



**AMATHEON AGRI**

## **President Hakainde Hichilema visits Mumbwa's Amatheon Agri Farm**

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• PRESIDENT Hakainde Hichilema during the planting of maize at Amatheon agri in Mumbwa.



• PRESIDENT Hakainde Hichilema on arrival at Amatheon agri in Mumbwa.

# HH visits Mumbwa's Amatheon Agri Farm

By AMOS ZULU

IN the heart of rural Mumbwa, Central Province, lies one of Zambia's biggest agricultural investments.

Here, Chief Kaindu of Mumbwa hosts an agricultural venture that spans 40, 000 hectares and has already received an initial injection of about \$100 million.

Amatheon Group manages a strong portfolio of farming, trading, and food processing activities, integrating its operations along the agricultural value chain.

According to Chief Executive Officer, Max Sturm, the firm is expanding its investment with an additional \$50 million, which will see more land developed every year, from the current 3, 000 hectares.

"The increased investment activities will include an annual addition of 15, 000 hectares, creating about 1, 500 permanent jobs," Mr Sturm said.

"We are committed to increasing food security in Zambia in the wake of the drought situation. The crops we plan to grow include maize, sugar beans, and onions. This will make us one of the largest farming operations in Zambia. We have a profound commitment to the country, we are here not only to stay but also to substantially increase our footprint in Zambia," explained Mr Sturm.

Amatheon Agri Zambia, a subsidiary of Amatheon Agri Holding N.V., began farming operations in Mumbwa District in 2012. Since its inception, the company has employed over 200 people on a permanent basis.

On Tuesday, July 23, 2024, President Hakainde Hichilema visited Mumbwa to appreciate the history and operations of the farm. His first engagement was with the chiefs, where he reiterated the government's position that all chiefs in the country must receive farming inputs to lead by example.

President Hichilema directed the Ministry of Agriculture to deliver farming inputs to the chiefs no later than September, adding that all chiefs must be added to the Farmer Input Support Programme, (FISP) database.

“Your government is happy to change the policy. All chiefs, without exception, must get farming inputs. We are hopeful that the water coming with your palaces can be used to irrigate a hectare even amidst the drought,” President Hichilema noted.

Mr Hichilema wants chiefs to encourage their subjects to work hard.

“One of the reasons I have come is to help solve some of the challenges on and around the farm, which cannot be done without the involvement of you, the traditional leaders. This was part of Dr Kaunda’s old project. We need to pull all the issues of heritage and legacy together to find solutions that will allow us to produce on this farm and support surrounding farmers through an out-grower scheme,” he said.

“If a farm is growing half a hectare twice a year, they will grow enough food. Your royal highnesses, let us encourage production and productivity. Our people have grown up believing they can live good lives without working. Let us teach our people how to work. I was flying over here, and I still see bush fires. What are the cattle going to feed on?” President Hichilema wondered.

After engaging with the chiefs, President Hichilema toured the Amatheon farm, where he inspected the production of wheat and onions.

With the Zambian government placing agriculture as a key driver of economic growth, President Hichilema demonstrated leadership by planting maize on the 5, 000 hectares designated for the crop.

President Hichilema encouraged Amatheon Group to incorporate small-scale farmers into its agenda of increasing productivity.

“If Amatheon can have about 50 small-scale farmers around this property who you work with, so that we gravitate them from 3 tons per hectare to over 8 tons over a period of 3 years, we would have achieved a lot. We don’t have to cut more trees to clear the land, the same hectare will produce 3 or 4 times more, and the country will be in a different space,” he said.

President Hichilema is optimistic that Amatheon can spread its investment to other parts of the country, and help galvanise investments to enhance government’s agrarian revolution agenda.

“We expect that the group will look at other opportunities in other parts of the country so that more investments can come and other investors should look at this country from a different angle. This is a stable country,” he noted.

President Hichilema also called for precision irrigation to increase productivity.

“To encourage water harvesting and precision irrigation, given the climate change we are faced with, this is the way to lead to increased production and productivity. We take note that this farm can produce maize at 11 metric tons per hectare when many of our small-scale farmers are producing less than 3 tons per hectare. The larger farmers, with capital endowment, can bring technology, skills, and resources, and when this is shared with the rest of the community, the whole community

increases production and productivity, and household food security is addressed even without too much rain,” he added.

Amatheon and Tendor Farm Group CEO, Lars Windhorst said that in the next 18 to 24 months, the firm is set to increase its capacity fivefold.

Mr Windhorst emphasised that successful economic activities are essential for any country to provide services to its citizens.

“Zambians are lucky to have President Hichilema, as he is not only a good politician but also a good entrepreneur who understands the importance of supporting businesses, developing, and growing the country. With the support offered, we are in good hands and will invest. The President is focused on supporting Foreign Direct Investment, which is crucial for the country. We hope to continue setting a good example to attract others and provide prosperity to Zambia,” he said. – **ZANIS**