

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

ON THE

OUTBREAK OF THE AFRICAN MIGRATORY LOCUST INFESTATION IN SOME PARTS
OF SOUTHERN, WESTERN AND CENTRAL PROVINCES

BY THE

HON. MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (MR KATAMBO), MP

Mr Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity that you have accorded me to issue a Ministerial Statement on the Outbreak of the African Migratory Locust Infestation in the Country.

Mr Speaker, I wish to inform the House and the nation at large that the country has recorded an outbreak of the African Migratory Locusts. These locusts have been reported in parts of Central, Southern and Western Provinces. To date, the following districts have reported cases of the African migratory locusts are Kazungula, Sesheke, Mwandu, Nalolo, Mongu, Kalabo, Shibuyunji and Mumbwa.

Mr Speaker, you may wish to know to that the African Migratory Locust is one of the four locust species that are of economic importance in the East, Central and Southern Africa. The other locust species are Red Locust, Brown Locust and the Desert Locust.

Mr Speaker, it is not the first time that the country has experienced on outbreak of the African Migratory Locust. The last outbreak was in 2016 /2017 Agriculture Session, when an outbreak was reported in the Kafue Floods. However, quick action by the Government prevented the spread of the locusts and damage to the crops.

Mr Speaker, coming to the current outbreak the first reports of the locust in Zambia were received in March, 2020 from Kazungula District in Southern Province. Immediately, the Ministry of Agriculture and the International Red Locust Control Organisation for Central and

Southern Africa carried out ground and aerial surveys in Kazungula District and confirmed the outbreak of the African Migratory Locust.

A total of 22000 hectares in Simahala, Kasaya and Subilo plains along the Zambezi River were surveyed during the exercise and the pest was controlled. This action prevented the rapid spread of the locusts. By the end of March, 2020 we had controlled the outbreak of the locust.

The outbreak of the current outbreak of the African Migratory Locust of great concern to the Government as it has the potential to greatly disrupt the 2020/ 2021 Agriculture Session that is due to start next month and thereby, affect household and national food security. It is for this reason that the Government has responded swiftly to this threat by undertaking surveillance and spraying in the affected districts. The spraying and surveillance are being undertaken simultaneously to ensure that the locust are controlled before the start of this year's agriculture session

Mr Speaker, currently the winter crop in parts of the Western Province is under threat and this will spread to homesteads in the plains. It is worth noting that framers in the Western Province plant their Maize in the Dambos by mid October and rice is about to be planted in the plains. Given the current locust outbreak farmers are now reluctant to plant their crops and this may have a negative impact on food security.

Mr Speaker, in view of this state of affairs, we would like to assure the nation that the Government is equal to the task and has moved in to conduct ground and aerial spraying in collaboration with the International Red Locust Organisation which had the mandate to control migratory pest. The chemicals and the helicopter for aerial spraying are ready in place. Spraying will be done at the sometime as surveillance and mapping to determine the extent of the African migratory pest infestation. Spraying will start with hot spot areas or areas with high density population of swarms of locusts while ground spraying will be done in areas where locust are at nymph stage near the homesteads and water bodies. This is to ensure safety of the households in these areas and to prevent contamination of the water bodies.

In this vein, the spraying exercise will begin with Sesheke District, which has been identified as a hot spot. So far, 29 500 hectares has been surveyed in readiness for spraying. The spraying exercise of the surveyed area is expected to begin today the 29th September, 2020 or tomorrow.

Mr Speaker, in preparation for the spraying exercise, the Government is carrying robust sensitisation campaigns in communities where spraying will be done.

Mr Speaker, I wish to start that the current outbreak of locust has affected several countries in the Southern African Development Communities (SADC), namely; Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Tanzania, Eswatini, South Africa, Namibia and Botswana. Therefore, the effective control of the locust requires international collaboration with our neighbouring countries for the control measures in Zambia to be effective. To date the food and agriculture organisation is providing support to SADC in the control of the locust under the initiative called Southern Africa Emergency Locust Response Preparedness (SAELORP), which was launched on 4th September 2020.

Mr Speaker, taking cognisance of the need to collaborate with the neighbouring countries, the Ministry of Agriculture through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is engaging these countries, particularly those countries that have been identified as breeding areas for the locust to ensure effective control.

Mr Speaker, for the whole exercise to be successful, it will be done in a multi-sectoral manner, implying that the Ministry of Agriculture will be supported by the Disaster Management and Mitigation Unit (DMMU) under the Office of the Vice-President, the Zambia Air Force (ZAF) and other relevant Government ministries and agencies as well as cooperating partners such as the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO).

Mr Speaker, going forward, as a precautionary measure, the Government will continue to maintain an optimum quantity of chemicals on standby in case of any future invasions or outbreaks of the African migratory locust which is believed to be in large numbers in some neighbouring countries. Further, the African migratory locust breeds four to five times in a year.

Therefore, it is very difficult to control unlike other species of locusts, which breed once a year. In order to prevent the future outbreaks, the ministry will continuously monitor the pace.

Mr Speaker, finally, I wish to assure all farmers and stakeholders that the Government will do everything possible and ensure that the African Migratory Locust is brought under control before the upcoming agriculture season.

Mr Speaker, I thank you.
