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COMPREHENSIVE CHILLI PRODUCTION & MARKETING GUIDE FOR ZIMBABWE FARMERS



Introduction

Chilli production in Zimbabwe offers an opportunity for both smallholder and commercial farmers to earn sustainable income through local and export markets. The Dendere Chilli Program provides certified seed, training, and a guaranteed buy-back arrangement for farmers participating in chilli farming across all provinces.

Zimbabwe's warm climate and fertile soils make it ideal for growing African Bird's Eye (ABE) chilli, known locally as Kacholo or Malaga. The crop thrives particularly in regions such as Chiredzi, Norton, Gokwe, and Mutare.



Climate and Soil Requirements

Chillies perform best in temperatures of 20–30°C with annual rainfall between 600–1200 mm. Optimal soil pH is between 6.0 and 7.0. Well-drained sandy loam soils are most suitable. Soil testing before planting helps determine nutrient requirements for proper fertilizer planning.

Shona Tip: Shandisa ivhu rinofema zvakanaka uye rine mvura yakakwana asi risinganyurwe nem

Land Preparation and Planting

Prepare land by clearing weeds and debris. Plough to a depth of 20–25 cm, harrow to break clods, and form raised beds (1.2–1.8 m wide). Spacing: 30–45 cm between plants and 60–90 cm between rows. Transplant 6–8 week-old seedlings and water thoroughly after transplanting.



Fertilization and Nutrition

Stage	Fertilizer Type	Rate/ha	Application Time
Basal	Compound S or NPK 10:10:10	300–400 kg	At transplanting
Top Dressing 1	Ammonium Nitrate (AN)	150 kg	4 weeks after transplanting
Top Dressing 2	Ammonium Nitrate (AN)	100 kg	8–10 weeks after transplanting
Foliar Feed	Calcium nitrate or potassium nitrate	As recommended	Every 2–3 weeks



Pest and Disease Management

Major pests include aphids, thrips, red spider mites, and fruit borers. Common diseases include anthracnose, bacterial wilt, and mosaic virus. Regular scouting should be done twice a week to check for pest and disease symptoms.

Example Chilli Spray Program

Week	Target Pest/Disease	Product	Notes
1–2	Damping off	Copper-based fungicide	Apply after transplanting
3–4	Aphids, Thrips	Imidacloprid or Dimethoate	Spray early morning
5–6	Anthracnose	Mancozeb or Azoxystrobin	Repeat every 14 days
7–8	Fruit borer	Lambda-cyhalothrin	Alternate products to prevent resistance



Case Studies from Zimbabwe Farmers

Case Study 1

Chiredzi Farmer – Expanded from 0.5ha to 5ha under Dendere Chilli, achieving yields up to 3.2t/ha through proper irrigation and pest control.

Case Study 2

Norton Cooperative – Achieved uniform fruiting with drip irrigation and consistent fertilizer use, producing Grade A chillies.

Case Study 3

Mutare Grower – Improved drying and grading techniques, leading to export-ready chilli and higher income returns.



How Dendere Agro Transformed Communities Through Chilli Farming

- Dendere Agro began its journey in marginalized rural villages, introducing chilli farming to communities that had long struggled with low-value crops and limited market access.
- Farmers received hands-on training, from seedbed preparation to harvesting, enabling even first-time growers to produce high-quality chillies.
- As the projects grew, women and youth became key participants, earning income that helped families pay school fees, improve homes, and start small businesses.
- In peri-urban areas, unused land was converted into productive chilli plots, turning idle spaces into income-generating micro-farms.
- Through guaranteed markets and transparent pricing, Dendere Agro connected farmers directly to buyers, removing middlemen and ensuring farmers earned fair value for their labour.
- The introduction of seedlings, agronomic support, and monitoring visits improved yields and built farmer confidence across all provinces.
- Communities once dependent on seasonal rainfall now enjoy year-round income, as chilli is a resilient, high-value crop with multiple harvest cycles.
- With every successful harvest, trust and hope grew, creating a ripple effect—neighbours joined, cooperatives formed, and entire communities shifted toward commercial agriculture.
- Today, from rural margins to peri-urban hubs, Dendere Agro has empowered thousands, proving that chilli farming can uplift livelihoods, strengthen food systems, and unlock new economic opportunities across Zimbabwe



Conclusion

Chilli production under the Dendere Chilli Program provides Zimbabwean farmers with a profitable and sustainable farming opportunity. By applying good agricultural practices, pest management, and maintaining quality, farmers can increase their income and contribute to export growth.

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