



# AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSION PRETORIA

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **Australia partners with the World Bank to support poor Zimbabwean farmers**

Australia will provide US\$7 million to the World Bank Global Food Crisis Response Program to expand maize production and food security in Zimbabwe during the 2009-10 summer cropping season. The program will distribute quality certified maize seed to more than 300,000 poor smallholder farmers across Zimbabwe.

Australia's Ambassador to Zimbabwe, John Courtney, said Australia's contribution to the program is part of a coordinated donor community effort that is an important first step to support the recovery of Zimbabwe's grain production.

"Up to 17 non-government organisations will distribute these seeds to poor farmers in time for the coming planting season to expand planted areas and raise crop yields in the communal areas," Mr Courtney said.

"Boosting farmers' capacity to meet their household grain requirements will help reduce Zimbabwe's dependence on expensive grain imports and food aid."

"The program will complement those of other donors and directly support the agricultural sector revitalisation plan outlined in the Inclusive Government's Short Term Emergency Recovery Plan. This program builds on the extensive experience of all participants in distributing seed and fertilizer to farmers under humanitarian programs."

While most of the seed will be distributed directly to smallholder farmers, the project will also support the revival of rural retail markets for agricultural inputs through a seed voucher program. Under this strategy the project will support the sale of 280 tonnes of hybrid maize seed through rural retailers in exchange for seed vouchers provided to some 28,000 needy rural families.

Australia and the World Bank work in close partnership to reduce global poverty.

Australia has been at the forefront of international efforts – both political and humanitarian – to assist Zimbabwe and, since the establishment of the Inclusive Government a little over one year ago, has provided more than A\$20 million in assistance. Australia was one of the first countries to deliver assistance in a manner that has become known as 'humanitarian plus'.

Australia's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Stephen Smith MP, recently announced further measures to assist Zimbabwe on the anniversary of the Global Political Agreement, including:

- a further A\$5 million in food aid through the World Food Programme;
- working with the Netherlands, a contribution of A\$1 million to support private sector activities aimed at boosting agricultural production;
- support of A\$2 million through UNICEF to support Zimbabwe's Ministry of Education in the provision of much needed materials including text books for Zimbabwean schools.

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