

MINISTERIALS STATEMENT
ON GOVERNMENT'S POSITION ON THE FUTURE OF THE FARMERS INPUT
SUPPORT PROGRAMME (FISP)

By the
MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (MR MTOLO), MP

Madam Speaker, I would like to thank you for this opportunity to deliver a ministerial statement on a subject that has generated national interest, regarding the Government's position on the Farmer Input Support Programme (FISP) in the 2023/2024 agriculture season and beyond. In addition, this ministerial statement has been necessitated by a matter of urgent public importance raised by the hon. Member of Parliament for Nakonde Constituency, Mr Luka Simumba.

Madam Speaker, the Government has no immediate intentions of phasing our FISP. Rather, the Government is working on improving its operations. The targeted number of beneficiaries is the usual 1,024,434.

Madam Speaker, in an effort to promote crop diversification, as well as food and nutrition security, the Government has widened the choice of crops on the programme to include: maize, soybeans, groundnuts, rice, common beans, cowpea, sorghum and sunflower seed.

Madam Speaker, the Government procured 120,380.25 metric tonnes of Compound D fertiliser of which 110,003.65 metric tonnes, which represents 91 per cent, has been delivered. I will repeat that, Madam Speaker. The Government procured 120,380.25 metric tonnes of Compound D fertiliser, which is the fertiliser we apply first, out of which 91 per cent, has been delivered across the country already.

Madam Speaker, with regards to urea, eight suppliers were awarded contracts for the supply and delivery of 120,380.25 metric tonnes. I would like to underscore the fact that no contract has ever been cancelled, and as we speak, the delivery of urea has commenced.

Madam Speaker, the implementation of FISP has over the years contributed to the surplus figures recorded for maize, which is our staple food. However, despite the achievements

attributed to the implementation of FISP, the programme has been hampered by a number of challenges which include the following:

- (a) poor targeting of beneficiaries;
- (b) malpractices by some officers and stakeholders entrusted to implement the programme;
- (c) blanket fertiliser applications, which in some cases has resulted in the wastage of inputs;
- (d) lack of a beneficiary exit strategy and an alternative financing mechanism to support beneficiaries who may wish to graduate from FISP; and
- (e) low levels of yields recorded by some beneficiaries.

Madam Speaker, in view of these outlined challenges, the Government of the Republic of Zambia has embarked on FISP reforms, with the aim of improving the implementation of the programme and its overall contribution to the development of the sector and the economy as a whole.

Madam Speaker, the Comprehensive Agriculture Support Transformation Programme (CATSP), will guide the agricultural sector going forward, and the reforms will extend to FISP. The proposed policy measures and instruments are aimed at transforming all programmes to bring out the potential to stimulate growth in the agriculture sector including FISP.

Madam Speaker, within CATSP, the Government will prioritise the transformation of FISP into an efficient, smart subsidy that enhances agricultural production and productivity and ensures all beneficiaries are adequately supported to graduate to higher levels of production. The proposed reforms of FISP under the framework of CATSP will include the following:

- (a) measures to enhance the targeting of FISP beneficiaries, which will also include the strengthening of beneficiary identification through biometrics and other options. This, Madam Speaker, is currently being implemented;
- (b) the introduction of a graduation strategy and an alternative financing mechanism to support farmers who will graduate from FISP. This, Madam Speaker, is where the credit window will apply. It will be affordable, agricultural credit;
- (c) measures to promote increased private sector participation in the supply and distribution of farming inputs;
- (d) measures to reduce malpractices;
- (e) measures to promote and accelerate agricultural diversification through the implementation of more crops on FISP program. As earlier indicated, eight crops are now on FISP.
- (f) measures to improve the productivity of FISP beneficiaries through enhanced extension services; and
- (g) measures to target the right crops in the right ecological zones.

Madam Speaker, in the 2023/2024 agricultural season, the eligibility criteria for one to qualify to receive inputs under FISP will be as follows. This will address the question which was raised yesterday:

- (a) an individual farmer should be a member of a registered farmer organisation and selected by the Camp Agriculture Committee;
- (b) be a registered small-scale farmer and actively involved in farming within the camp coverage area;

- (c) cultivating not more than 5 ha of land;
- (d) have the capacity to pay;
- (e) prescribed farmer contribution of K400;
- (f) not employed by the Government, public institutions, and not in formal employment;
- (g) should be a Zambian and possess a green National Registration Card (NRC);
- (h) should have an active phone number;
- (i) not benefitting from a similar Government programme such as the Food Security Pack under the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services; and
- (j) each household will be entitled to one pack only.

Madam Speaker, going forward, and given that the production from FISP is subsidised, it will be a requirement for farmers on FISP to sell part of their surplus harvest to the Food Reserve Agency (FRA) in order to boost the national strategic reserves.

I will repeat this, Madam Speaker. Going forward, and given that the production from FISP is subsidised, it will be a requirement for farmers on FISP to sell part of their surplus harvest to the Food Reserve Agency (FRA) in order to boost the national strategic reserves. This year, the proposal for farmers on FISP to sell their surplus production has been applied as an added advantage. However, in subsequent seasons, it will be a requirement for all farmers participating in FISP to sell part of their surplus produce to the FRA.

Madam Speaker, the Government of the Republic of Zambia remains committed to the implementation of FISP as it is a viable means of increasing access to quality and affordable inputs in the country. As you will all agree, FISP has contributed to the national food basket and the livelihoods of many beneficiaries since its inception in 2002.

Madam Speaker, I wish to conclude my statement by re-affirming the Government's commitment to increasing food security in the country. Among the many interventions that can actualise this aspiration is prudent implementation and enhancement FISP.

I thank you, Madam Speaker.
