

THE FALL ARMY WORM ATTACK ON THE MAIZE CROP IN 2018/2019
AGRICULTURAL SEASON

The Minister of Agriculture (Mr Katambo): Mr Speaker, I thank you for giving me this opportunity to deliver a Ministerial Statement on the fall army worm attacks on the maize crop in the 2018/2019 agricultural season. It is important that the country is made aware on levels of infestation of the fall army worms and efforts that the Government is putting place to help farmers manage the pest.

Sir, in the 2016/2017 agricultural season, the country experienced the first outbreak of fall army worms which attacked the maize crop in some parts of the country. The outbreak of the fall army worms has since become a seasonal occurrence. As you may be aware the fall army worm is not native to Africa. However, it is worth noting that this pest is here to stay and there is need for farmers to learn how to manage the pest in their fields.

In the 2018/2019 season, there were reports of the fall armyworm attacking maize fields across the country. A total of 308, 506 households and a total of 215, 735, hectares of maize have so far been affected by the pest in ninety three districts in all the provinces.

Sir, in response to this outbreak, with the support of the African Development Bank (AfDB), the Government procured various chemicals for the control of the pest which were distributed to the affected farmers.

In addition, to the procurement of these chemicals, the Government has continued to sensitise the farmers on scouting, identification and control of the pest. Further, a total of 420 agricultural and extension officers have been trained on the monitoring and management of the pest. These agricultural extension officers are in turn expected to provide support to the farmers in the management of the fall army worms.

In order to provide early warning system and detect the presence of the pest, the ministry procured a total of 1 200 pheromone traps which were distributed to all the provinces. We are

encouraging the farmers to plan for the control of these pests in their fields, through the e-Voucher system. Farmers are able to access the agro-chemicals needed for the control of the fall army worms. Farmers should take advantage of the programme to acquire the chemicals.

Sir, the Ministry of Agriculture continues to collaborate with other Government institutions such as the Disaster Management and Mitigation Unit (DMMU), district and provincial administrations in the fight against the fall army worms. Management of these pests requires collaborative efforts of all the stakeholders, both public and private sector. We shall continue to engage all stakeholders in the management of the pest.

Sir, in closing, I wish to urge the farmers to continue with surveillance programmes up to the harvest time. Farmers are urged to continue scouting their fields for the pest and spraying until after harvest time as the worm may even attack maize cobs.

I thank you, Sir.