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EVALUATION REPORT

Evaluation of the ECHO
Operations in Zimbabwe
(2002 – 2003)

Sector Report: **Food Security**

(essential part of the overall evaluation report on ECHO Operations in Zimbabwe)

prepared on behalf of the:

European Commission
Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO)

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The views expressed herein are those of the consultants, and do not represent any official view of the Commission.

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List of Acronyms

AIDCO	Europe Aid Co-ordination Office of the European Commission
ALNAP	Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action
AREX	Agriculture and Extension Services
CAP	Consolidated Agency Appeal
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
€	Euro
EC	European Commission
ECHO	European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office
EDF	European Development Fund
EU	European Union
EuronAid	European Association of Non-Governmental Organisations/NGOs active in Food Security and Food Aid programmes
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GoZ	Government of Zimbabwe
IDP	Internally Displaced People
ICRISAT	International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics
IRIN	Integrated Regional Information Networks
LFM	Logical Framework Matrix
LFA	Logical Framework Approach
LRRD	Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development
MT	Metric Ton
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
RSO	Regional Support Office (here: ECHO's support structure in Nairobi)
RRU	Relief and Rehabilitation Unit
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
US $	US-Dollar
VAC	Vulnerability Assessment Committee
WFP	World Food Programme
ZIM $	Zimbabwe Dollar (5,100 ZIM $ = 1 Euro, in the period of evaluation)

1 Executive Summary

A. The Evaluation

Evaluated Action: ECHO funded Operations in Zimbabwe in the Period 2002 and 2003 under the subsequent decisions: ECHO/TPS/210/2002/16000 & ECHO/ZWE/210/2003/01000
(value of food security component: **€**12,732,089[1])

Focus of Report: Food Security operations under the a.m. decisions (self-standing report, but to be seen as essential part of the overall evaluation of the a.m. decisions – Summary Evaluation Report Zimbabwe 2002 – 2003, which includes the sectors Health and Nutrition, Water and Sanitation)

Dates of Evaluation: 1st – 24th February 2004 (Field Mission Period)
Name of Evaluator: Mr John Wilding

B. Purpose and Methodology

The magnitude of overall ECHO commitment to Zimbabwe, which has increased from **€** 0.5 million in 2001, through **€ 1**5 million in 2002 to **€** 25 million in 2003, warrants evaluation in order to undertake a lesson learning process for the purpose of ensuring the optimal appropriateness of future ECHO intervention.

The methodology implied briefings at the Brussels and Harare levels with ECHO, other Commission services, ECHO partners and other concerned national international institutions. At the field level, semi-structured interviews were held with beneficiary and special interest (e.g. women) groups; key informants; individual beneficiaries/beneficiary families. Ongoing triangulation of findings was carried out with project staff and government extension workers, and this process was finalised in debriefing sessions with the initially briefed institutions.

A key step of the methodology was the elaboration of an ex-post Logical Framework whose programme structure (left-hand column) is presented in Section 4. (Planned results) for the 2002/3/4 ECHO operation in Zimbabwe, as the main point of reference for the evaluation.

C. Main Conclusions

Relevance

C1. ECHO has employed Budget line B7-210 (under Council Regulation [EC] No.1257/96) in Zimbabwe in response to a very real shortage of food in the country and a perceived shortage of seed. The causes and complexities of this food insecurity situation, which is almost unique in history, will be discussed in detail in **Section 3.** (Background) of this report.

C2. A proportion of ECHO funded seeds have not produced harvest due to the failure of precipitation to meet their moisture needs thus bringing into question the choice of the risk-prone crop types and varieties distributed. This is a complex issue which will be discussed in detail in

[1] Not including school/supplementary/therapeutic feeding.

Section 3.2 (Agricultural background) of the main report. It is noted here, however, that ECHO is distributing maize seed in agro-ecological Regions IV and V (in which most of the intervention areas are located) to which maize production is not most suited.

Effectiveness

C3. While the agro-economic situation in Zimbabwe is currently not as bad as in many other parts of Africa, its exponential decline completely justifies ECHO's timely intervention in conjunction with the preamble to the Regulation: "*preventing any worsening in the impact of the crisis and starting to help those affected regain a minimum level of self-sufficiency."* The consultant considers that ECHO has indeed made a significant contribution to slowing down the decline but not a reversal of it.

Efficiency

C4. As a result of the inappropriateness of some of the crop types/varieties distributed, some of ECHO's investment has been lost and the cost (to ECHO or other donors) of sustaining some beneficiaries (seed plus food aid) has been more than doubled.

C5. Despite the availability of a very experienced East Africa agriculturalist in the ECHO Regional Support Office, Nairobi, the latter's input was not requested until preparation of the third decision. The consultant considers that ECHO should not rely on the NGOs (met in Zimbabwe) as the experts – they are not necessarily so – nor do they necessarily have good institutional memories. If they had been experts, they would not have rushed into the inclusion of hybrid maize seed in the second decision which is considered to have been a mistake.

C6. Timing is paramount in crop production and the ideal of planting on arrival of first rains (from the end of October) has not been met due to:

- late arrival of seeds[2];
- post dry-season weakness of draught animals (which require more than one month's rain induced grazing before cultivation can start);
- queuing of farmers (according to wealth) for ploughing services due to widespread drought/disease/chaos -induced livestock losses.

C7. There is a pressing need for better information gathering in order to improve better ECHO decision-making. The NGOs, while representing useful providers of information, are not the best placed to coordinate the task nationally.

Impact

C8. There has been an inability to maximise the production potential of ECHO seeds due to beneficiaries' limited access to the technical advice necessary to support their employment as well as (in some cases) adequate supplies of other inputs, notably appropriate fertiliser, demanded by them**.**

[2] While timely delivery of inputs has not been ideal, substantial efforts by ECHO and its partners have achieved almost acceptable delivery deadlines. Some delay is due to the fact that even ECHO planning is, to some extent, dependent on and following the UN process of **i)** FAO/WFP crop assessment; followed by **ii)** Emergency Operation (EMOP) and Consolidated Appeal (CAP) – this was particularly the case in 2002, when the huge dimension of the food crisis (and the nature of its agricultural implications) could be properly understood.

C9. ECHO has funded the supply of NPK & S[3] fertiliser for establishment of its seeds as well as ammonium nitrate for later top-dressing but some partners have cut out the latter in order to reduce budgets. Priorities have been wrong here:

- the most important fertiliser is nitrogen top-dressing which substitutes for nitrogen leached from the soil by the rains. Basic dressing can be achieved through the application of kraal manure and/or composted organic matter;
- if precipitation does not occur, farmers will not apply top-dressings but retain this ECHO investment until the following year.

Sustainability

C10. It is noted that, while many of the intervention locations (and particularly Matabeleland) are pastoral areas in which crop production is secondary to livestock herding, no support to the latter was included in the ECHO programmes. The ECHO interventions cannot, therefore, claim to have made any moves towards re-establishing the *status quo ante* which (while not ideal) had some element of sustainability.

C11. There are many other food production interventions which could significantly have improved household/community food security without the need for an expanded ECHO budget. These include: encouragement of conservation farming techniques and immediate post-harvest manual[4] cultivation; soil acidity reduction through lime application; stronger agricultural extension support; repair of existing community irrigation schemes; more efficient use of available water through plastic piping and drip irrigation techniques; crop diversification; animal health programmes and increasing livestock planes of nutrition.

D. Recommendations

R1. Due the imminent ECHO Decision process and the advanced plans of its partners), a continuation of similar seed distributions is recommended for 2004 but with a significant reduction of the maize[5] component.

R2. Moves should be made towards changing beneficiary tastes towards a zero maize component in any possible 2005 distribution. At the same time, ECHO should look at the possibility of local seed multiplication to perhaps include landrace varieties (without destroying local systems) and local purchase to reduce costs.

R3. It is now time to consider how ECHO may now effect a reversal of the declining food security situation in Zimbabwe.

R4. Monitoring of the seed beneficiaries needs to be so thorough that, in the event of crop failure, their survival can be assured and so that observation of their coping mechanisms can provide an insight into how future assistance may be better chosen.

3 Chemical composite of the fertilizer

[4] Where necessary.

[5] The inclusion of maize is contrary to the purist views of the consultant agriculturalist but time is needed to change the views, not only of the farmers themselves, but also of most ECHO partners who would not support an approach which did not include maize seed.

R5. Increased monitoring implies a heavier workload on the already heavily committed ECHO staff and requires their supplementation by at least one other member. The inclusion of an agriculturalist would be useful in the Harare team.

R6. Correct timing of planting and fertiliser application (to maximise its effectiveness and to avoid crop damage) has to be assured by earlier delivery of inputs.

R7. The information gathering system proposed by FAO (based on similar information gathering in Zambia) is recommended for ECHO support in 2004/5 but under strict contractual conditions and with clear indicators of success.

R8. The current cooperation with AREX extension workers should continue and be expanded both in terms of access to beneficiaries (which implies supporting their mobility/transport) and quality of advice (which involves training). The distribution of fertiliser should continue in the correct corresponding quantities and with an emphasis on nitrogen top-dressing.

R9. The consultant will argue that a farmer can always access some seed somehow but that interventions should be prioritised as follows:

i) technical extension support;

ii) nitrogen top-dressing fertiliser;

iii) provision of appropriate crop types/varieties.

R10. Adopting the guiding principle that livestock intervention should always be underwritten by veterinary and fodder support, recommendations will be made in the main report towards correcting the anomaly that no support has, so far, been given to livestock production.

R11. The consultant considers that ECHO intervention will be justified in the coming year[6] as the economic situation continues to deteriorate and that it would now be appropriate to diversify the food production coverage of intervention without necessarily an increase in the ECHO budget.

E. Lessons learned

12. A guiding principle of humanitarian aid intervention, albeit unwritten, is that specified needs should be met, insofar as is possible, with certainty. Food Aid meets this criterion but the provision of seed can never do so due to the hazards of weather, disease and pests etc. This is not to state that ECHO's seed provision has not been a justified intervention since it is cheaper than Food Aid, less destructive to markets and human morale, it can lead to local purchase of seed with its associated introduction of funds at the 'grass-roots' level; it meets the objective of *helping those affected to regain a minimum level of self-sufficiency*, can lead to the normalization of victims' lives and represents a link between Relief, Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD).

13. With regard to addressing national food security, this is considered to be beyond the capacity of ECHO and, other than through the provision of food aid, beyond the capacity of any donor until such time as the long process of land redistribution stabilises.

[6] And beyond.

14. In the meantime, it is the consultant's opinion that agricultural reliance on the existing Communal lands[7] at current population densities is not sustainable and never was. Cooperation with the 'fast-track' resettlement programme is clearly not an option for the Commission at this stage. Intervention in the Communal lands can, thus, only be seen as a 'holding operation' until more acceptable solutions prevail.

[7] The beneficiary location of ECHO support.

2 Introduction

This report concerns ECHO interventions in the Zimbabwean Food Security sector between mid 2002 and the end of 2003 following two years of drought, exponentially declining economic/food production performance and administrative chaos following a 'fast-track' resettlement programme in which previous commercial landowners and their workers were expelled from the highly productive land of Zimbabwe.

Since June 2002, ECHO has funded (in the sum of € 32,934,997 through four decisions) a multi-sector programme towards the improvement of Food Security, recovery of water and sanitation systems and improvement of the health and nutrition status of the population. The strictly Food Security component comprised eight seed distributions, one logistical support and one information gathering project in the sum of € 12,732,089 through two decisions as presented in **Annex II.**

Other Commission services[8] have continued with the provision of such aid as could be judged as of humanitarian benefit to the population. In the Food Security sector this amounts to the delivery of seed and food aid.

It is in this context, where lesson learning is of utmost importance in ensuring the optimal appropriateness of ECHO intervention, that this evaluation mission was launched.

The Terms of Reference require that, *inter alia,* the Team should consider:

- the adequacy of the management and monitoring of specific operations;
- the cost-effectiveness of specific operations;
- the relevance of the sector orientation of ECHO's financing, in view of prevailing humanitarian needs;
- the optimum added value ECHO's resources could have in the Zimbabwean context, taking into account the difficult working environment, other resources and instruments available to the Commission in Zimbabwe, and strategies and programmes by other humanitarian donors.
- the way ECHO operations have taken into account the specific issues identified by and problems of Technical Assistance; LRRD; Gender, women and female-headed households; Elderly persons, particularly those caring for orphans and persons affected by HIV/AIDS; Children and children-headed households; IDPs, specifically the situation of displaced/dismissed farm workers; the environment; Visibility of Commission assistance both within Zimbabwe and within the international humanitarian community; Protection and human rights issues;
- the extent to which partners have sought to make the communities aware of their proposed operations and its benefits, as well as the extent to which communities have been involved in ECHO-financed operations.

The methodology adopted is presented in **Annex III.** The task commenced with briefings in Brussels, continued with similar exercises in Harare and led to the collection of documents for review. A key step of the methodology was the elaboration of an ex-post Logical Framework

[8] Working through the EC Delegation in Harare under the conditions of specific targeted measures in which development assistance has been stopped.

whose programme structure (left-hand column) is presented in **Section 4.** (Planned results) for the 2002/3/4 ECHO operation in Zimbabwe, as the main point of reference for the evaluation.

All the Food Security NGO partner projects were visited and participatory semi-structured interviews held with key informants, individual farmers and focus groups. Field visits were made in the company of beneficiary farmers so that direct observations and 'on-site analysis' of yield components could be carried out in order to triangulate assertions made during interviews.

The Mission Itinerary and List of People met is presented in **Annex I.** while the bibliography is presented in **Annex IV.**

The output of the mission should be the production of three documents:

- an Aide-memoire discussed with ECHO in Harare at the end of the mission;
- a draft evaluation report presented to ECHO within ten days following completion of the fieldwork;
- a final report submitted to ECHO after incorporation of all comments.

The Food Security and Agriculture study was carried out between 26th January and 31st. March by John Wilding, an agricultural economist with a wide experience of Food Security, Relief and Development issues in Africa and Asia.

3 Background

3.1 Historical background

Some fifty years before the arrival of the British in the late nineteenth century, the Ndbele, an offshoot of the Zulus of Kwa-Zulu Natal, arrived in Matabeleland killing and driving out the existing population and demanding tribute of the Mashona, Manica and other peoples of modern day Zimbabwe.

British settlement of 'African' lands in what became Southern Rhodesia was institutionalised in the British Colonial Government's Land Apportionment Act which 'legalised' the removal of Africans[9] to less productive Tribal Trust Lands[10] and their replacement by white settlers for the purpose of commercial farming.

This injustice was not enacted with vigour until the end of the Second World War when British servicemen were rewarded with land at the cost of the eviction[11] of the African residents. The greatest injustice lay, however, in the fact that, as the black population burgeoned on the poorer soils of what later became known as the Communal lands, there was nowhere for them to expand. The result was 'local' over-population, over-exploitation of the natural resource base, reduced soil fertility and erosion enhanced by poor farming practices.

[9] From parts of the higher rainfall Agro-ecological Regions I, II and III as well as from ranching lands in the drier Regions IV and V.

[10] Some being pockets in Regions I, II and III but largely lying in Regions IV and V.

[11] With coercion - sometimes at gunpoint and followed by burning of their homes.

The Lancaster House Agreement of 1980, in which the British Government ceded sovereignty to a majority black government, included a notion of 'increasing citizen participation' in the economy which might have been translated into a degree of gradual return of lands to black farmers. This was enacted in a limited and inequitable manner until 2002 when a sudden 'fast-track' resettlement programme was instituted under the Government of Zimbabwe's Land Resettlement Act.

The programme enabled the removal of all but a few white occupants of commercial lands with their limited and sometimes inequitable replacement by black farmers[12]. The result has been the virtual cessation of commercial agricultural production in the country, a consequent significant national food deficit and economic chaos

A national emergency was declared by the President in 2002 resulting in the intervention of the main humanitarian aid institutions including the United Nations (WFP, FAO, UNDP, UNAIDS etc), International Organisations (Red Cross etc) and international and local NGOs. Foreign powers, including the European Union, intervened with food and humanitarian aid but many, including the EU, placed restrictions on development aid because of alleged discrepancies in the democratic processes.

3.2 Agricultural background

Many new crops such as maize and tobacco were introduced to the coast of Africa by the Portuguese from the sixteenth century onwards and these soon found their way to Zimbabwe. The taste for maize has thus been enjoyed by Zimbabwe for some centuries but it was not until white settlers began to increase its cultivation as a commercial crop in the early twentieth century and the exigencies of the First World War demanded increased production that its consumption became widespread.

With the onset of the 'green revolution' in the 1950s and 60s and the development of high yielding and disease resistant hybrid maize varieties, increasing maize production was not only encouraged by international development agencies but became enshrined in Government policy. With the establishment of the newly independent administration in the 1980s, the whole cereal marketing structure[13] became based upon the production, across the country, of cheap maize for the population as well as for export.

Maize thus became the staple for the whole population for whom its *sadza* (or porridge) represents a fundamental dietary need almost to the point of addiction.

Maize, however, requires a minimum of 200 mm rainfall during the growing season, 450 – 600 mm is preferred and, in the tropics, does best with 600 – 900 mm. The most critical period is the 30 days of maximum growth before pollination, at which time warm wet weather is required with 100 – 125 mm of rain[14]. High temperatures and deficient moisture at pollination may result in death of the pollen, retarded development of the female parts (silks) in time relation to shedding of the pollen from the male parts (tassels) and drying out of the silks making them unreceptive to the pollen.

[12] Not all of whom had the technical know-how or capital to exploit the land.

[13] Through the Grain Marketing Board (GMB).

[14] **Source: Purseglove,J.W**, *Tropical Crops – Monocotyledons*. Longman, New York, 1972

Maize, therefore, not only requires very good growing conditions but is also a risky crop because of the (approximately 10 day) window of opportunity for pollination in which conditions must be ideal and in the absence of which the crop will fail completely.

The widespread cultivation of maize in Zimbabwe is largely in contradiction to these criteria except in Agro-ecological Regions I and II (see **Box A**. below) and is even practised in the most extreme regions of Region V (eg. Beitbridge). This is gambling.

Box A. Agro-ecological zones in Zimbabwe

Zone I. *Specialised and Diversified Farming Region:* Rainfall in this region is high (more than 1 000 mm per annum in areas lying below 1 700m altitude, and more than 900 mm per annum at greater altitudes), normally with some precipitation in all months of the year. Temperatures are normally comparatively low and the rainfall is consequently highly effective, enabling afforestation, fruit and intensive livestock production. In frost-free areas, plantation crops such as tea, coffee and macadamia nuts can be grown; where the mean annual rainfall is below 1 400 mm, supplementary irrigation of these plantation crops is required to maximise yields.

Zone II. *Intensive Farming Region:* Rainfall is confined to summer and is moderately high (75 – 1 000 mm). Two sub-regions have been defined:

> **Sub-region IIa** receives an average of at least 18 rainy pentads per season and normally enjoys reliable conditions, rarely experiencing severe dry spells in summer. The region is suitable for intensive systems of farming based on crops and/or livestock production.
>
> **Sub-region IIb** receives an average of 16 – 18 rainy pentads per season and is subject either to rather more severe dry spells during the rainy season or to the occurrence of relatively short rainy seasons. In either event, crop yields in certain areas will be affected, but not sufficiently frequently to change the overall utilisation from intensive systems of farming.

Zone III. *Semi-intensive Farming Region:* Rainfall in this region is moderate in total amount (650 – 800 mm), but, because much of it is accounted for by infrequent heavy falls and temperatures are generally high, its effectiveness is reduced. This region will receive an average of 14 – 16 rainy pentads per season. The region is also subject to fairly severe mid-season dry spells and therefore is marginal for maize, tobacco and cotton production, or for enterprises based on crop production alone. Farming systems, in conformity with the natural conditioning factors, should therefore be based on both livestock production (assisted by the production of fodder crops) and cash crops under good management on soils of high moisture potential.

Zone IV. *Semi-intensive Farming Region:* This region experiences fairly low total rainfall (450 – 650 mm) and is subject to periodic seasonal droughts and several dry spells during the rainy season. The rainfall is too low and uncertain for cash cropping except in certain very favourable localities, where drought-resistant crops can be afforded as a sideline. The farming system, in accord with natural factors, should be based on livestock production, but it can be intensified to some extent by the growing of drought-resistant fodder crops.

Zone V. *Extensive Farming Region:* The rainfall in this region is too low and erratic for the reliable production of even drought-resistant fodder and grain crops, and farming has to be based on the veldt alone. The extensive form of cattle ranging is the only sound farming system for this region. Included in this region are areas below 900 m altitude, where the mean rainfall is below 650 mm (in the Zambezi valley) and below 600 mm (in the Sabi-Limpopo valleys).

Note: A rainy pentad is defined as the centre one of three five-day periods (pentads) which together receive more than 40 mm rainfall and two of which receive at least 8 mm of rainfall.

The small grains, sorghum and particularly millet, however, are crops which are physiologically adapted towards drought tolerance. Sorghum has a mechanism which enables the plant to 'shut-down' during moisture deficient periods and then 'restart' growth on the return of precipitation.

Sorghum, requiring precipitation of approximately 275 mm. per annum has a particular ability to survive physiological drought caused by water-logging when root functions are temporarily impaired. This capacity makes sorghum an almost ideal crop to take advantage of good rains when they occur and to give some guarantee of a harvest in years when there is poor rainfall distribution. Sorghum is, however, reported to fail as often as maize on a five year average in Matabeleland[15] and is prone to attack by the Q*uelea* bird.

Bulrush (or Pearl) millet, requiring precipitation of about 250 mm. per annum (or less if there is good rainfall distribution), is the crop which can be most relied upon to produce a harvest. Too much rainfall at flowering can, however, cause failure and the crop is again susceptible to bird attack.

The farmer's planting strategy is thus based upon very clever gambles, fine-tuning of the choice of crop type as the season progresses and always with an almost addictive desire to plant some maize to satisfy the family's taste. For the donor, there is an equally complex dilemma but there are certain rules which are fundamental:

i) **Genetically modified** (GM) seeds will revert to their component gene types and might introduce unwelcome genetic strains into the national crop resource. They should not be introduced until more is understood of their characteristics and then only under very strict technical control.

ii) **Hybrid** varieties cannot be grown from last year's seed because this will already have started to revert to its component varieties and thus has to be replaced every year. This creates[16] dependency and provides no sustainability to the intervention;

iii) **Open pollinated varieties** (OPVs), of the certified type currently distributed by ECHO, can be re-cycled but only for three to five years before the necessity to renew as it, too, will then start to revert to its component varieties;

iv) **Landrace varieties**[17], while lower yielding, are adapted to local conditions over centuries and tend to have greater resistance to disease. They can be recycled *ad infinitum*, give the best chance of harvest and are usually suited to local taste. Landrace varieties are also the subject of a typically clever survival (insurance) strategy in which farmers' stocks are replanted every year and traditional rules of obligation require the stocks of those farmers whose crop has failed to be replenished by those who have enjoyed success. The long-term advantage, to all players, of this largely non-monetised system is clear.

As such, the Team cannot state categorically that maize seed should not be distributed because this would not be supported by the ECHO partners nor, more importantly, by the beneficiaries themselves. While contrary to the purist views of the agriculturalist, the latter would therefore recommend significant reduction of the maize component in the 2004 seed package and moves made towards changing beneficiary tastes for a zero maize component in any possible 2005

[15] **Source:** Principal Scientist (Economics), International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics, Matopos Research Station, Bulawayo.

[16] In fact, has already created dependency over many years.

[17] Local traditional varieties.

distribution. At the same time, ECHO should look at the possibility of local seed multiplication to perhaps include landrace varieties (without destroying local systems) and local purchase to reduce costs.

3.3 Livestock production background

The number of export quality livestock is reported[18] to have fallen from an estimated 1.66 million beasts in 2000 to an estimated 0.2 million in mid-2003 due to the release of large numbers of commercial herds during the 'fast-track resettlement' programme, their slaughter and sale at reduced prices, their removal outside the country, the removal of fences, the breakdown of livestock health controls and now a rapid increase in epidemic diseases such as Foot and Mouth Disease.

The condition of the national livestock herd at the time of the mission was observed to be largely good but noting that this was in the middle of a relatively good (for grass) rainy season and the long dry season (April to October) will take a further toll upon livestock denied good health care and supplementary feeding.

The impact of this catastrophic decline is not only on the contribution of meat and livestock products to the national food basket (and foreign earnings), but also to the availability of draught power for land cultivation. Animal traction, being the major form of draught power, is thus, more than ever, allocated on a 'the richer the earlier' queuing system. The implication for timely planting is clear and the impact on yields, whose potentials are estimated to decline by 1.4% (for maize, cotton and groundnut) for each day delayed[19], is significant.

Animal traction is always delayed by its need to regain strength on arrival of rain induced grazing after some six months of 'survival' on unpalatable forage and browse.[20] Current poor maintenance of wells, dams, boreholes and watering points is further weakening the herd during the difficult dry season.

The forecast result of reduced draught power is an increasing reliance on manual cultivation. In the light of the widespread (and increasing) incidence of HIV/AIDS, the potential of such methods is limited. For those families with adequate manpower, however, the possibility to take advantage of the need for manual cultivation through Conservation Farming Methods (which include the construction of re-usable planting pits, immediate post harvest cultivation and dry season weeding) must be seen as a positive side to the problem.

[18] By FAO.

[19] **Source:** *Conservation Farming in Zambia*. ZNFU Conservation Farming Unit, Lusaka, April 2003

[20] Tree/bush leaves and litter.

3.4 Economic background

Zimbabwe's real GDP (at 1990 prices) is estimated to have declined by nearly 50% between 1998 and the end of 2003 with inflation now running at an estimated 600% and money supply expansion moving towards the 200% figure.[21] Unemployment, estimated at 70% in 2003 (a rather meaningless figure since it does not include 'hidden unemployment'[22]), now includes a real hard-core of newly unemployed and homeless farm workers (estimated at 400 000) as well as those dismissed by business closures and down-sizing.

Access to foreign exchange has been severely limited by a decline in export earnings[23] and foreign investment, and the suspension of balance of payments support and development project funding by international agencies and governments. This presents a particular problem for the need to import large quantities of food and fuel.

The currency exchange rate, while reasonably stable at the time of the mission due to the introduction of forex auctions, is both erratic and anomalous. At the time of the mission, the **US$** to **Zim$** exchange stood at approximately 1 : 3,500 at auction while the officially fixed rate stood at approximately 1 : 800 with 'street rates' sometimes wandering towards 1 : 4,000. Shortly before the mission, however, the situation had been one of 'street rates rising as high as 1 : 6,000.

The exchange rate anomaly and the foreign currency shortages (which have been exacerbated by it[24]) have significant negative impacts on donors' possible intervention choices. While food aid has to be purchased in foreign exchange outside the country because of the national food deficit and GoZ encourages the import of seed in order not to reduce internal seed market supply, the possibilities for cash injection into local economies through local purchase of these commodities are limited.

Equally, the opportunities for alternative means of support to beneficiaries through cash for work, voucher systems, livestock purchases and seed fairs are limited by the question as to whether payments should be made in **a)** hard- or **b)** local currency. Through either system, there is a significant risk that the initial forex can get into the wrong hands to be further exchanged to their great profit.

For both farmers and donors, the unstable exchange rate/monetary value situation leaves the planning of short term investment strategies with very little certainty.

[21] Through the printing of unsupported Reserve Bank 'bearer cheques'.

[22] Workers doing 'half a job' or working full time on a job which gives very little economic return eg. many farm family members.

[23] Particularly from tobacco, gold and cotton.

[24] As much of the incoming foreign exchange has found its way into the parallel market(s).

3.5 Food security background

Clear and precise information/statistics are currently very difficult to obtain due to their political value/embarrassment and to administrative chaos. The calculation below is drawn from a number of information sources detailed in foot note[25] below:

i) Commercial seed companies estimate that, in 2003, not more than 26 000MT of maize seed was available to plant **1.04 million ha[26]**

ii) In addition, FAO estimates that 4 300 MT of maize seed was imported by NGOs to plant **0.172 million ha**

iii) GoZ tendered for an estimated 7 000 MT of maize seed from South Africa to plant **0.280 million ha**

iv) It is estimated that about 7 500 MT of maize seed was retained from the 2002/3 season to plant **0.300 million ha**

Maximum estimated area planted to maize **1.792 million ha**

It is assumed that virtually no commercial maize was planted in 2003/4 season[27] and so yields should be estimated on the basis of assumed communal farmer figures of 0.8[28] MT per hectare or a total maize harvest of **1.433 million MT[29]**. National demand for maize is considered to be of the order of **1.8 million MT**[30] so leaving a **shortfall of just less than 400.000 MT** to be covered by commercial imports and food aid in 2004/5.

More than 67%[31] of the Zimbabwean population live in the rural areas and are assumed to be continuing a subsistence farming existence[32]. There is thus likely to be a 100% shortfall in urban areas to be covered by commercial imports[33] and a significant shortfall in rural areas to be covered

[25] FAO, UN Relief and Recovery Unit for Zimbabwe (RRU), Commercial Grain Producers Association (CGPA), Commercial Farmers Union (CFU), GoZ District Development Fund (DDF), Friederich Naumann Foundation, Ministry of Lands, Agriculture and Rural Resettlement (MoLARR) and the Zimbabwe Grain Marketing Board (GMB).

[26] At the usual 25 kg/ha planting rate.

[27] It is estimated that 80% of ex-commercial land was not planted in 2003/4 and that the remaining 20% was planted by 'resettled' farmers who often lacked capital and technical expertise for full exploitation.

[28] While the 2003/4 season is not considered to have been a drought year (so far), the consultant observed many failed maize crops and thus reduced the more normal communal farmer harvest estimate (of 1 MT/ha) by 20% to give the estimated maize harvest of approximately **0.8 MT/ha**.

[29] ICRISAT suggested a yield of 1.3 MT and an area planted of around 1 million ha. to give a **1.3 MT** maize harvest.

[30] A 12 million population consuming 0.15 MT/person/annum.

[31] **Source:** FAO.

[32] Producing no surplus for the market.

[33] Plus some proposed food aid whose delivery is complex in urban areas and avoided by most donors.

by food aid. This highlights the very likely problems of the urban poor, is considered to be a 'best likely scenario' and is serious.

The calculation does not of course include other grains, oilseeds and pulses (whose contribution is considered to be important but not so significant, nor does it include livestock products whose contribution is frustrated by the current chaos in the sector.

4 Planned results - 2002/3 ECHO interventions in Zimbabwe

Planned	Achieved	Comments
General objectives: As stated in the first decision: (***ECHO/ZWE/210/2002/01000):*** To prevent malnutrition and starvation among amongst groups most vulnerable to Zimbabwe's food security crisis.	See data from Health and Nutrition report	While the Food Security consultant did not work in the urban areas and observed little evidence of acute or even chronic malnutrition in the rural areas, the general objective of the intervention was to prevent nutrition problems as the food security situation deteriorates. The consultant does not consider that the shortage of such evidence was due to the ECHO intervention with seed as such but due to the facts that **a)** the food security deterioration is still not at an advanced stage; **b)** food aid distribution has been widespread; and **c)** supplementary and therapeutic feeding has probably 'caught' any local problems. Reference should be made to the Health & Nutrition reports.
Specific objectives (corresponding to Activities): ***ECHO/ TPS/210/2002/16000:*** **a.** To assist emergency food aid operations to vulnerable groups and to support logistical arrangements for such operations.	**a.** This block grant was used to fund: 2 expatriate staff for 12 months; 72 local staff for 12 months; 40 Rubhall tents; 1 000 tarpaulins; 108 4x4 vehicles for use by WFP IPs; Communications and computer equipment for WFP IPs; and Consultancy/TA services.	**a**. It is difficult to measure this intervention against specific criteria without a dedicated study of the WFP operations in Zimbabwe. The focus of questions should be: **i)** whether the large food distributions supported by this intervention were required; **ii)** what damage did they cause to the market; and **iii)** what damage did they cause to traditional systems. The evidence is that: **i)** available data still indicate that global (national) food shortages continue; **ii)** grain/flour prices continue to rise in the market; and **iii)** 'beneficiary dependency attitudes' observed by the consultant indicate that damage is being done to morale/coping approaches. This would, however, justify use of the personnel/equipment for close impact monitoring – ECHO should insist on a greater degree of such monitoring by WFP/ IPs.
b. To create a technical assistance capacity in the field, to coordinate, assess needs, appraise project proposals and monitor operations.	**b.** CARE's Livelihood Watch community based monitoring of food security, coping and nutritional status in 320 communities in Midlands and Masvingo provinces using 1 920 volunteers collected data but did not succeed in publishing any useful material.	**b.** This project could have been the forerunner of a nationwide NGO/ community information gathering process and the reasons for its failure are unclear to the consultant – even ECHO's project monitoring file only includes initial analysis of the proposal - the matter needs further investigation.
c. To support emergency agricultural rehabilitation. ***ECHO/ ZWE/210/2003/ 01000:***	**c. 1,320,686** persons benefited from seed distributions. See **Annex II.** (ECHO Zimbabwe Food security programmes by financial decision). **d.** 1**,483,800** persons benefited from	Average cost/beneficiary (for **c and d**) was € 2.63 with a range of **€** 1.42 to **€** 17.50 depending upon seed components and ancillary inputs. This is significantly lower than the cost of food aid if the seed produced a reasonable harvest. The problem is that, as noted below, the outputs in terms of harvest are not known.

d. To improve food security for rural communities and communal farmers.	seed distributions. See **Annex II.**	
Outputs: ***ECHO/ TPS/210/2002/16000:*** ***ECHO/ ZWE/210/2003/ 01000:***	Harvest yields not known - ditto -	Later in 2004, ICRISAT, Bulawayo intends to carry out an assessment of seeds distributions in the West.
Activities: ***ECHO/ TPS/210/2002/16000:*** **a.** Logistical support to WFP **b.** Seeds distribution (Help, Oxfam, FAO) **c.** Livelihood watch (CARE) ***ECHO/ ZWE/210/2003/ 01000:*** **d.** Seeds distribution (FAO, Help, COSV, WV, Helpage).	See **Table A.** (Seed distributions, plantings and yields - 2003/4 ECHO interventions in Zimbabwe)	
Means: ECHO/ TPS/210/2002/16000 ECHO/ZWE/210/2003/01000	**€** 9,942.089 **€** 4,790,000	

5 Relevance/appropriateness of food security interventions

The relevance of seed distribution as a humanitarian response must always be questioned:

- it does not respond to immediate humanitarian needs;
- it does not represent an emergency response
- victims do not benefit from the intervention until up to one year after ECHO decision;
- provision of food is not guaranteed due to the vagaries of weather, disease, pests etc.
- provision of incorrect seed (which farmers are quite capable of recognising) can lead to its human consumption and, *in extremis*, lead to poisoning (particularly of young children) due the organo-phosphorus or mercurial seed dressing applied to the seed and not properly washed off prior to cooking.

Relevance also has to be questioned when the decision to intervene is taken by non-technical staff without reference to expert advice. ECHO's linkage of a food crisis to a perceived seed shortage would seem to have been driven by the reaction of its NGO partners towards the distribution of seed[34]. ECHO (globally) considers its NGO partners as the experts, an ethos with which the consultant would not concur and notes their frequent lack of institutional memory. ECHO needs to take such relatively large financing decisions on the basis of technical advice provided either from its own 'in-house' experts or from independent consultants hired in for the purpose.

While there was, indeed, a case for seed distribution, at least one audit report highlighted the facts that:

a) clear criteria were not defined for beneficiary selection[35];

b) recipients of seed were not always the intended beneficiaries[36];

c) beneficiaries' access to sufficient (and suitable) land was not checked.

The appropriateness of crop types/varieties distributed always has to be questioned with regard to the agro-ecological zone in which it is to be planted. ECHO agreed to finance NGO proposals for seed intervention in September 2002 without technical advice and without sufficient 'lead time' to guarantee delivery before optimum time of planting (October/November). One of the crop types delivered (maize) was of doubtful appropriateness to the recipient agro-ecological zones. The maize seed varieties (hybrid) require heavy applications of agricultural inputs

[34] Seed is considered by many players in the aid sector (not just NGOs) as a simple subject (which it is not) whose procurement, management and logistics are easy (which, to the unitiated they are).

[35] The consultant would argue that, in the almost unique situation currently prevailing in Zimbabwe, the whole farming community ('*locally rich*' and poor) are affected by the same problem and largely to the same degree. This would thus justify 'blanket' coverage.

[36] Purely on the basis of hearsay, it is possible that this was due to political pressures. Expatriates could not be expected to be *au fait* with local political complexities, ex-commercial farmers (often speaking the language) are extremely useful but may have some biases and local staff are always subject to pressures.

(fertiliser etc.) and technical support (agricultural extension), both of which were provided but not always in adequate quality or quantity.

The 2002/3 cropping season generally experienced poor rainfall, particularly with reference to the moisture needs of maize and, although adequate data are not available, it is understood that a proportion of the distributed seeds actually failed.

In December 2002, ECHO took advantage of the advice of its very experienced regional agricultural advisor[37] based in Nairobi and who visited Zimbabwe at that time. The result was his recommendation for the inclusion of open pollinated varieties (OPVs) of maize in the 2003/4 distribution. Again, these did not arrive at the most ideal time for planting but whose delivery (in November/December/January) can be considered as almost acceptable. The relevance of the inclusion of maize in the seed package was not questioned at that time but the subject was discussed with the ECHO regional agricultural advisor, who shares (with the consultant) concerns about this complex subject.

The 2002/3 intervention cannot be considered to have been completely relevant and, when aggregated with similar inappropriate seed distributions by ECHO (and other Commission services) on a worldwide basis, constitutes a significant wastage of Commission resources. The 2003/4 intervention, while greatly improved and benefiting from somewhat better rains[38], still demands some analysis[39].

This report does not condemn seed distribution as an irrelevant humanitarian response:

- it is cheaper than food aid;
- it is less destructive, to markets and human morale, than free food aid;
- it can lead to local purchase of seed with its associated introduction of funds at the 'grass-roots' level;
- it meets the objective of *helping those affected to regain a minimum level of self-sufficiency*;
- it can lead to the normalization of victims' lives; and
- it represents a link between Relief, Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD).

Seed distribution must, however, be implemented properly.

As discussed in **Section 3.2** (Agricultural background) above, Zimbabweans have an almost addictive need for maize such that the people consider that they have not eaten on a day in which maize was not included in the diet. It has to be questioned whether ECHO funding should 'feed an addiction', particularly in light of the fact that small grains are healthier[40] than maize and that millet, in particular, has a far greater chance of producing a harvest.

[37] With more than 30 years' experience in East African agriculture.

[38] But not necessarily so for maize.

[39] Later in the year, ICRISAT, Bulawayo intends to carry out an assessment of seeds distributions in the West of Zimbabwe.

[40] Many older people, having been brought up on a diet of small grains, expressed a preference for the taste of millet. Some more educated Zimbabweans actually choose to avoid maize in their diets in the same way as some Europeans avoid white bread.

The consultant considers that it would not be just (or timely) to **completely** remove maize from the 2004/5 seeds package without fair notification to the beneficiaries. Furthermore, such a move would not receive the support of ECHO partners who suspect that an over-donation of millet would result in a large proportion of that seed being eaten or sold by the farmers.

The consultant recommends that the 2004/5 seed distribution include considerably less maize[41] but that beneficiaries be given fair notice of a harder line to be taken on small grains in any possible 2005/6 seed distribution. They should also be subjected to a programme of awareness-raising with regard to the reasons for the change.

6 **Cost-effectiveness** (Means to Activities)

According to WFP, the average budgeted cost per food aid maize delivered to the beneficiary in Zimbabwe is **USD** 562/MT. This includes the initial price of the commodity.

The average cost/beneficiary of seed distributions was **€** 2.63 with a range of **€** 1.42 to **€** 17.50 depending upon seed package components and ancillary inputs[42]. The problem is that the outputs in terms of harvest are not known.

If one looks at the example of FAO's second project (ZWE/210/2003/01005), with little more project components than the distribution of seed and fertiliser at a cost of **€** 2.73 per beneficiary and with their anticipated[43] outputs/beneficiary (from their Kit I[44]) of:

80.0 kg maize;
36.5 kg sorghum;
7.3 kg millet;
18.3 kg cowpeas.

142.1 kg Food
======

then the cost of 1 MT of food produced would be **€** 19.21 (or **€** 18.51 at the average ECHO cost above) as opposed to the **US$** 562[45] cost of 1 MT of food aid.

Despite the imprecision of currency (**$** *v* **€**), food type (maize *v* maize/sorghum/millet/ cowpeas) and the possibility of harvest failure[46], this is significantly lower than the cost of food aid and would justify (in investment terms) the choice of a seed intervention in all but the most disastrous of cropping years. A caveat must be introduced here that this is in investment terms and does not guarantee food supply to the beneficiary as would food aid, food for work or cash for work[47].

[41] Reduced from 10kg to 3 kg of maize with a corresponding (according to equivalent hectares' seed rate) increase in small grains.

[42] See **Annex IV.** (ECHO Zimbabwe Food security programmes by financial decision).

[43] **Source:** FAO

[44] Maize, sorghum, millet and cowpeas.

[45] **Source:** ECHO, Harare

[46] Estimated at 25% in 2003/4 for the purpose of this report.

[47] Except in exceptional cases.

Intervention with food for work and cash for work projects would also have been less costly than seed but the latter could be considered the least disruptive on markets and traditional strategies. Intervention with cash would, however, have been difficult due to the monetary problems described in **Section 3.4** (Economic background) above.

Local purchase of seed could have been considered but rejected in 2002/2003 because of the perceived global shortage of seeds in the country. Such intervention would certainly have been disruptive even if sufficient seed had been available because of the negative perception, chaos and panic prevailing in the country at that time It should now be considered through local seed multiplication, seed fairs and straight commercial purchase.

7 Efficiency (Activities to Results)

It is striking that ECHO partners, some of whom own EuronAid[48], did not use the latter's facilities for procurement of any of their seed and agricultural inputs. Such EuronAid involvement could surely have taken advantage of economies of scale and been cheaper, faster and more effective than the individual NGO efforts which prevailed and would have left partner staff to concentrate on their own comparative advantages.

There is a problem here which needs to be investigated. On the one hand, all respondent NGOs categorically dismissed EuronAid's potential as a useful (or expeditious) procurement agency because of bad experience under AIDCO F5 funding. Since ECHO procurement does not demand the bureaucratic processes (Field-Hague-Brussels-Hague-Field) required by AIDCO, there may be a partner misunderstanding of the efficient possibilities of EuronAid.

It would appear, however, that the ECHO partners sourced their supplies at acceptable cost and quality, although there were cases of the wrong seed being delivered under the wrong seed variety name[49] and which had to be corrected by the suppliers.

Delays in delivery for timely planting were not at all a result of logistical delays but as a result of the ECHO funding calendar. A Zimbabwean farmer needs to hold the seed on his/her farm during the month of September for possible optimal planting at the end of October. An ECHO decision made in May, with funds made available to partners in June, can already be a little late for selection of/negotiation with seed supplies at the time of harvest in May. Partners, while given early verbal ECHO guarantees of funds in May, communicated to the consultant that they are not prepared to mobilize until the cash is firmly in their banks.

[48] EuronAid is a service organisation jointly owned by NGO members but which was assisted in its establishment by the Commission in the early 1980s and which, since then, has been almost entirely financed by them for the organization/administration, purchase, transport, and delivery of foodstuffs (and agricultural inputs) to NGOs. It is currently working in Zimbabwe for AIDCO F5 in the above role. It is, however, an independent organization with the legal possibilities to contract to other Commission services and non-Commission institutions in the same way as any other commercial sub-contractor.

EuronAid has specific procurement skills and intimate knowledge of Commission procurement rules. It has a varied reputation but can be a very effective procurement/distribution tool (see: **Wilding,J. and Grunewald,F)** *Joint EC/EuronAid mission – Evaluationof the 2002/3 EuronAid programme in Afghanistan.* GFA, Hamburg, November 2003.)

[49] This is very disturbing to Zimbabwean farmers who manifest a high level of sophistication in their knowledge of seed varieties and fertilisers.

It is not known to the consultant whether this reticence is due to the partners' weak cash flow facilities or to earlier bad experiences.

8 **Effectiveness** (Results to Specific objectives)

Data is plentiful in Zimbabwe but uncoordinated and not homogenous. ECHO's bank of information is no exception. **Table A.**, below, represents details of the seed distributions of the ECHO partners under Decision ***ECHO/ ZWE/210/2003/ 01000*** with forecast plantings and expected harvest yields using that seed.

Table A. Seed distributions, plantings and yields - 2003/4 ECHO interventions in Zimbabwe

	Quantities distributed (actual)					Number Of B/ficiary	Quantity Per B/ficiary
	Maize	**Sorghum**	**Millet**	**Pulses**			
	(MT)	(MT)	(MT)	(MT)		(No)	(Kg)
FAO II	1,100	30	15	315		660,000	
Help II	800	80	40	240		480,000	
Helpage	60	0	0	0		30,000	
WV	40	?	?	?		240,000	
COSV	100	84	85	42		73,800	
Total distributed	**2,100**	**194**	**140**	**597**		**1,483,800**	
		Area planted (estimated)			**Total Area planted**	**Number Of B/ficiary**	**Area per Family** (6 person)
	Maize	**Sorghum**	**Millet**	**Pulses**			
	(ha)	(ha)	(ha)	(ha)	(ha)	(No.)	(ha)
FAO II	66,682	3,000	7,600	16,400	**93,682**	660,000	**0.85**
Help II	47,508	11,034	3,200	6,400	**68,142**	480,000	**0.85**
Helpage	2,400	0	0	0	**2,400**	30,000	**0.48**
WV	1,600	?	?	?	**?**	240,000	**?**
COSV	4,000	8,400	8,500	2,100	**23,000**	73,800	**0.31**
Total area planted	**122,190**	**22,434**	**19,300**	**24,900**	**188,824**	**1,483,800**	**0.13**
		Yield (estimated)			**Total yield**	**Number Of B/ficiary**	**Yield Per B/ficiary**
	Maize	**Sorghum**	**Millet**	**Pulses**			
	(MT)	(MT)	(MT)	(MT)	(MT)	(No.)	(Kg)
FAO II	55,056	2,250	3,800	720	**61,826**	660,000	**92**
Help II	37,646	8,275	1,600	3,840	**51,361**	480,000	**107**
Helpage	1,920	0	0	0	**1,920**	30,000	**64**
WV	1,280	?	?	?	**1,280**	240,000	**5.3**
COSV	3,200	8,400	4,250	1,260	**17,110**	73,800	**231**
Total yield	**99,102**	**18,925**	**9,650**	**5820**	**133,497**	**1,483,800**	**90**

The figures in black represent data retrieved from ECHO's internal calculations, while those shaded have been extrapolated using the consultant's own yield assumptions following his field observation:
Maize: 0.8 MT/ha;**Sorghum:** 0.75 MT/ha; **Millet:** 0.5 MT/ha; **Pulses:** 0.6 MT/ha

Coverage - The table, while not at all accurate, does give some idea of what did or will happen during the 2003/4 ECHO seeds intervention. The total grain yield of 127,677 MT of grains is very interesting as it represents a significant (about 30%) contribution to the estimated cereal shortfall calculated in **Section 3.5** (Food security background). The estimated 163,924 ha of cereals planted in 2003/4 represents 95% of the potential 172,000 ha thought to have been planted by NGOs in 2002/3 – while this cannot be correct[50], the figure does indicate a significant ECHO contribution towards the international effort in addressing the seed shortage issue.

Effectiveness - In terms of meeting **Specific objective c.** (to support emergency agricultural rehabilitation), the 2002/3 intervention, even though frustrated by significant drought-induced crop failure and not ideal types/varieties, can be considered to have assisted the beneficiaries to continue their focus on farming at a time when, it is reported, there was an element of 'panic' amongst the seed buying population. This should not be a criterion of humanitarian intervention but, from the agricultural rehabilitation perspective, the intervention did have some (if limited) effect.

In terms of meeting **Specific objective d.** (to improve food security for rural communities and communal farmers), the 2003/4 ECHO intervention, while still not ideal but improving, certainly does appear (2 months before harvesting) to have been effective. It could be better by adopting the small changes recommended for 2004/5 and most effective in any possible 2005/6 intervention through the adoption of the significant changes recommended in this report. In the scenario leading to 2005/6, ECHO will also have the chance to provide leadership in food security approaches in Zimbabwe – this is a role which ECHO is increasingly playing in other humanitarian scenarios in other countries[51] and, the consultant considers, would be supported by serious agriculturalists in Zimbabwe.

Specific objective a. (to assist emergency food aid operations to vulnerable groups and to support logistical arrangements for such operations) was quite simple through financial transfer for the purchase of logistics and communications hardware, and the effectiveness of their use quite evident. The provision of long-term capital assets (vehicles and radios) for 'short-term' response without conditionality as to their long-term ownership does, however, raise questions of legality.

Specific objective b. (to create a technical assistance capacity in the field, to coordinate, assess needs, appraise project proposals and monitor operations) does appear to have been ineffective from the perspective of ECHO's wider needs, if not for those of the concerned partner. A need for good information is nevertheless highlighted here and, in recognition of GoZ sensitivity to intelligence gathering, the NGOs, while providing information, are probably not the best placed to carry out the task of national co-ordination. The consultant has studied the system that FAO would propose (based on similar information gathering in Zambia) and would recommend ECHO support of this programme under strict contractual conditions and with clear indicators of success.

[50] Seed was also distributed by AIDCO F5, USAID etc.

[51] Eg. Afghanistan.

9 **Impact** (Specific objectives to Overall objectives)

The **General objective** of 'preventing malnutrition and starvation amongst groups most vulnerable to Zimbabwe's food security crisis**'** cannot be seen as having been achieved through ECHO funded seed distribution. The general objective was more likely achieved through the widespread distribution of food aid.

The need for food aid was clear in the market chaos which prevailed in 2002 and, without it, there would have been considerable suffering amongst the rural population of Zimbabwe and, particularly, those farming in the Communal lands. This was because of their excessive reliance on a price controlled commercial market in hybrid maize in which farm gate prices were reported to be some 20% below import parity prices[52]. In the event of the drought-induced failure of both their own and commercial crops, economic chaos and then the collapse of guaranteed food from the market, access to affordable food had become a priority.

In the light of the fact that food prices are still rising[53], it would seem that food aid remains a priority now[54]. It would appear that the ECHO seed intervention in 2002/3 had very little impact on food supply and even less so on malnutrition and starvation. With 'increasing' price stability (for the time being) and the production of a reasonable (if not very good) harvest, the consultant considers that the 2003/4 seed intervention will have made an impact on food supply and to its stabilisation.

The 2003/4 ECHO intervention must therefore be seen as having made a significant contribution to a slowing down but not reversing of the impact of the food security crisis.

Negative impacts, however, include:

- encouragement of aid reliance;
- prolongation of a misplaced sense of guaranteed support which is no longer there (at least from Government sources);
- facilitation of continued denial of the advisability of cultivating maize in inappropriate agro-ecological conditions;
- potential destruction of traditional coping strategies (including the 'banking' of landrace varieties); and
- delaying of communal farmers need to introduce (or more correctly re-introduce) farming systems which are appropriate to their new agro-economic condition.

In the sure assumption that the food security crisis will continue even after political change in Zimbabwe[55], recommendations will be made in this report for ECHO actions which could be taken, particularly in 2005/6, to reverse these negative impacts.

[52] **Source:** Jimat Development Consultants, Harare
[53] **Source:** IRIN, IRIN@irinnews.org, 2nd February 2004

[54] Although the signs of aid reliance are appearing and sensitivity to destabilisation of the market needs to be heightened.

[55] Because the expertise, capital, fences and equipment (which guaranteed the high production levels to under-write the country's food needs) are now gone.

10 Sustainability

The distribution of GM or Hybrid seeds is not sustainable. They can only be grown once before the farmer's need to re-purchase from the seed breeder via the seed merchant.

The reliance of most Zimbabwean farmers' on hybrid maize worked under what was a sophisticated agricultural economy, with support from what was probably the best agricultural extension service in Africa and with farmers' confidence that the Government would always supplement harvest shortfalls with ample reserves of commercially grown maize. These are exactly the factors which brought about such an agricultural catastrophe when the politico-economic conditions changed so rapidly in 2002.

ECHO quickly learnt the mistake of distributing hybrid maize varieties and, in 2003, largely funded open pollinated maize varieties (OPVs) along with small grains and pulses together with some fertiliser. Some sustainability was thus introduced into the seed package.

Some intervention in the building of landrace variety stocks (held in small quantities by farmers as an insurance strategy) could have introduced a further element of sustainability, although this is a specialist area in which damage could be caused to traditional systems through inept intervention.

The manner in which ECHO partners are working closely with the agricultural advisory services (AREX) has to be applauded. Agricultural extension is fundamental to the introduction of new varieties and technologies[56] in order to maximise the benefits and minimise damage to the crop by inappropriate use of inputs. The introductions of new germ plasm, technology and knowledge are some of the most sustaining added values from which a farmer may benefit.

It is the consultant's opinion that agricultural reliance on the existing Communal lands at current population densities is not sustainable and never was. Clearly, the Commission cannot cooperate with the GoZ 'fast-track' resettlement programme and intervention in the Communal lands can, thus, only be seen as a 'holding operation' until more acceptable solutions prevail for the commercial lands.

[56] Both the introduction of new OPVs and different fertilisers, by ECHO partners, constitute areas wherein agricultural extension is most definitely required.

11 Conclusion

This report has highlighted the facts that:

- **i)** timing is everything in agriculture;
- **ii)** knowledge is fundamental in agriculture;
- **iii)** the West and South of Zimbabwe are pastoral areas. The remaining communal lands traditionally lent themselves to mixed farming with heavy reliance on livestock;
- **iv)** livestock levels have been severely reduced in Zimbabwe;
- **v)** animal draught power has been drastically cut;
- **vi)** HIV/AIDS has severely reduced the level of farm manpower;
- **vii)** farmers can always access some seed (somewhere) but that this is currently less than required;
- **viii)** fertiliser (and particularly nitrogen top-dressing) applied at the right time (and in the right quantities) can carry a crop through difficult periods and help to assure a harvest;
- **ix)** kraal manure (or compost) is ideal as a basal fertiliser dressing for crop establishment and can negate the need for basal chemical fertiliser;
- **x)** water is fundamental in agriculture and its application (at the right time and in the right quantities) can assure a harvest;
- **xi)** there is a pressing need for better information in terms of: who is working where; local agricultural situations (rainfall, pests, diseases, crop development, anticipated harvest, etc) and needs. While necessary for providing information, NGOs are not the best placed to coordinate the task.

Points i) to x) raise the question as to why ECHO agreed to finance (in agricultural project terms) just the supply of seed packages[57] and did not request its partners to submit alternative proposals.

In addressing these issues, any donor might be inclined to suggest interventions which are considered to be of a developmental nature. The current situation in Zimbabwe (politically, economically and agriculturally) is almost unique in history and demands for (humanitarian) interventions with a strong link between relief, rehabilitation and development.

Clearly, the other Commission services cannot make such interventions under the conditions of its specific targeted measures and, without such interventions, ECHO will lose opportunities to make a real humanitarian contribution in Zimbabwe.

The new situation in which the Communal farmers (the main beneficiaries of ECHO food security intervention) find themselves is such that they must completely rely, in the foreseeable future, on production from their own small and soil-impoverished land holdings without external

[57] Which were, anyway, not the most appropriate to some of the conditions described in points **i)** to **x)** above.

(Government) support. This requires the adoption of techniques which will maximise production without further detriment to their land and preferably with a reversal of that process.

12 Recommendations

Due to the imminent ECHO Decision process and the advanced stage of partner plans, the consultant would recommend continuation of seed distribution in 2004 with the inclusion of OPV maize[58], the proportion of which should be reduced significantly but with a corresponding increase (on an hectare basis) of small grains seed. ECHO needs to ensure that adequate nitrogen top-dressing fertiliser is included in the package. Moves should also be made towards changing beneficiary tastes for a zero maize component in any possible 2005/6 distribution and attention should be paid to increasing the diversity of crops with inclusion of more drought-tolerant crops such as sesame and possibly cassava.

With regard to expanding intervention activities (without necessarily increasing budgets), ECHO should now start to look at and introduce the following activities which correspond with points **i)** to **x)** listed in **Section 11.** (Conclusions) above:

i) Conservation farming techniques are making great progress in, for example, Zambia and involve immediate post-harvest cultivation; minimum cultivation (see **v.** and **vi.** below); the digging of 'one-off' re-useable planting pits; ongoing weeding throughout the dry season to kill off foreign matter under strong sunlight and to form a base of composted organic matter; the readiness of weed-free and organically fertilised planting pits at the onset of the rainy season; and optimal planting on first arrival of rains[59].

ii) Such technologies need agricultural extension and so the existing cooperation with AREX needs to be expanded.

iii) ECHO needs to focus on the importance of livestock in Zimbabwe particularly in Matabeleland and the South where it has always been the main food production activity but also in the other communal areas where livestock production has always been an integral component of mixed farming systems.

iv) The ongoing reduction in livestock numbers (now mainly due to disease and malnutrition) has to be halted and reversed by animal health and nutritional intervention:

- **a)** NGO responses (sometimes uninformed) to reduced livestock numbers often include livestock distribution projects which frequently fail due to lack of beneficiary resources for animal maintenance, adequate forage during (and after) drought and lack of veterinary support and medicines. Any serious proposals which address these issues should, nevertheless, receive due consideration;

- **b)** For those who still retain livestock, natural increase is most effective, particularly with regard to small ruminants. The process can be assisted by raising the animals' plane of nutrition before mating (to increase fertility) and as parturition approaches (to produce strong, healthy offspring). Provision and/or improvement of fodder and concentrate feeding can be cost effective.

[58] Contrary to the purist views of the consultant agriculturalist.
[59] Or dry-planting before the rains (particularly of millet but also sorghum. Maize can be dry-planted when the farmer is confident of oncoming rainfall)

c) Livestock become particularly vulnerable during the long dry season when green material is limited and the proteins of browse denied to them[60]. Provision of digestive modifiers for daily administration to ruminants can 'unlock' this protein source and so help survival and better prepare them for strenuous work and parturition on arrival of the rains.

d) Equally, water supplies become limited during the dry season but this is not helped by the poor maintenance of troughs, stand-pipes and dams. The favourable cost-benefit relationship of repair intervention is not just to water supply, but also to the reduction of over-grazing at too few water points.

e) Even though veterinary support and regulation has suffered from the prevailing chaos, many owners are quite capable of administering medicines/medicaments if supplies are assured and vaccine cold chains maintained. ECHO could effectively intervene here but specialist veterinary advice is needed on such subjects as tick control[61] (through dipping/spraying) and Foot and Mouth vaccination[62].

v) Access to animal draught power (now drastically reduced) is, anyway, a problem to poorer farmers. The possibilities for hand preparation of land well before the rainy season, as described in **i)** above, avoids the need to queue (according to wealth) for the opportunity to cultivate with animal traction. Vast number of tractors and farm equipment have also 'disappeared'[63] from the ex-commercial farms which, when they come back into production, may also require different farming systems. The situation now prevailing in Zimbabwe may be seen as an opportunity for ECHO to assist farmers' adaptation to appropriate farming systems (see **i)** above and **v)** below).

vi) While the system described in **i)** above does require an initial investment of very hard work (which is difficult for an HIV/AIDS affected family), the elements of minimal cultivation, re-usable planting holes and time-spread weeding do constitute a reduced and time-spread workload which may be more adaptable to families with reduced manpower resources.

vii) The very fact that farmers can access some seed under their own auspices does demand that the possibility of expanding/exploiting this capacity should be examined. ECHO should look at the possibility of local seed selection/multiplication to perhaps include landrace varieties (without destroying local systems) and local purchase to reduce costs.

viii) Some ECHO partners are already undertaking field trials, including those for fertiliser application, and this exercise needs to be encouraged by ECHO particularly in relation to the new crop varieties distributed and in relation to 'old' varieties which have not traditionally been subjected to chemical fertilisation.

ix) The practice of composting both household waste and crop/weed residues needs to be encouraged with the objectives of re-building soil structure/soil fertility and reducing over-

[60] But not to truly indigenous wild animals due to adaptation of their digestive systems.

[61] There is a point of view that, while it would be useful to facilitate uninterrupted continuation of treatment, those animals from which attention has already been absent for a year or more may already have started to build some degree of resistance which would be set back by 'occasional' intervention.

[62] There is little point in starting a vaccination campaign which cannot be assured of continuation for at least four years.

[63] Removed to other countries, sold, hidden, stolen, broken.

reliance on basal chemical fertilisers. The fact that acidic soils limit a crop's access to soil nutrients (particularly phosphate and can be corrected by application of lime[64]) needs to be understood and translated into action to the benefit of the farmers.

x) While many of the beneficiaries rely on rain-fed agriculture, the opportunities for drip-fed irrigation are substantial and should be expanded from the existing, but low, level of intervention currently supported by ECHO. Furthermore, the number of dam/small irrigation schemes observed to be lying idle (for want of maintenance and plastic piping) highlight the opportunities for very substantial increased food production with minimal investment.

xi) The consultant has studied the system which FAO would propose for information gathering in Zimbabwe (based on a similar project in Zambia) and would recommend ECHO support of this programme under strict contractual conditions and with clear indicators of success. Under the same contract, FAO quality technical input could be secured for the support of a possible additional ECHO technical assistant (agriculturalist) to be based in Harare.

[64] Available in Zimbabwe and cheaper than the fertilisers applied to substitute for 'locked' nutrients.

Annex I. Itinerary and List of people met

January 2004

Mon.26th. Fly Manchester-Brussels. ECHO briefing
Paul Koulen, ECHO Desk Officer – Zimbabwe
Montse Pantaleoni, ECHO Evaluation Sector
Martine Vanackere, ECHO Evaluation Sector

Tues.27th Brussels. ECHO briefing. DG DEV briefing.
Val Flynn, ECHO Security
Steffen Stenberg, Head of Unit, ECHO1
Philippe Darmuzey, Head of Unit (Southern Africa), DG DEV
Joan Pijuan-Canadell, DG DEV Desk Officer - Zimbabwe

Wed. 28th Brussels. AIDCO F5 briefing.
Xavier Guillou, AIDCO F5 Desk Officer – Zimbabwe
Jose Valente, AIDCO (Health).

Thur.29th Brussels. ALNAP briefing
John Mitchell, ALNAP Co-ordinator
Tony Beck, ALNAP Consultant
John Lakeman, ALNAP Database and Website Manager

Fri. 30th Fly Brussels-Manchester

February 2004

Sun. 1st Fly Manchester-Nairobi.

Mon. 2nd Nairobi. ECHO Nairobi briefing
Johan Heffinck, ECHO **R**egional **S**upport **O**ffice (Nairobi) Co-ordinator

Tues. 3rd Nairobi. ECHO Nairobi briefing. EC Nairobi Delegation briefing.
Allessandro de Matteis, ECHO RSO (Nairobi) Food Security Advisor
Lammert Zwaagstra, ECHO RSO (Nairobi) Agricultural Advisor
Peter Holdsworth, ECHO RSO (Nairobi) Rapid Reaction Advisor
Gary Quince, Head of EC Delegation, Kenya

Wed. 4th Fly Nairobi-Harare. ECHO Harare briefing
Jose (Pepe) Tamarit, ECHO Technical Assistant, Zimbabwe
Aadrian Sullivan, ECHO Technical Assistant, Zimbabwe

Thur. 5th Harare. FAO Conference on Digestive Modifiers. FAO briefing.
Mike Duncan, Browse Plus Representative, Zimbabwe
Rod Charters, Emergency Co-ordinator, FAO Zimbabwe
Jean-Claude Urvoy, Assistant Emergency Co-ordinator, FAO Zambia

		Morris Mudewa, National Manager, FAO Emergency, Zimbabwe
		UNDP briefing:
		Victor Angelo, UN Resident Representative, Zimbabwe
		Ambrose Made, Land Consultant, UNDP Zimbabwe
		Ruth Butao Ayoade, Recovery Programme Officer, RRU Zimbabwe
		Michael Jenrich, Agricultural Advisor, RRU Zimbabwe
		EC Delegation briefing:
		Francesca Mosca, Head of EC Delegation, Zimbabwe
Fri.	**6th**	Harare. NGO briefing
		Loris Palentini, Administration & Services Director, COSV Zimbabwe
		Nick Ngijima, Logistics Officer, COSV Zimbabwe
		Demmelash Getachew, Programme manager, HelpAge International
		Shemeles Mekonnen, Public Health Team Leader, OXFAM Zimbabwe
		Steven Gwynne-Vaughn, Assistant Country Director, Care Zimbabwe
		Stephen Huddle, Food Security Manager, World Vision, Zimbabwe
Sat.	**7th**	Harare
		Fred Mousseau, OXFAM Consultant, France
		Chris Leather, Food & Nutrition Advisor, OXFAM, UK
Sun.	**8th**	Harare
		HansSittig, Country Director, HELP Zimbabwe
		Wolfgang Nierwetberg, Managing Director, HELP, Germany
Mon.	**9th**	Drive Harare-Mutasa-Mutare (HELP)
		Richard Chitakunye, Project Manager, PLAN Zimbabwe
		Mrs.Chikuni, Farmer, Pafiya village, Mutasa district. (Landrace varieties)
		Mrs.Chimboza, Mutasa district. (Oilseeds, cassava)
Tues.	**10th**	Drive Mutare-Gweru (CARE)
		Jephita Mahove, Project Manager, CARE Zimbabwe
Wed.	**11th**	Gweru (OXFAM)
		Chief John Chaka, Madeba village, Telonga ward, Churumanzu district.
		Farmer, Baru Resettlement, Chirumanzu district. (Ex-vendor)
Thur.	**12th**	Drive Gweru-Bulawayo (HelpAge)
		Farmer, Sivomo village, Nosigue (River irrigation)
Fri.	**13th**	Bulawayo
		Dr.David Rohrbach, Principal Scientist (Economics), ICRISAT/SADC
		Dr.Stephen Twomlow, Land, Water & Agrodiversity, ICRISAT/SADC
		Shadreck Ncube, Ruminant Nutritionist, Matopos Research Station
		Joseph Siksana, Director, Matopos Research Station

Sat. 14th	Bulawayo (World Vision)
	Farmer, Ward 5, Village 17, Bubi district, Matabeleland North (trials)
	Farmer, Ward 18, Villlage 1, Bubi district, Mat.North (winter ploughing)
Sun. 15th	Bulawayo (HELP)
	Janush Negri/Tim Smith, HELP Zimbabwe
	Farmer, Dambasashoku village, Ward 2, Gwanda district, Mat.South
Mon. 16th	Drive Bulawayo-Hwange (COSV)
	Paolo Felice, Agronomist, COSV Zimbabwe
	Farmer, Chentali village, Makwandara ward, Mat.North (Irrigation dam)
	Farmer, Simangani village, Simangani ward, Mat.North (Irrigated garden)
Tues. 17th	Fly Hwange-Harare (COSV)
	Mrs.Ndube, farmer, Hwange district (Landrace seeds)
Wed. 18th	Harare
	Aadrian Driesen, Southern Africa Representative, EuronAid
Thur. 19th	Harare
	Elliot Murumuku, FEWSNET Zimbabwe
	Tracy Atwood, Team Leader (Econ.Development), USAID, Zimbabwe
	Heather Evans, Emergency Humanitarian Assistance Co-ordinator, USAID
Fri. 20th	Harare – Debrief with NGOs. Briefing/debriefing AIDCO F5
	Pat Phipps, Food Security Advisor, EC Delegation, Harare
	Chris McIvor, Country Programme Director, SC(UK) Zimbabwe
	Chris Bowley, Emergency Manager, SC(UK) Zimbabwe
	Kevin Farrell, Country Representative, WFP Zimbabwe
Sat. 21st	Harare
	Annemarie Hoogendoorn, Consultant, AIDCO F5 Evaluation
	Munhamo Chisvo, Consultant, AIDCO F5 Evaluation
Sun. 22nd	Harare
Mon. 23rd	Debrief with ECHO**.** Fly Harare-Manchester
Tues. 24th	Arrive Manchester

Annex II. ECHO Zimbabwe Food security programmes by financial decision

Decision ECHO/TPS/210/2002/16000

Partner	Contract number	Project	Project cost (€)	Number of beneficiaries	Cost per beneficiary (€)	Start date	Finish date	Project status
CARE	TPS/210/2002/16001	Livelihood watch	240,000			1-Nov-02	31-Oct-03	**completed**
HELP	TPS/210/2002/16002	Seeds	1,100,000	592,686	1.85	1-Oct-02	28-Feb-03	**completed**
OXFAM	TPS/210/2002/16003	Seeds	490,000	28,000	17.50	1-Oct-02	30-June-03	**completed**
WFP	TPS/210/2002/16018	Logistical Support	5,112,089			1-Oct-02	28-Mar-04	**ongoing**
FAO	TPS/210/2002/16030	Seeds	1,000,000	700,000	1.42	15-Dec-02	30-June-03	**completed**
		Total:	**7,942,089**	**1,320,686**				

Decision ECHO/ZWE/210/2003/01000

FAO	ZWE/210/2003/01005	Seeds	1,800,000	660,000	2.73	1-June-03	31-May-04	**ongoing**
WV	ZWE/210/2003/01012	Seeds	670,000	240,000	2.79	1-July-03	31-Jan-04	**ongoing**
HelpAge	ZWE/210/2003/01013	Seeds	300,000	30,000	10.00	1-July-03	31-March-04	**ongoing**
COSV	ZWE/210/2003/01014	Seeds	420,000	73,800	5.69	1-May-03	15-Dec-03	**completed**
HELP	ZWE/210/2003/01015	Seeds	1,600,000	480,000	3.33	1-June-03	30-Dec-03	**completed**
		Total:	**4,790,000**	**1,483,800**				
		Grand total	**12,732,089**	**2,804,486**				

Less CARE Livelihood watch	240,000			
Less WFP Logistical support	5,112,089	5,352,089		
Seeds component		**7,380,810**	**2,804,486**	**2.63**
		========	=======	===

Annex III. Methodology

i) Brussels

Prior to mission departure:

- briefing in Brussels by ECHO staff;
- collection and review of relevant documents including background material, guidelines, decisions, project proposal, situation reports, mid-term reports, communications traffic etc.

ii) Harare

Prior to departure to the field:

- interviews in Harare with all relevant sources of information (other donors, partner NGOs and concerned International Organisations);
- elaboration of an ex-post Logical Framework matrix for intervention to date.

iii) Field

Visits to project sites to make field observations of the success of seed distributions, inspect existing activities and to carry out participatory discussions as follows:

- interviews with institutional stakeholders such as local government and AREX extension workers;
- semi-structured interviews with beneficiary and special interest (eg. women) groups;
- semi-structured interviews with key informants;
- semi-structured interviews with individual beneficiaries/beneficiary families.
- ongoing triangulation of findings with project staff.

iv) Harare

Feed-back session with ECHO partners;

Feed-back sessions (where necessary) with earlier sources of information (eg.FAO) to triangulate findings;

Data collated and analysed;

Conclusions and recommendations for future action;

Aide-Mémoire presented by team to ECHO Harare and ECHO Brussels.

v) Europe

Draught report writing;

Comments received from ECHO;

Finalisation of report.

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Annex V. Terms of Reference for the Zimbabwe Evaluation