

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### FARMER INPUT SUPPORT PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

**The Minister of Agriculture (Mr Katambo):** Mr Speaker, I thank you for giving me this opportunity to deliver this ministerial statement on the implementation of the Farmer Input Support Programme (FISP) for the 2018/2019 agriculture season. This statement is a follow-up to the statement I delivered on Tuesday, 25<sup>th</sup> September, 2018, where I updated the House on the preparations the Ministry of Agriculture undertook on the implementation of FISP. It is now necessary that I update the House and the nation at large on the status of the implementation.

Mr Speaker, allow me to remind the House of the salient points of my last ministerial statement on the subject at hand. In the 2018/2019 agriculture season, FISP was implemented using two approaches, namely: the Electronic Voucher System (e-Voucher) and the Direct Input Supply System (DISS). A total of one million farmers was targeted to receive inputs under the programme. The targeted farmers were expected to each contribute K400 while the Government contributed K1700 towards the inputs.

Mr Speaker, in order to facilitate the implementation of the programme, the ministry used the Zambia Integrated Agriculture Management Information System (ZIAMIS). The features of the ZIAMIS were enhanced to facilitate the implementation of both the e-Voucher system and the DISS. In addition to facilitating the farmer deposits and payments to agro dealers, seven commercial banks and two private sector financial service providers were contracted by the ministry. The ministry also registered 870 agro dealers who operated about 2,155 outlets.

Mr Speaker, as at 14<sup>th</sup> February, 2019, a total of 998,791 or 99.9 per cent of the targeted one million farmers in both the e-Voucher and Direct Input Supply districts had successfully deposited their contribution. These farmers were eligible to receive Government support. Of this

number of farmers that deposited, a total of 854,799 farmers redeemed their inputs. In addition, the Government has so far paid over K500 million to agro dealers under the e-Voucher.

Mr Speaker, despite the relative success of the programme in the 2018/2019 agriculture season, the ministry faced several challenges in its implementation and they include:

- (a) challenges in delivering all the required quantities of legume seed on time because of the failure by some contracted suppliers to source for the seed;
- (b) some agro-dealers in the e-Voucher districts have also had challenges in supplying fertiliser to our farmers;
- (c) dishonest agro-dealers who were swiping but not issuing farmers with inputs; and
- (d) some cooperative leaders where reported not to be giving the intended programme beneficiaries their allocation of inputs despite the farmers having registered and passed the eligibility criteria.

Mr Speaker, with regard to the next season, the Ministry of Agriculture is quickly making preparations for the 2019/2020 season. In line with this, a series of consultative meetings with various stakeholders are planned for the coming month in March. Our aim is to ensure that the programme performance improves by eliminating the identified challenges. We want the programme to start as early April 2019. The ministry will continue to provide regular updates on FISP.

Mr Speaker, I thank you.