

PERFORMANCE OF THE FARMER INPUT SUPPORT PROGRAMME, THE OVERVIEW
OF THE 2021/2022 AGRICULTURE SEASON AND THE COUNTRY'S FOOD SECURITY
SITUATION

The Minister of Agriculture (Mr Mtolo): Madam Speaker, thank you most sincerely for this opportunity allowing me to give a ministerial statement on the performance of the Farmer Input Support Programme (FISP) during the 2021/2022 agriculture season and the current food security situation in the country. In this statement, I will address matters pertaining to the delayed onset of the rainy season, floods, armyworms attacks, implementation of FISP and the food security status.

Weather Condition in the 2021/2022 Agriculture Season

Madam Speaker, at the start of the 2021/2022 agriculture season, the country experienced prolonged dry spells and delayed onset of rains in most parts of the country for the period leading up to mid January, 2022. The provinces mostly affected by the dry spells include the Eastern Province, the Northern Province and the North-Western Province.

Madam Speaker, hon. Members of the House may wish to note that the farmers who are practicing conservation agriculture had better crop establishment in areas that experienced dry spells.

I wish to take this opportunity to encourage farmers to adopt the climate-smart agriculture practices that the ministry is promoting.

Madam, in addition, as the agriculture season progressed, the country also experienced floods in Luapula Province, Muchinga Province, the Northern Province, the North-Western Province, the Southern Province, Lusaka Province, the Eastern Province and the Copperbelt Province.

Madam Speaker, a total of 37,924 farmers' fields measuring approximately 36,640 hectares were affected by floods in various parts of the country. Maize, sunflower, soya beans and cowpeas are some of the crops that have been affected.

In view of this unfortunate situation, I wish to assure the public that the Ministry of Agriculture is working closely with other wings of Government, particularly the Disaster Management and Mitigation Unit (DMMU), which is under the Office of the Vice-President, to provide relief in the affected areas.

Fall Armyworm Infestation

Madam Speaker, allow me to now turn my attention to the issue of the Fall Armyworms. During the 2021/2022 agriculture season, all the ten provinces and all the 116 districts across the country reported the infestation of the Fall Armyworm in the maize fields. At the end of January 2022, the Army Worm infestation had affected 269,273 households and a total 155,010 hectares of maize spread across all the provinces of Zambia.

Madam, in order to help control the spread of Armyworms, the Government procured and distributed 113,000 litres of chemicals to all the provinces at no cost to the farmers. In addition, the ministry procured and distributed personal protective equipment and sprayers to all the provinces. Further, our extension staff stepped-up surveillance activities and are providing technical advice to farmers. I wish to emphasise that the outbreak of the Armyworms continues to be a threat to households and national food security. I, therefore, wish to advise all the farmers to remain vigilant and report any outbreak of pests to their nearest extension officers.

Food Security Status

Madam Speaker, having highlighted the weather conditions and the Fall Armyworm infestation, it is important that I highlight the food security position of the country. Let me state from the outset that the ministry has only begun the process of undertaking a crop forecast survey which will determine the crop production for this year.