

## **MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

ON

MAIZE SUPPLY AND MEALIE MEAL PRICES SITUATION COUNTRYWIDE

BY

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, MR KATAMBO, MP

Mr Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity that you have accorded me to give this ministerial statement on the prevailing maize supply and mealie-meal prices situation in the country.

Sir, having followed the debates and public concerns raised on maize supply and mealie-meal prices, it is necessary that I issue this ministerial statement to clarify issues pertaining to national food security.

Mr Speaker, hon. Members of this august House may recall that in May this year, I announced the crop forecast survey results to the nation. In my statement, I stated that the production of the maize in the 2018/2019 agricultural season had reduced from 2,394,907 metric tonnes recorded in the previous season 2,004,389 metric tonnes. I also mentioned that the country had carryover stock amounting to 475,042 metric tonnes bringing the total available supply to 2,478,389 metric tonnes.

Sir, for an estimated population of 17.6 million, the total maize required for human consumption amounts to 1,558,339 metric tonnes. With 409,018 required for industrial use, the total requirement for both human and industrial use is 1,967,357 metric tonnes.

With this scenario, it is very clear that the country can survive until the next harvest season provided that illegal exports or smuggling which is a major threat to our national food security is controlled.

Mr Speaker, I must stress to the House that the crop forecast survey results are a static measure of food security. What I mean by this is that the actual situation on the ground has evolved from the time I announced the results. We can all agree that consumption occurs daily and therefore

the supply and availability of maize is also changing as the year progresses. We have serious threats to our food security situation which if not dealt with can result into national food shortages.

Mr Speaker, due to the consumption pressure on the maize commodity and also the fact that we have only produced enough to meet our domestic needs, it would be prudent for the Government to recognize and deal with the threats to our food security. The first threat is the smuggling of maize into neighbouring countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). As you are aware, smuggling is a serious threat to national food security as it has the potential of creating maize shortages and higher mealie meal prices.

Sir, the second threat, which we have already witnessed, is panic buying and hoarding of maize by traders in the belief that the country is running out of maize stocks. This has also had a major impact on mealie meal prices.

Mr Speaker, the third threat is that we have pockets of food shortages in some parts of the country. This has arisen because of the reduced production of maize in areas that were severely hit by drought and floods, mostly in southern, western and some parts of eastern and Lusaka provinces. This has created an uneven distribution of maize and mealie meal in the country, which also has had an impact on mealie meal prices.

Mr Speaker, in addressing these threats, we have put in place the following measures:

- a)* my ministry has banned the export of maize and maize products;
- b)* my ministry is closely monitoring maize stocks to ensure that the country has sufficient grain to last until the next harvest;