

Aliens risk lives for virgin farmland

By CHRIS BISHOP
Maputo

HUNDREDS of land-hungry Zimbabweans are risking their lives by border jumping to stake illegal claims on Mozambican farmland, a growing trend which could cause diplomatic tension between the countries.

Zimbabweans, frustrated by the years of waiting for land redistribution in their homeland, are walking for days across land-mined mountains at the border to buy up land in Mozambique.

And local chiefs, hungry for any kind of foreign currency in the war-torn border province of Manica, are prepared to sell 12ha of virgin farmland for just £6 (about R33).

Farai Majoso, 25, from Mutare in Zimbabwe, made the hazardous three-day trip on foot to secure a smallholding growing maize a few kilometres inside Mozambique.

"We had to come here. There are too many people and too few farms in Zimbabwe," he said.

But as more Zimbabweans arrive, the political problems surrounding their illegal exodus are likely to increase. Politicians in Mozambique are eager to keep the Manica province clear for an estimated 60 000 returning war refugees.

Foreigners buying land in Mozambique need a permit to do so. — © The Telegraph, London

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