



REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA

SPEECH DELIVERED BY

**HIS EXCELLENCY DR. EDGAR CHAGWA LUNGU
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA**

**AT THE LAUNCH OF THE WHEAT HARVEST
IN MKUSHI, CENTRAL PROVINCE**

FRIDAY, 18TH SEPTEMBER, 2020

**STATE HOUSE
LUSAKA**

- THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE – HON. MICHAEL KATAMBO (MP);
- THE PRESIDENTIAL AFFAIRS MINISTER – HON. FREEDOM SIKAZWE (MP);
- THE PROVINCIAL MINISTER FOR CENTRAL PROVINCE – HON. SYDNEY MUSHANGA (MP);
- YOUR ROYAL HIGHNESSES PRESENT,
- PERMANENT SECRETARIES AND SENIOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS PRESENT;
- THE PRESIDENT OF ZAMBIA NATIONAL FARMERS' UNION;
- CHIEF EXECUTIVES AND REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR;
- MEMBERS OF THE PRESS;
- FELLOW FARMERS;
- DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

IT IS A GREAT PLEASURE TO BE HERE WITH YOU TODAY TO GRACE THE LAUNCH OF THE WHEAT HARVEST. I GLADLY ACCEPTED THE INVITATION, BY THE ZAMBIA NATIONAL FARMERS' UNION AS SUCH OCCASIONS AFFORDS ME AN OPPORTUNITY TO INTERACT WITH THE FARMERS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS IN THE AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY. THIS IS VERY CRITICAL BECAUSE I GET FIRST-HAND INFORMATION ON THE HAPPENINGS IN THE AGRICULTURE SECTOR.

THEREFORE, THIS, OCCASION RESONATES WELL WITH MY GOVERNMENT'S THRUST TO TRANSFORM THE AGRICULTURE SECTOR INTO AN EXPORT ORIENTED, DIVERSIFIED, PRIVATE SECTOR DRIVEN, AND A CLIMATE RESILIENT SECTOR.

BUT TO ACHIEVE THIS CALLS FOR EFFECTIVE AND TRANSPARENT DIALOGUE BETWEEN YOU THE FARMERS, THE PRIVATE SECTOR AND THE GOVERNMENT. MY PRESENCE HERE TODAY IS A DEMONSTRATION THAT THE PF GOVERNMENT IS OPEN TO DIALOGUE AND DETERMINED TO RESOLVE THE CHALLENGES COMFRONTING YOU AS A FARMING COMMUNITY.

DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

ALTHOUGH THERE IS SO MUCH ATTENTION PAID TO THE MAIZE CROP BECAUSE IT IS OUR MAJOR STAPLE FOOD AND HAS GREAT POTENTIAL FOR EXPORT, WE STILL REMAIN COMMITTED TO AGRICULTURAL DIVERSIFICATION. WE, THEREFORE, ATTACH THE SAME IMPORTANCE TO OTHER CROPS SUCH AS WHEAT AS WE DO TO MAIZE.

THE WHEAT COMMODITY INDUSTRY IS VERY STRATEGIC AND IMPORTANT TO OUR COUNTRY NOT ONLY FOR ENSURING THAT BREAD IS AVAILABLE IN THE COUNTRY, BUT BECAUSE OF ITS HUGE POTENTIAL TO CONTRIBUTE TOWARDS EMPLOYMENT CREATION, FOREIGN EXCHANGE EARNINGS AND THE GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT (GDP). WE, THEREFORE, HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO QUICKLY RESOLVE CHALLENGES INHIBITING INCREASED WHEAT PRODUCTION.

MY GOVERNMENT EXPECTS EXPONENTIAL GROWTH IN THE WHEAT INDUSTRY. DESPITE THE CALL FOR SUCH A GROWTH, I AM COGNISANT OF THE CHALLENGES THAT YOU AS FARMERS ARE FACING. THESE CHALLENGES INCLUDE UNRELIABLE ELECTRICITY SUPPLY, ESCALATING INPUT COSTS, LIMITED ACCESS TO FINANCE AND ACCESS TO GOOD ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE TO MENTION BUT A FEW.

GOVERNMENT IS FULLY AWARE THAT INDUSTRY, INCLUDING THE AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY, CANNOT THRIVE WITHOUT RELIABLE POWER SUPPLY. CURRENTLY, THE COUNTRY HAS A DEFICIT OF 810 MEGAWATTS AS A RESULT OF INCREASED DEMAND, WHICH OUR PRESENT GENERATION CAPACITY CANNOT COPE WITH. IT IS FOR THIS REASON THAT MY GOVERNMENT TOOK DELIBERATE STEPS AND MADE HUGE INVESTMENTS IN POWER GENERATION.

THUS, I WISH TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO ASSURE YOU THAT OUR HUGE INVESTMENT IN THE ENERGY SECTOR WILL SOON BEGIN TO BEAR FRUIT. THE KAFUE GORGE LOWER POWER PLANT WITH A CAPACITY OF 750 MEGAWATTS IS EXPECTED TO BE OPERATIONAL BY THE END OF THE YEAR. THIS WILL GREATLY IMPROVE POWER SUPPLY IN THE COUNTRY IN GENERAL, AND TO THE FARMING COMMUNITY IN PARTICULAR.

I IMPLORER THE ZAMBIA NATIONAL FARMERS' UNION, THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND THE MINISTRY OF ENERGY TO CONSTANTLY ENGAGE TO ENSURE MINIMAL POWER DISRUPTIONS TO THE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION AREAS.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

MY GOVERNMENT WILL DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO PROTECT THE WHEAT FARMERS. THIS IS THE REASON WHY ANY DECISIONS PERTAINING TO THE IMPORTATION OF WHEAT, WHEN NEED ARISES, HAS BEEN IN FULL CONSULTATION WITH THE ZAMBIA NATIONAL FARMERS' UNION AND OTHER INDUSTRY PLAYERS. FOR AVOIDANCE OF DOUBT, ALL DECISIONS ON IMPORTS ARE BASED ON INDUSTRY CONSENSUS.

LOCAL FARMERS OR LOCAL PRODUCTION WILL ALWAYS COME FIRST AND THIS DOES NOT ONLY APPLY TO WHEAT BUT TO ALL COMMODITIES SUCH AS SOYA BEANS, FRUITS AND VEGETABLES.

GOING FORWARD, THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND THE ZAMBIA NATIONAL FARMERS' UNION SHOULD CONTINUE COLLABORATING TO PROTECT THE LOCAL INDUSTRY. THIS IS THE ONLY WAY WE SHALL SUSTAIN JOBS AND ENSURE ECONOMIC GROWTH.

DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

I AM AWARE THAT MOST FARMERS ARE STRUGGLING WHEN IT COMES TO MEETING THEIR OBLIGATIONS WITH FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS. LET ME APPEAL TO FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS TO RELAX THEIR PRESSURE AND DEVELOP MECHANISMS THAT WILL ALLOW FARMERS TO SURVIVE AND THRIVE. I URGE FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS TO EXTEND SOME INCENTIVES TO THE FARMERS DURING THESE TOUGH TIMES OF COVID-19.

FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS SHOULD COME UP WITH FACILITIES THAT ARE TAILOR-MADE FOR THE AGRICULTURE SECTOR AS THE SECTOR REQUIRES SPECIALISED FINANCIAL PRODUCTS THAT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE FACT THAT AGRICULTURE IS UNIQUE.

DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

IT IS VERY CLEAR THAT WE NEED AN ACTION PLAN ON HOW TO GROW THE WHEAT INDUSTRY. THE SOLUTIONS ARE ALREADY OUT THERE BUT WHAT IS REQUIRED IS A WELL THOUGHT OUT ACTION PLAN TO ENSURE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF IDENTIFIED SOLUTIONS.

IN THIS REGARD, I WOULD LIKE TO SEE ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OF THE ZAMBIA NATIONAL FARMERS' UNION IN THE FORMULATION OF THE ACTION PLANS THAT THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE IS CURRENTLY DEVELOPING FOR EACH COMMODITY INDUSTRY.

THE JOINT ACTION PLANS SHOULD ADDRESS THE CHALLENGES I HAVE HIGHLIGHTED. I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT IF WE PUT OUR BRAINS TOGETHER, WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO ADDRESS THESE CHALLENGES.

I AM AWARE THAT THERE ARE OTHER CHALLENGES WHICH I HAVE NOT HIGHLIGHTED BUT I EXPECT THAT EVERY CHALLENGE WILL BE ANALYSED AND FEASIBLE SOLUTIONS AGREED UPON FOR IMPLEMENTATION.

DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

MY GOVERNMENT REMAINS COMMITTED TO OPEN DIALOGUE WITH THE FARMERS AND OTHER VALUE CHAIN PLAYERS TO RESOLVE THE VARIOUS CHALLENGES THAT YOU MAY FACE.

TIME HAS COME FOR US TO BE PRACTICAL AND MOVE AWAY FROM THE RHETORIC THAT ZAMBIA HAS A LOT OF POTENTIAL TO BECOME THE BREAD BASKET OF THE REGION. IT IS TIME FOR US TO ACTUALISE THIS.

I WISH TO REITERATE THE NEED FOR EFFECTIVE AND TRANSPARENT DIALOGUE. THIS IS THE ONLY WAY THAT GOVERNMENT WILL BE KEPT ABREAST WITH CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE INDUSTRY AND IT'S THE ONLY WAY WE CAN ENSURE TIMELY INTERVENTIONS.

OUR INTEREST AS GOVERNMENT IS TO ENSURE THAT AGRICULTURE THRIVES AND FARMERS MAKE A MEANINGFUL RETURN ON THEIR INVESTMENT. LIKEWISE, THIS IS ALSO YOUR INTEREST AS FARMERS.

IT, THEREFORE, FOLLOWS THAT THE PATH WE HAVE EMBARKED ON, OF ENSURING FREQUENT INTERACTIONS BETWEEN THE AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY AND THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD BE UPHELD AT ALL COSTS, AS IT IS THE ONLY PROGRESSIVE WAY TO THE SUCCESS OF THE AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY.

AS I CONCLUDE, I WISH TO REASSURE THAT THE PF GOVERNMENT IS RESOLVED TO RE-ENGINEER AND TRANSFORM THE AGRICULTURE SECTOR. FOR THIS TRANSFORMATION TO OCCUR A CONDUCTIVE ENVIRONMENT IS INEVITABLE. IN THE CASE OF WHEAT PRODUCTION, THE MAJOR CHALLENGE, WHEN ONE TALKS TO ANY WHEAT FARMER, HAS BEEN THE ISSUE OF UNRELIABLE POWER SUPPLY.

AS I HAVE INDICATED TO YOU EARLIER, THE ISSUE OF UNRELIABLE POWER SUPPLY WILL BE A THING OF THE PAST. I, THEREFORE, APPEAL TO THE FARMING COMMUNITY FOR PATIENCE AND RESILIENCE AS WE TACKLE THE ISSUE OF POWER SUPPLY AND OTHER CHALLENGES.

WITH THESE REMARKS, LET ME OFFICIALLY LAUNCH THE WHEAT HARVEST.

I THANK YOU AND MAY GOD BLESS YOU ALL.