

Experts seek local solution as Zimbabwe gobbles US\$2 billion on food imports amid uncertain international market

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HARARE - The Agricultural Marketing Authority (AMA) and Africa Economic Development Strategies (AEDS) have convened a high-level meeting to explore strategies for reducing Zimbabwe's ballooning food import bill, which now stands at US\$2 billion annually.

The meeting, set for 15 January and strictly by invitation, will bring together senior government officials, industry leaders, financiers, agro-processors and farmer representative bodies. Its objective is to align national strategy on localising the grains and oilseeds value chain.

According to a joint statement, the gathering comes at a time when global markets are increasingly unstable due to wars, geopolitical tensions and supply-chain disruptions.

"The meeting is convened against a backdrop of heightened global geopolitical uncertainty and repeated supply chain disruptions, which have exposed the risks of reliance on food imports," the statement reads.

"Lessons from the Covid-19 pandemic and ongoing global conflicts have underscored a critical reality: food import dependence is a national security vulnerability. Zimbabwe currently spends over US\$2 billion annually on agricultural imports, a significant proportion of which can be competitively produced locally."

Government has since prioritised self-sufficiency in grains and oilseeds, pushing for the domestication of key agricultural value chains as both an economic and security imperative.

Local research institutions have already developed a new wheat strain expected to save millions in import costs from Europe and North Africa. This comes as Zimbabwe celebrates what officials describe as the best wheat harvest since the start of commercial production.

Statutory Instrument 87 of 2025 (SI 87), which restricts imports of selected grains and oilseeds to stimulate domestic production and accelerate agro-industrial growth, is expected to be a major point of discussion at the meeting.

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