

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

ON

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FARMER INPUT SUPPORT PROGRAMME FOR THE 2022/2023 AGRICULTURE SEASON

Madam Speaker, I thank you most sincerely for this opportunity to issue a ministerial statement on the 2022/2023 Agriculture Season.

Madam Speaker, it is important that we inform the nation on the preparations we are making for the 2022/2023 Agriculture Season. The statement will also respond to a point of order raised by Hon. R. K. Chitotela, the Member of Parliament for Pambashe Parliamentary Constituency.

Madam Speaker, the Cabinet, at its fourth special meeting held on 22nd November, 2021, resolved that the Farmer Input Support Programme (FISP) migrates to a cost-effective and enhanced electronic agro-input system beginning from the 2022/2023 Agriculture Season. However, the Russian-Ukraine conflict has affected the supply of fertiliser on the world market and caused a drastic increase in prices. The implementation of an electronic agro-input system would require the private sector to take upfront the risk of importing the fertiliser and stocking it in various outlets countrywide. This poses a threat of non-supply of fertiliser to the farmers, as huge financial resources will be required by the private sector to mobilise the required quantities.

Madam Speaker, given this uncertainty, the Government has decided that for the 2022/2023 Farming Season, FISP will be implemented using the Direct Input Supply modality. The following will be the considerations:

- (a) a total of 1,024,434 farmers will benefit from the programme. This number is exactly as of last year's beneficiaries and the farmer contribution will remain at K400;
- (b) revision of the input pack under the programme as follows:

- (i) a total of six bags of fertiliser per farmer will be given, out of which three will be basal dressing and three will be top dressing;
 - (ii) a 10 kg of maize seed will be given to all the beneficiaries; and
 - (iii) a supplementary pack of either 1 x 25 kg soya beans seed or 1 x 20 kg groundnut seed will be given to half of the group each, meaning 500,000 farmers will get soya beans and the other 500,000 will get groundnuts.
- (c) introduction of the use of biometrics at farmer registration and input collection stages.

Madam Speaker, I am happy to inform this respective Chamber that the ministry has commenced procurement of inputs for the 2022/2023 Agriculture Season. The ministry will continue updating the public on the progress of the procurement process and when farmers will begin making deposits towards FISP.

Madam Speaker, the ministry, together with the Smart Zambia Institute, has also embarked on beneficiary register verification exercise in order to ensure that only eligible beneficiaries are registered and benefit from the programme.

Madam Speaker, as I conclude my very brief ministerial statement, I wish to state that the Government will continue supporting the small-scale farmers with inputs. The proposed implementation modality is expected to contribute to the enhancement of access to quality fertiliser and certified seed by the farmers. This will, in turn, lead to improved production and productivity and enhanced national and household food and nutritional security.

I thank the Hon. Members for listening very attentively.

I thank you, Madam Speaker.