



MINISTRY OF HEALTH

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

**TO UPDATE PARLIAMENT ON THE FINDINGS OF THE INVESTIGATIONS ON ZAMBEEF
IMPORTED MEAT PRODUCTS**

PRESENTED TO PARLIAMENT BY HON, JOSEPH KASONDE, MP

MINISTER OF HEALTH

JULY 2013

Mr. Speaker,

I wish to thank you for giving me the opportunity to update this House on the progress made so far on the investigations on Zambeef imported meat and meat products which were seized for further laboratory analysis. You may also wish to know that my Ministry has been monitoring the importation of fish into the country.

Mr. Speaker,

May I remind the house that the importation of meat and meat products are stipulated under the Public Health Act Cap 295 of the Laws of Zambia Meat, abattoir and butcheries regulations and the abattoir and transport of meat regulations and the food and drugs Act Cap. 303. However, the fish imports are dealt with under the Food and Drugs Act.

Mr. Speaker,

I must state here that the objective of the Public Health Laws is to prevent exposure to hazards that cause food borne illness or injury. In my previous address to this August House, I emphasized on the need and importance of safeguarding our communities through food safety and Environmental Health Risk Assessments.

Mr. Speaker,

To this effect, you may be aware that there have been a lot of concerns raised regarding the importation and the quality of imported meat products and fish from outside the country.

In my previous statement before this house, I made a promise to report back to this August House on the findings by my ministry regarding the food samples taken to South Africa for isolation of the specific chemical in the aldehyde group that was found in the seized meat from Zambeef (Plc) outlets.

Mr. Speaker

The findings from further laboratory analysis undertaken in South Africa have confirmed the presence of formaldehydes in meat samples taken from different batches and outlets of Zambeef (Plc).

The affected meat products are the interiors and hooves which are mainly imported and it is therefore important that we establish the point of contamination, a task we have vigorously embarked on.

Mr Speaker,

This August House may also wish to note that during the same period, my Ministry also seized 13 trucks of imported fresh fish whose results were negative for aromatic ketones and aldehydes. These trucks have since been released to the owners to conduct business as usual as per standard surveillance guidelines.

Mr. Speaker,

In doing this My Ministry worked in collaboration with Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock and other relevant ministries to facilitate smooth investigations.

Mr. Speaker,

As earlier indicated in my previous statement, formaldehyde is in a group of aldehydes and is a compound mainly used in embalming corpses for preservation and is also used in industrial activities.

Formaldehyde is not listed among the preservatives in our Food and Drugs Act because of its harmful nature.

Mr. Speaker,

Vending in fresh meat and fish products on the streets may increase the possibility of contamination. Therefore, My Ministry with involvement of local authorities will intensify routine monitoring of food and strengthen surveillance not only in Points of Entry but also within the country to ensure food safety and guarantee quality of life of people of Zambia.

Finally and following up on the results of the investigation, my Ministry will take appropriate action on this matter as prescribed by the existing laws in order to ensure adherence to food safety standards in the country.

Mr. Speaker,

In conclusion, on the basis of the results of the investigations carried out so far, it has been established that;

- (a) Contamination of some imported meat products in local outlets has been confirmed;

- (b) The monitoring of food products by inspection and testing of samples on importation and in local storage and sales points has proved effective as a way to protect the public from consuming contaminated material; and
- (c) Normal business may be resumed by all suppliers, with the assurance to the public that the intensified surveillance system will remain in place.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you