



FARMERS' DAY: INNOVATION THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

PRESS STATEMENT

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Agriculture plays an important role in the Zambian economy, contributing around 20 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and about 12 percent of the national export earnings. **Agriculture employs nearly 70 percent of the labour force and remains the main source of income and employment for most of the people living in rural areas.** The Seventh National Development Plan (7NDP) and the Economic Recovery Programme (ERP 2020-2023) recognises agriculture as one of the key sector critical for achieving diversification, economic growth and poverty reduction in Zambia. **It is for this reason that the Government has over the years endeavoured to invest in the agricultural sector through various initiatives such as, the Farmer Input Support Program (FISP), reducing customs duty on agricultural equipment and the encouragement of private sector participation.**

Zambia celebrates this year's Farmers' Day under the theme **"Innovation through technology"**. Science and research continue to develop technologies for enhancing crop and livestock productivity. **In livestock and fisheries, the use of exotic breeds has enabled genetic improvements to accelerate, while biotechnology has led to more cost effective health care products. Various additives and supplements have been identified to accelerate weight gain, increase digestibility of feedstuffs or reduce the amount of feed required.** In the crop sector biotechnology has also led to improved yields, reduced vulnerability of crops to environmental stresses, increased nutritional qualities of food crops among others. In order to move away from rain-fed dependent agriculture, irrigated farming has been key in meeting human needs as it increases productivity, and is important for environmental, technical and economic sustainability.

The 2019 Enabling Business of Agriculture (EBA) report indicators show that Zambia is ranked number **3 out of 28 countries in Sub Saharan Africa in design and implement regulations as well as processes that promote an enabling environment for farmers to thrive.**

Below are some of the key developments that have been made within the agriculture sector:

Policy Reforms

- The Ministry of Agriculture has made changes with regards to the implementation of the Farmer Input Support Programme (FISP) by migrating farmers from Direct Input Support (DIS) to Electronic-voucher System (E-FISP). **The programme will be migrated fully to the e-voucher system to promote cost efficiency and crowding-in of the private sector.** Currently, 80 percent of the beneficiaries are under the Direct Input Supply (DIS) system while 20 percent are on the more efficient and cheaper e-voucher input supply system. In the 2021/2022 farming season, the proportion of beneficiaries under the DIS will be reduced to 60 percent. Full migration to e-voucher will be completed in the 2022/2023 farming season.

Infrastructure

- Key achievements have been in the **development of warehousing, storage, breeding centres and irrigation**, among others. The **construction of 87 modern livestock breeding centres** as well as the **rehabilitation of 15 livestock breeding centres** countrywide in order to increase livestock production. Government has completed the US\$28.3 million Mwomboshi dam in Chisamba. Government will at the end of this year complete the construction and **remedial works of 10 dams under the Zambia Water Resources Development Project.**

Fisheries Sub Sector-Aquaculture

- In the fishery sub sector Government has been supporting Aquaculture development through the loan facility of US\$50.9 million obtained from African Development Bank (AfDB) being administered by Zambia Aquaculture Enterprise Development Project (ZAEDP), which is helping in developing the Aquaculture value chain.
- The stable political setting has provided a conducive environment for investment in the Aquaculture sector **resulting in an increase of private players' participation along the aquaculture value chain such as fish feed, hatchery, nursery, grow out, processing and value addition operators.** These measures have resulted in thirteen (13) private fish hatcheries developed, complimenting the sixteen (16) Government fish farms in the country.

Livestock Sector

- Government through the Enhanced Smallholder Livestock Investment Programme (E-SLIP) has strengthened the capacity for animal disease control which has reduced the incidence of East Coast Fever and Contagious Bovine Pleuro Pneumonia (CBPP)
- Government has conducted **value chain studies and is developing market-oriented extension manuals for improved cattle, goat, sheep and poultry (improved village chickens) production and marketing.** In the last two consecutive seasons, Zambia's crop-sub sector performed very scoring bumper harvests and increased crop production.

Going forward, Government has put in place measures intended to grow and diversify the agriculture sector. The first measure is the promotion of international and domestic markets. This will be done by developing a Crop Marketing and Export Policy, which will provide a roadmap of procedures on the institutional arrangements for the management of crop marketing and exports. **Government will also enhance exports of goats, honey, wax and fish in collaboration with the private sector through the establishment of trade centres at the borders with DRC and Angola as well as operationalization of key trade agreements.** Government will increase participation on commodity exchange platforms to promote amalgamation of local produce and their supply of domestic and regional value chains.

Wishing all farmers in Zambia a Happy Farmers' Day.

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