

PERFORMANCE OF THE FARMER INPUT SUPPORT PROGRAMME, THE OVERVIEW
OF THE 2021/2022 AGRICULTURE SEASON AND THE COUNTRY'S FOOD SECURITY
SITUATION

The Minister of Agriculture (Mr Mtolo): Madam Speaker, thank you most sincerely for this opportunity allowing me to give a ministerial statement on the performance of the Farmer Input Support Programme (FISP) during the 2021/2022 agriculture season and the current food security situation in the country. In this statement, I will address matters pertaining to the delayed onset of the rainy season, floods, armyworms attacks, implementation of FISP and the food security status.

Weather Condition in the 2021/2022 Agriculture Season

Madam Speaker, at the start of the 2021/2022 agriculture season, the country experienced prolonged dry spells and delayed onset of rains in most parts of the country for the period leading up to mid January, 2022. The provinces mostly affected by the dry spells include the Eastern Province, the Northern Province and the North-Western Province.

Madam Speaker, hon. Members of the House may wish to note that the farmers who are practicing conservation agriculture had better crop establishment in areas that experienced dry spells.

I wish to take this opportunity to encourage farmers to adopt the climate-smart agriculture practices that the ministry is promoting.

Madam, in addition, as the agriculture season progressed, the country also experienced floods in Luapula Province, Muchinga Province, the Northern Province, the North-Western Province, the Southern Province, Lusaka Province, the Eastern Province and the Copperbelt Province.

Madam Speaker, a total of 37,924 farmers' fields measuring approximately 36,640 hectares were affected by floods in various parts of the country. Maize, sunflower, soya beans and cowpeas are some of the crops that have been affected.

In view of this unfortunate situation, I wish to assure the public that the Ministry of Agriculture is working closely with other wings of Government, particularly the Disaster Management and Mitigation Unit (DMMU), which is under the Office of the Vice-President, to provide relief in the affected areas.

Fall Armyworm Infestation

Madam Speaker, allow me to now turn my attention to the issue of the Fall Armyworms. During the 2021/2022 agriculture season, all the ten provinces and all the 116 districts across the country reported the infestation of the Fall Armyworm in the maize fields. At the end of January 2022, the Army Worm infestation had affected 269,273 households and a total 155,010 hectares of maize spread across all the provinces of Zambia.

Madam, in order to help control the spread of Armyworms, the Government procured and distributed 113,000 litres of chemicals to all the provinces at no cost to the farmers. In addition, the ministry procured and distributed personal protective equipment and sprayers to all the provinces. Further, our extension staff stepped-up surveillance activities and are providing technical advice to farmers. I wish to emphasise that the outbreak of the Armyworms continues to be a threat to households and national food security. I, therefore, wish to advise all the farmers to remain vigilant and report any outbreak of pests to their nearest extension officers.

Food Security Status

Madam Speaker, having highlighted the weather conditions and the Fall Armyworm infestation, it is important that I highlight the food security position of the country. Let me state from the outset that the ministry has only begun the process of undertaking a crop forecast survey which will determine the crop production for this year.

Madam, even before the crop forecasting results are known, I wish to state that as at 28th February, 2022, the country had maize stocks of 1,723,477 metric tonnes. Of this amount, over 1.2 million metric tonnes is currently held by the Food Reserve Agency (FRA).

Madam Speaker, our current consumption is estimated at 120,000 metric tonnes of maize per month. Therefore, the available stock in the country is sufficient to cover a period of not less than fourteen months.

Madam Speaker, I will, sometime in the month of May, come and give the House an update on the food security position after we have completed undertaking the crop forecast survey.

Implementation of FISP

Madam Speaker, you may recall that on Tuesday, 19th October, 2021, I issued a statement on the Floor of the House when I announced measures that the Government was taking to ensure equity under the Farmer Input Support Programme (FISP). It is my pleasure to report to the House that all farmers that have, to this date, received their inputs under FISP received 6 x 50kg bags of fertiliser and 1 x 10 kg bag of maize seed in all districts across the country. This is the first step to attaining equity in the implementation of the programme.

Madam Speaker, in the 2021/2022 agricultural season, a total of 1,024,434 farmers were targeted to benefit from FISP subject to meeting the prescribed criteria such as paying the farmer contribution of K400. Farmers began depositing their contributions to the programme in May 2021 and, as of 14th February, 2022, all the targeted farmers had made their K400 contributions with a total of K410 million deposited and the distribution of inputs is now approaching its end.

Madam Speaker, as you may recall, a total of 215,000 metric tonnes of Compound D and 165,000 metric tonnes of Urea were contracted by the Government. As at 14th February, 2022, over 201,000 metric tonnes of Compound D fertiliser and 147,000 metric tonnes of Urea had

been delivered to the districts. This represents 93 per cent on Compound D and 89 per cent on Urea in terms of delivery to the districts.

Madam, with regard to the supply and distribution of seed, the Government supplied various types of seed as follows:

- (a) 10,244 metric tonnes of maize;
- (b) 12,121 metric tonnes of soya beans;
- (c) 6,494 metric tonnes of groundnuts; and
- (d) 1,030 metric tonnes of sorghum.

To date, all the contracted maize, groundnuts and sorghum seed have been supplied while 99.89 per cent of soya bean has also been supplied to the farmers.

Madam Speaker, the implementation of FISP had some challenges. However, despite those challenges, the majority of farmers have received their inputs. In order to improve the performance of the programme, the Ministry of Agriculture is currently undertaking a review of FISP.

Madam, allow me to conclude by sharing with the nation that the Government is closely monitoring the food security situation and providing farmers with support to ensure we address any challenges faced.

Madam Speaker, may you allow me to address the issue that was raised by the hon. Member for Lundazi on why certain farmers are yet to receive fertiliser.

Madam Speaker, you will recall that of the six suppliers that were contracted by our colleagues who were previously in office, one particular supplier has had serious challenges to conclude its

contract. We can only assume that this is probably because they were given the largest portion of quantity to supply, which was 135,000 metric tonnes. As at today, this supplier is still struggling to supply about 20,000 metric tonnes to areas, not only in the Eastern Province, but specific areas in the Eastern Province, Muchinga Province, the Northern Province and the Central Province.

Madam, the issue is, what are we doing? I am very positive that we are going to unbundle this issue this afternoon. All things being equal, we are certain that by tomorrow, lunchtime, the last batch of trucks to cover all these areas should be rolling taking the fertiliser to all the areas where there is a deficit.

Madam Speaker, I can only thank the ingenious velocity and desire to see things done by the hon. Minister of Finance and National Planning, Hon. Dr Situmbeko Musokotwane, who is coming to our aid in order to solve this problem so that it comes to an end.

I thank you, Madam Speaker.