

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
ON
MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE PREPARATIONS FOR 2019/2020 FARMER INPUT
SUPPORT PROGRAMME
BY
BY THE HON. MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, MR KATAMBO, MP

Mr Speaker, I thank you for this opportunity to issue a ministerial statement on the preparations that the Ministry of Agriculture is making for the 2019/2020 Farmer Input Support Programme (FISP). It is important that I inform the nation on the preparations we are making for the programme, especially with the prolonged dry spells experienced in some parts of the country in the last agricultural season.

Sir, the Patriotic Front (PF) Government remains committed to supporting the smallholder farmers through FISP. The smallholder farmers are the backbone of this country's agricultural sector. The support under FISP will enable our smallholder farmers to have access to affordable agricultural inputs and in turn, guarantee household and national food security.

Mr Speaker, in the 2018/2019 agricultural season, FISP targeted to provide support to 1 million farmers. I am delighted to report that over 990,000 smallholder farmers accessed inputs in the 2018/2019 agricultural season. You may note that this represents over 99 per cent of the targeted beneficiaries. In the 2018/2019 agricultural season, the country experienced prolonged dry spells in some parts of the country, particularly the southern and western parts. The prolonged dry spells affected the production of most crops and affected the household food security of most farmers in these areas. In addition, in the 2018/2019 season, the country experienced excessive rains in some parts of the northern and eastern parts of the country and an outbreak of fall armyworms in some parts of the country. With regard to FISP, the key challenges were delayed payment to agro dealers by the ministry as well as agro dealers failing to stock adequate quantities of the agricultural inputs needed by the farmers.