**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

ON THE

FOOD AND NUTRITION PROGRAMMES

BY THE

HON. MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, MR KATAMBO, MP

 Madam Speaker, I thank you for giving me this opportunity to update the august House and the nation at large on the Food and Nutrition Programmes being undertaken by the Ministry of Agriculture.

Madam, Zambia like any other African countries has a high burden of under-nutrition in children under the age of five. Thousands of children and women suffer from one or more forms of malnutrition including low birth weight, wasting, stunting, under-weight and multiple micro-nutrients deficiencies such as Vitamin A, Iron and Zinc deficiencies. In the recent, Zambia Demographic Health Survey of 2013/14, current trends indicate that Zambia is suffering a double burden of malnutrition of both under-nutrition and over-nutrition, which is obesity being on the rise. About 20 per cent of the Zambian women are said to over-weight.

Madam Speaker, under-nutrition is determined by a number of factors which operate at deferent levels. According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Conceptual Framework for under-nutrition, malnutrition is an outcome of a combination of factors associated with economic, social, cultural, health and environment. Other underlined determinants include food insecurity and inadequate health services. The immediate determinants of malnutrition are mainly inadequate food intake and diseases such as diarrhoea pneumonia, malaria and HIV/AIDS.

Madam Speaker, it is against this background that the Ministry of Agriculture undertakes programmes and activities to enhance behavioural change towards food consumption patterns and ultimately improves nutrition status among the households. My ministry realises the cross-cutting nature of nutrition and, therefore, collaborates with other ministries such as the Ministry of Health, the National Food and Nutrition Commission, the ministries of Community Development and Social Welfare, General Education, Water, Sanitation and Environmental Protection, Gender, and Fisheries and Livestock to implement the food and nutrition programmes. The ministry disseminates extensive messages with a focus on improving nutrition status among the farming community and the general public. This information is also disseminated through the National Agricultural Information Service (NAIS). Through NAIS, the ministry produces television and radio programmes in different languages on nutrition targeted at farmers and the general public.

Madam, the ministry is promoting the production and consumption of diverse foods at household level for improved nutrition. Thus, crop diversification programmes that emphasise the production of nutrients dense crops such as soya beans, groundnuts common beans, orange fleshed, sweet potatoes, fruits and vegetables are being promoted. The emphasis has been on the utilisation of the legumes such as common beans, soya beans, groundnuts bambara nuts andcowpeas to provide cheaper sources of proteinas compared to animal proteins sources that may not be easily accessible and affordable in rural areas. Fruits and vegetables are being promoted to combat micro-nutrients deficiencies in women of productive age and children below the age of two.

Madam Speaker, the ministry has also developed recipes of traditional food and compiled recipe books that are used as tools for demonstrating the utilisation of locally available foods. Two volumes have been published and disseminated to the communities, camp extension officers and other field workers. In addition, the ministry has developed and distributed to all provinces, a total of 4,000 copies of food and nutrition operational guidelines that are meant to guide food and nutrition officers in the execution of their duties.

Madam Speaker, the ministry is also promoting bio-fortified crops through the Zambia Agriculture Research Institute (ZARI) in collaboration with partners such as Harvest Plus. Through this collaboration, the ministry has bred and promoted the production and consumption of bio-fortified food crops such as orange maize, iron rich beans, which is mbereshi beans, and orange fleshed sweet potatoes. They are being promoted through field demonstrations and farmer trainings, among others. The objective is to improve the accessibility of the bio-fortified crops as these crops help address micro-nutrient deficiencies.

Madam Speaker, another programme that the ministry is undertaking is the promotion of value addition through food processing, preservation and improved storage technologies. The ministry distributed various agro-food processing equipment that includes solar driers, peanut butter making machines, grinders, rice polishing machines, groundnut shellers, peanut roasters and blanchers, among others, to farmer groups in various parts of the country. This is to enhance the quality of food crops and promote value addition among small scale farmers, thereby improve their incomes. The ministry is also promoting the use of improved storage structures such as metal silos for increased all-year-round food availability.

Madam Speaker, the ministry is also implementing the Scale-Up Nutrition and the first 1,000 Most Critical Days Programmes. The first phase of the first 1,000 Most Critical Days Programme was implemented from 2014 to 2017. The objective of the programme is to improve the nutrition status of the Zambian population through the provision of quality nutrition services and increased availability, access and utilisation of quality and safe foods. The role of the ministry is to provide nutrition sensitive agriculture interventions and ultimately improve the diets of target groups. The programme was implemented in seven provinces, namely; Eastern, Muchinga, Northern, Western, North-Western, Central and Luapula.

Madam Speaker, one of the key outputs of the programme was the introduction of bio-fortified crops, which are nutrient-dense such as orange fleshed maize, orange fleshed sweet potatoes and iron-rich beans in participating households and communities. Currently, preparations for the implementation of phase two of the 1,000 Most Critical Days Programme are on-going and implementation is expected to start before early next year. The programme is supported by a consortium of donors. A total of K21 million has been spent on the programme from 2014 to-date.

Madam Speaker, the Scaling-Up Nutrition Programme is a manifestation of inter-sectoral coordination among government ministries and co-operating partners. Further, the ministry has also been supporting the School Feeding Programme under the Ministry of General Education with maize from the Food Reserve Agency (FRA).

Madam Speaker, the Ministry of Agriculture in collaboration with the Central Statistical Office (CSO), Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations (UN) and National Food and Nutrition Commission has prepared an updated national food balance sheet to take into account not only grains, but other food crops, livestock products and fish. This is a demonstration of our commitment to ensuring food security and good nutrition for the majority of the Zambian population.

Madam Speaker, I wish to conclude by reiterating our Government’s commitment to improving the food security and nutritional status of citizens of our nation. As the Ministry of Agriculture, we are cognisant of the fact that for nutrition interventions to be successful, we need a multi-sectoral approach. Therefore, our doors are open to players who are willing to work with us to improve nutrition in the country.

Madam Speaker, I thank you.