

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
ON THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FARMER INPUT SUPPORT PROGRAMME IN 2018/2019
FARMING SEASON
BY THE HON. MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, MR KATAMBO

Mr Speaker, I thank you for allowing me this opportunity to deliver a ministerial statement on the implementation of the Farmer Input Support Programme (FISP) in 2018/2019 Farming Season. This statement has been necessitated by the need to inform the House and the nation at large on the state of the implementation of FISP for the 2018/2019 Farming Season.

Mr Speaker, on 24th to 25th April, 2018, the Ministry of Agriculture held a meeting with various stakeholders to review the performance of FISP Electronic Voucher System (e-Voucher System) during the 2017/2018 Farming Season. The stakeholders that participated were as follows:

- (a) Ministry of Agriculture;
- (b) Smart Zambia Institute (SZI);
- (c) Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO);
- (d) Agro-Dealers Representatives;
- (e) National Input Suppliers;
- (f) Mayfair Insurance;
- (g) Musika Zambia;
- (h) Indaba Agricultural Policy Research Institute (IAPRI);
- (i) Banks and Financial Institutions; and
- (j) Farmer Organisation Representatives.

Mr Speaker, during the stakeholders' consultation meeting, challenges faced during the 2017/2018 Farming Season under FISP e-Voucher System implementation were highlighted as follows:

- (a) Network limitations in some districts;
- (b) Competence limitations in the usage of ICT by agro-dealers and members of staff;
- (c) Farmers losing their cards or pin numbers;
- (d) Delays in card production distribution and loading by service providers;
- (e) Complications in deposit capture due to lack of physical presence by some contracted banks in some districts;
- (f) Challenges faced by some agro-dealers in accessing sufficient inputs from national suppliers;
- (g) Delays by farmers in making their K400 contribution;
- (h) The code system under the Zambia Integrated Agriculture Management Information System (ZAMIS) proved a challenge with some agro-dealers and farmers;
- (i) There were also reports of bias and abuse by some ministry staff in their dealings with agro-dealers; and
- (j) Delays in release of the Government contribution from the Treasury.

Mr Speaker, despite the above challenges, FISP e-Voucher System has the following advantages:

- (a) Improved targeting of beneficiaries, thereby reducing on ghost farmers;

- (b) The system provides beneficiary farmers with the wide option of agriculture livestock and fisheries inputs to choose from. This is very important for pushing the agriculture diversification agenda;
- (c) The e-Voucher System also helped to open up private sector participation on FISP through the involvement of local agro-dealers and national suppliers;
- (d) The involvement of local agro-dealers also helped to create job opportunities; and
- (e) The use of e-Voucher cards helped to link farmers to banking services through the deposits as well the visa cards.

Mr Speaker, arising from the stakeholders consultations in order to address the encountered challenges and at the same time avoiding put the national and household food security at risk, the Government had to relook at the programme for FISP for the 2018/2019 Farming Season. For some districts, the Government will directly procure and distribute fertiliser and assorted seed varieties for issuance to farmers in these selected districts. To this effect, the Government has already initiated the process of procuring inputs for the 2018/2019 Farming Season. The affected districts however, will gradually be reintroduced back into the e-Voucher System in the season to come once the noted challenges are addressed.

Mr Speaker, for the other districts, target beneficiaries will be serviced through the e-Voucher System using cardless mechanism with all eligible agro-dealers participating in input supply. All districts will continue to have their beneficiaries data bases managed through ZAMIS under the Smart Zambia Institute.

Mr Speaker, under the two approaches, the targeted number of farmers remains the same at 1 million. The farmer contribution will still be K400 and the Government contribution is at K1,700. Working with the Smart Zambia Institute, the Ministry of Agriculture will capture information on the farmers involved through ZAMIS. The information to be captured will be on farmers' deposits and strict verification of farmers at input collection stage using ICT system

including biometrics (fingers prints) for cardless system. Under this, there will a strict monitoring regarding authority to collect to ensure that only selected farmers on the ZAMIS system access the inputs.

Mr Speaker, during the 2017/2018 Farming Season, the Government enrolled all targeted farmers on the weather index insurance. This is meant to compensate farmers on any crop losses that could occur if there is any adverse weather. This initiative will continue in the 2018/2019 Farming Season.

Mr Speaker, I thank you.