pvt) Ltd

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Tinashe Denga: A Testament to Perseverance in Tobacco Farming

Based at Urungwe Farm in Mutorashanga, Mashonaland West, Tinashe Denga is a successful tobacco farmer whose journey reflects the value of patience, perseverance, and sound production planning.

Tinashe joined Shasha Tobacco in 2016 under the guidance of field officer Innocent Chako. During his first season, he was contracted to grow tobacco on one hectare, a hectare he maintained for three consecutive seasons while steadily improving his production capacity.



Tinashe in his tobacco crop for the 2025-26 season

He later expanded to two hectares, by which time he was working with field officer Stuart Gwinhi. Tinashe maintained this hectareage for a further two seasons before increasing his production area to 2.5 hectares, which is classified as semi-commercial at Shasha Tobacco.

His gradual approach to expansion demonstrates that success in tobacco farming is not achieved by increasing hectareage indiscriminately. Instead, farmers must consider their production capacity, including the availability of curing facilities, labour and other essential resources.

Over the years, Tinashe has endured droughts, mid-season dry spells, incessant rains and unfavourable market prices. Despite these challenges, he has remained committed to tobacco production.

Today, Tinashe stands as a testament to the rewards of resilience and responsible growth. Through tobacco farming as a Shasha Tobacco grower, he has accumulated valuable assets and significantly improved his livelihood.



Tinashe in his seedbed for the 2026-27 season



Innocent Chako addressing a grower awards gathering at St Boniface



Kudzaishe Gurajena presenting the soccer trophy to the winning team



Tashinga Hondongwa inspecting seedlings at a seedbed site in Centenary



James Marumbwa (centre) emphasizing a point to his farmers during inputs distribution at Butcombe in Matepatepa

Production team

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