

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
ON THE
CROP FORECASTING SURVEY RESULTS FOR THE 2016/2017 AGRICULTURAL
SEASON AND THE FOOD BALANCE STATUS FOR THE 2017/2018 MARKETING
SEASON
BY THE
HON. MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, MS SILIYA

Mr Speaker, it is my pleasure to brief the House on the country's estimated crop production for the 2016/17 agricultural season as well as the country's national food balance for the marketing season covering the period 1st May, 2017 to 30th April, 2018. The crop production estimates generated by my ministry in collaboration with the Central Statistical Office (CSO) are based on a universally applied scientific survey method that is used every year.

Sir, as most of us may be aware, the SADC Region in general and Zambia in particular experienced the *La Nina* weather phenomenon. This is generally associated with high rainfall for countries in Southern Africa. The Region did indeed experience very good rainfall from November, 2016 to May, 2017. Most parts of the country experienced normal rainfall including in the southern half of the country, which previously had experienced poor rainfall in the prior two seasons. The timely commencement of the rains led to a good start to the planting season. As a result, yields and production of several crops such as maize, sorghum, rice, soya beans, Irish potatoes and cow peas have been forecast to increase.

Sir, production of millet is forecast to increase by 8.65 per cent to 32,566 metric tonnes from 29,974 metric tonnes from last season. Production of rice is forecast to increase by 44.04 per cent to 38,423 metric tonnes from 26,677 metric tonnes last season. Production of groundnuts is also forecast to increase by 28.23 per cent to 168,699 metric tonnes from 131,562 metric tonnes last season. Additionally, production of mixed beans is forecast to increase slightly by 1.29 per cent to 45,938 metric tonnes from 45,351 metric tonnes last season. The production of Barley tobacco is forecast to increase by 29.95 per cent while production of Virginia is forecast to reduce by 3.68

per cent. Production of sorghum is forecasted to increase by 22.9 per cent to 17,337 metric tonnes from 14,107 metric tonnes from last season.

Mr Speaker, production of soya beans of forecast to increase by 31.38 per cent to 351,460 metric tonnes from 267,490 metric tonnes last season. The national yield rate for soya beans has reduced by 17.3 per cent from 1.84 metric tonnes per hectare last season to 1.52 metric tonnes per hectare. The area planted to soya beans increased by 58.9 per cent from 145,763 hectares to 231,630 hectares.

Of this production of soya beans, our small and medium scale farmers account for 150,994 metric tonnes. This is a 131 per cent increase in soya beans production by small and medium scale farmers from 65,304 metric tonnes last season. The number of small and medium scale farmers producing soya beans has increased by 82 per cent. This significant increase in the number of small and medium scale farmers taking up soya beans production is evidence of the Government's diversification strategy bearing fruit.

Mr Speaker, according to the crop focus survey results, national cassava flour equivalent production for the 2016/17 season has been forecast to increase by 8.12 per cent to 923,795 metric tonnes compared to 854,393 metric tonnes of cassava flour equivalent produced last season. The increase in production of cassava flour equivalent is attributed to increased market prospects that have come up in the cassava value chain such as brewing and cassava blends.

Sir, the wheat crop for the 2016/17 season is currently being planted. However, preliminary estimates indicate that the country will produce 193,713 metric tonnes from an estimated planted area of 26,773 hectares. The country has 54,522 metric tonnes of carryover stocks of wheat as at 30th April, 2017. Wheat requirements have been estimated at 395,000 metric tonnes for the 2017/18 season. A detailed estimate for the anticipated wheat production for the 2017/18 season will be provided later in the season.

Mr Speaker, production of seed cotton is forecast to decrease by 20.2 per cent to 89,293 metric tonnes from 111,902 metric tonnes last season. The area planted to seed cotton decreased by

18.35 per cent this season. The reduction in seed cotton production is due to farmers switching to other crops, notably, soya beans and maize.

Sir, production of sweet potatoes is forecast to decrease by 10.87 per cent. The decrease in the production of sweet potatoes is due to the fact that many farmers also switched hectareage from sweet potatoes to maize due to the high price of maize. Similarly, the production of sunflower also declined by 17.8 per cent to 50,220 metric tonnes from 61,073 metric tonnes last season. The decline in sunflower is due to the fact that last season the price of soya beans was better than sunflower. Therefore, farmers switched hectareage to soya beans.

Mr Speaker, maize production is forecast to increase to 3,606,549 metric tonnes from 2,873,052 metric tonnes in the 2015/16 season. This represents an increase of 25.53 per cent. The national average yield rate for maize has increased slightly to 2.19 metric tonnes per hectare from 2.10 metric tonnes per hectare last season. This represents an increase of 4.18 per cent.

Sir, small and medium scale farmers have recorded an average maize yield rate of 2.12 metric tonnes per hectare while large scale farmers have recorded an average maize yield rate of 5.2 metric tonnes per hectare.

Mr Speaker, the contributing factors to the high production of maize are increased area planted and favourable agro-meteorological conditions which resulted in higher yields. In addition, usage of fertiliser and maize by farmers increased by 26 per cent in 2016/17 compared to last season. The continued adoption of conservation farming practices by farmers also had a positive impact on productivity and ultimately production. The area utilised for maize production increased by 20.5 per cent to 1,644,741 hectares in the 2015/16 season from 1,364,977 hectares last season. The area expected to be harvested also increased by 23.86 per cent.

Sir, the national food balance sheet for 2017/18 marketing season based on the crop forecasting survey shows that the country has produced sufficient maize for both human consumption and industrial use. As already stated, total maize production this season has been estimated to be 3,606,549 metric tonnes. The country also had a maize carry-over stock amounting 569,317

metric tonnes as at 1st May, 2016. When the maize carry-over stock from last season is added to the maize production for this season, the total supply of maize available for the 2017/18 marketing season is 4,175,866 metric tonnes.

Mr Speaker, the food balance sheet for the current population shows that the total amount of maize required for human consumption, industrial use and other commitments amounts to 2,997,350 metric tonnes. The total maize requirements include an unanticipated national strategic reserve stock of 500,000 metric tonnes to be held by the FRA. When total maize requirements are subtracted from total maize availability, the food balance sheet indicates that the country has recorded a maize surplus of 1.1 million metric tonnes.

Sir, last year's agricultural marketing season was very unique to the country and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region because Zambia was one of the few countries that had surplus maize production. As such, the country experienced pressure on the maize stocks and several measures such as restrictions on the export of maize and maize products were put in place to safeguard the food and nutrition security of the nation. In view of the increased production of maize this season, the export ban on maize and maize products has since been lifted. In addition, the FRA will purchase up to 500,000 metric tonnes of commodities, including maize, for strategic reserves.

Mr Speaker, the Ministry of Agriculture has commenced the review of the FRA mandate legislation. The ministry is also conducting consultations with stakeholders on the 2017 marketing modalities. The FRA will announce crop marketing modalities after the completion of consultations with stakeholders and approval of Cabinet.

Sir, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Finance this morning held consultations with industries including grain traders, the milling industry, bi-lateral and multi-lateral cooperating partners, farmer unions and other key private and public sector players in the agricultural sector. The consultations are aimed at finding market policy solutions going forward. The discussions were fruitful and the House will be informed of the outcomes of these discussions in due course.

Mr Speaker, I would like to reiterate my message to the private sector to continue to actively participate in agricultural marketing, particularly maize marketing.

Sir, let me conclude by once again commending our hard working farmers, both large and small scale, out growers, agro-dealers and many others in the agricultural sector for their hard work and effort this season. I encourage them to continue diversifying their crop production and to take agriculture as a business. I also wish to advise our farmers to use cooperatives and to negotiate the best price to avoid being taken advantage of by traders.

I thank you, Sir.