

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
ON
DISTRIBUTION OF INPUTS UNDER FISP FOR 2023/2024 FARMING SEASON
BY
THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (MR MTOLO), MP

Madam Speaker, I thank you for giving me this opportunity to present a ministerial statement in order to clarify a few issues on the distribution of farming –

Madam Speaker, I started by thanking you for giving me this opportunity to present a ministerial statement in order to clarify a few issues on the distribution of farming inputs under the Farmer Input Support Programme (FISP) for the 2023/2024 Farming Season.

Madam Speaker, since the commencement of the distribution of inputs, a few issues have been raised regarding the exercise. These include the following:

- (a) sharing of input packs by some beneficiaries;
- (b) finalisation of the fertilizer distribution;
- (c) status of redemption of inputs by farmers;
- (d) agro-dealers;
- (e) minor differences in farming inputs received; and
- (f) beneficiaries receiving other types of seed in addition to maize seed.

Madam Speaker, the issues have been well noted by the ministry and allow me to address them one by one.

Sharing of Input Packs by Beneficiaries

Madam Speaker, FISP is providing support to a total of 1,024,434 farmers across the country and the allocation per province is as follows:

<i>Province</i>	<i>No. of Beneficiaries</i>
Central	162,711
Copperbelt	93,688
Eastern	194,543
Luapula	61,804
Lusaka	59,188
Muchinga	65,153
Northern	98,315
North-Western	67,973
Southern	183,375
Western	37,684
<i>Total</i>	1,024,434

Madam Speaker, I wish to be very categorical by informing the House that the sharing of inputs by farmers has no blessing from the Government as it is detrimental to achieving optimal production levels and national food security. We do not support this whatsoever.

Madam Speaker, however, recognizing the need to cater for farmers that might not be on FISP, the Government has come up with other interventions that will provide access to farming inputs. Notable among these interventions is the famous and very powerful credit window, which is an initiative to provide financing to farmers, including those who are under-served in their groups.

Finalization of Fertilizer Distribution

Madam Speaker, the Government procured a total of 240,760.50 metric tonnes of fertiliser for the 2023/2024 Farming Season for the Eastern, Southern, Northern, Luapula, Muchinga, Western, Copperbelt and North-Western Provinces, which are under the direct input supply modality. For the sake of clarity, there are two provinces which are not on the direct input supply modality and this is Lusaka and Central Provinces. So they are not included for this fertiliser we procured.

Madam Speaker, I can confirm that as of today, 5th December, 2023, the fertiliser distribution for both compound-D and urea still remains at 100 per cent. There is a 100 per cent total delivery to all provinces for both fertilizer and seed. Assertions that the fertiliser distribution has been delayed are, therefore, not true and meant to mislead the members of the public.

Status of Redemption of Inputs by Farmers under the e-Voucher Modality

Madam Speaker, six districts in Lusaka Province and eleven districts in the Central Province, respectively, are under the e-Voucher modality. The targeted beneficiaries under the modality are 221,899. So far, the number of farmers who have collected their inputs after depositing their contribution is 220,413, which represents a good 99.33 per cent success rate.

Agro-Dealers

Madam Speaker, on the issue of the agro-dealers, I wish to inform the House that the country through the National Input Supplier System has designated agro-dealers throughout the country in close proximity to the farmers. The Government wants to promote development of the sector through encouraging more agro-dealers to commence operations in all parts of the country. I will repeat this. The Government wants to promote development of the sector through encouraging more agro-dealers to commence operations in all parts of the country. This will support FISP's transition to 100 per cent e-Voucher modality. We are all aware that we are in this transition. So we want to have as many agro-dealers as possible.

Type of Farming Inputs Received

Madam Speaker, the package under the direct input supply and e-Voucher modalities consist of the following:

- (a) 3 X 50 kg bags of compound-D;
- (b) 3 X 50 kg bags of urea;
- (c) 1 X 10 kg bags of maize seed; and
- (d) 1 X 20 kg bag of groundnuts or 1 X 25 kg bag of soybeans or 1 X 12.5 kg bag of rice or 1 X 5 kg bag of sunflower or 1 X 10 kg bag of cowpeas or 1 X 20 kg bag of common beans or 1 X 10 kg bag of sorghum.

Madam Speaker, regarding the issue that was raised by some farmers that other farmers received four bags of compound – D and four bags of Urea, the House may wish to note that the farmers that received the eight bags plus seed are those that were supported under the Agricultural Credit Window during the 2022/23 Farming Season. The farmers had paid, Madam Speaker, a K5,000 to access inputs during that season, but did not collect the inputs.

Beneficiaries Receiving Other Types in Additional to Maize Seed

Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that at the beginning of the input distribution, the e-Voucher modality in Lusaka and Central provinces had some flexibility regarding the type of inputs that farmers could redeem that farmers could redeem. However, this has been stopped as a show of responsibility by the Government to ensure that farmers get the right seed and that the national food security is not compromised. I also wish to add the flexibility under the e-Voucher modality was meant to provide crop diversification. Going forward, Madam Speaker, the Government will continue to introduce other types of crop under the pack to enhance diversification and reduced risks associated with mono-cropping.

Madam Speaker, in conclusion, I wish to reiterate that the Government has unwavering commitment to a food secure Zambia. In this regard, we will continue improving our farmer support services which are in no way limited to the Fertilizer Input Support Programme (FISP), but covers other are such as mechanization, irrigation, extension services and others including processing.

I also wish to take this opportunity to urge our farmers who may require clarification on a number of issues to seek guidance or help from our district agricultural officers.

Madam Speaker, I thank you.
