



SPEECH BY

**HIS EXCELLENCY MR EDGAR CHAGWA LUNGU
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA,**

**AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE 2019 AGRITECH
EXPO IN CHISAMBA DISTRICT, CENTRAL PROVINCE**

ON FRIDAY, 12TH APRIL 2019

**STATE HOUSE
LUSAKA**

- **THE PRESIDENT OF ZAMBIA NATIONAL FARMERS' UNION (ZNFU), MR JERVIS ZIMBA;**
- **THE CHAIRMAN OF FARMERS' EXPO BOARD, MR. ASHOK OZA;**
- **THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, HONOURABLE MICHAEL KATAMBO, M.P;**
- **THE MINISTER OF FISHERIES AND LIVESTOCK, HONOURABLE KAMPAMBA MULENGA CHEWE, M.P;**
- **COOPERATING PARTNERS PRESENT;**
- **SENIOR GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES;**
- **MEMBERS OF THE PRESS;**
- **DISTINGUISHED GUESTS;**
- **LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:**

LET ME BEGIN BY WELCOMING YOU ALL TO THIS IMPORTANT EVENT, THE 2019 AGRITECH EXPO.

TODAY, WE GATHER HERE WITH A LOT OF HOPE FOR ALL PLAYERS IN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR, AND THAT OF OUR PEOPLE. THIS IS BEARING IN MIND THAT AGRICULTURE IS ONE OF THE PRIORITY ECONOMIC SECTORS CRITICAL TO THE COUNTRY'S OVERALL DEVELOPMENT AGENDA.

MY GOVERNMENT HAS CONTINUED TO RECOGNISE THE IMPORTANT ROLE THAT THIS SECTOR PLAYS AND IS RESOLVED TO PURSUING APPROPRIATE POLICIES WHICH ARE AIMED AT TRANSFORMING THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR INTO A DYNAMIC, COMMERCIAL AND SUSTAINABLE SECTOR, CAPABLE OF MEETING THE ASPIRATIONS OF OUR PEOPLE.

MR PRESIDENT:

GOVERNMENT ALSO RECOGNISES THE IMPORTANT ROLE THAT THE EXPO PLAYS IN THE AGRICULTURAL CALENDAR, AS IT BRINGS TOGETHER IMPORTANT PLAYERS IN THE SECTOR, SUCH AS THE PRIVATE SECTOR AND THE FARMING COMMUNITY, IN GENERAL.

I AM PARTICULARLY PLEASED TO NOTE THAT THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE IS TAKING AN ACTIVE ROLE IN BRINGING TOGETHER ALL THE STAKEHOLDERS IN AGRICULTURE, WITH A VIEW TO RESOLVING THE MANY CHALLENGES WHICH HAVE BEEN AFFECTING THE SECTOR FOR SOMETIME NOW. THIS IS AS IT SHOULD BE.

THE PERENNIAL PROBLEMS WHICH THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR HAS BEEN GRAPPLING WITH SHOULD NOW BECOME A THING OF THE PAST.

WE NEED TO DIVERSIFY THE SECTOR FROM ITS CURRENT STATUS TO A COMMERCIALISED AND EXPORT-ORIENTED POSITION IN ORDER TO FULLY EXPLORE ITS POTENTIAL.

IN TERMS OF AGRICULTURAL TRADE, THERE IS A HUGE DEMAND FOR AGRICULTURAL FOOD PRODUCTS, BOTH PROCESSED AND RAW AT DOMESTIC AND REGIONAL LEVELS, AND BEYOND.

GOING FORWARD AS A COUNTRY, WE NEED TO LEVERAGE THIS OPPORTUNITY BY INCREASING PRODUCTION OF A WIDE RANGE OF FOOD PRODUCTS THAT IS, CROPS, LIVESTOCK AND FISH.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

GOVERNMENT WILL ALWAYS BE READY TO FACILITATE TRADE WITH OUR NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES SUCH AS THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO WHICH HAS A YAWNING MARKET FOR MOST OF OUR AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS.

AT THIS POINT, I DO ACKNOWLEDGE AND APPLAUD THE IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTION OF THE MANY PARTNERS THAT HAVE BEEN PARTICIPATING IN THIS EXPO EVERY YEAR.

I ENCOURAGE YOU TO CONTINUE EXCHANGING NEW AND IMPROVED AGRICULTURAL TECHNOLOGIES FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL PLAYERS IN THE SECTOR.

OUR DESIRE, AS GOVERNMENT, IS TO SEE TO IT THAT AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION AND PRODUCTIVITY IS ENHANCED THROUGH THE USE OF IMPROVED TECHNOLOGIES. I AM GRATIFIED TO NOTE THAT THIS EXPO IS DOING JUST THAT.

LET ME NOW ADDRESS THE ISSUE OF FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC INVESTMENT IN THE COUNTRY. WE HAVE CONTINUED TO RECEIVE FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT AS A RESULT OF OUR STEADY AND RESOLUTE COMMITMENT TO A PRIVATE SECTOR-LED ECONOMY, WHERE WE GUARANTEE SAFETY FOR PRIVATE INVESTORS TO DO BUSINESS.

OUR FOCUS AS GOVERNMENT IS TO ENSURE THAT WE PROVIDE A SUITABLE REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT FOR THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO THRIVE AND REMAIN IN BUSINESS.

MR. PRESIDENT,

THE PARTICIPATION OF PRIVATE INVESTORS IN THIS AGRITECH EXPO IS TESTIMONY TO OUR UNWAVERING COMMITMENT.

I AM AWARE THAT THERE ARE MANY BURNING POLICY ISSUES WHICH THE ZAMBIA NATIONAL FARMERS' UNION ARE GRAPPLING WITH FROM SEASON TO SEASON.

YOUR IMPORTANT ROLE OF LOBBYING GOVERNMENT AND ADVOCATING FOR IMPROVED AGRICULTURAL POLICIES ON BEHALF OF FARMERS IS WELL APPRECIATED.

MY GOVERNMENT STANDS READY TO LISTEN TO YOUR CONCERNS THROUGH A CONSULTATIVE PROCESS, WHICH I AM CONFIDENT IS NOW WORKING WELL BETWEEN YOURSELVES AND THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE.

I, THEREFORE, WISH TO IMPORE THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE TO EXPEDITE THE PROCESS OF CONSENSUS BUILDING, PARTICULARLY, IN DEVISING PRAGMATIC MEASURES AIMED AT ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES WHICH THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR CONTINUES TO FACE.

IN DOING SO, THE CONCERNS OF BOTH THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR, AND INDEED THE FARMERS WILL BE ADEQUATELY REPRESENTED AND CONSIDERED FOR ACTION. THIS WILL CONSEQUENTLY, IMPROVE THE PERFORMANCE OF THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR IN GENERAL.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

IMPROVED PERFORMANCE IN THE SECTOR, CALLS FOR JOINT EFFORTS BY GOVERNMENT AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR, THROUGH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF VARIOUS VIABLE PROGRAMMES IN ORDER TO STIMULATE GROWTH.

YOU WILL ALL AGREE WITH ME THAT THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR REQUIRES TRANSFORMATION AND WE HAVE NO TIME TO WASTE. DEBATES ON FOOD SHORTAGES IN THE NEXT FEW YEARS MUST BE RELEGATED TO THE ARCHIVES.

THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR IS POISED FOR POSITIVE GROWTH, IF ONLY WE DO THE RIGHT THING.

FOR US TO ACHIEVE THIS, WE NEED TO SERIOUSLY REVISIT WHATEVER WE HAVE DONE WRONG IN THE PAST BY PUTTING IN PLACE VIABLE AND SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS FOR THE SECTOR TO THRIVE.

I WISH TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO IMPLORE THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND HIS PERMANENT SECRETARY TO CONTINUE ENSURING THAT STAKEHOLDERS ARE BROUGHT ON BOARD TO COME UP WITH SOLUTIONS AFFECTING THE SECTOR.

I ALSO URGE YOU TO ENSURE THAT CONSULTATIONS ARE ON-GOING, AS CHALLENGES DIFFER FROM TIME TO TIME AND ARE DYNAMIC IN NATURE.

IN ADDRESSING CHALLENGES FACED BY THE SECTOR, I WANT YOU, THE ZNFU AND THE MINISTRY TO PAY PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO THE FOLLOWING:

1. INCREASING MAIZE PRODUCTION TO MEET BOTH THE DOMESTIC AND EXPORT MARKETS;
2. STIMULATING THE PRODUCTION OF PRODUCTS WHICH HAVE FAILED TO COMPETE WITH IMPORTS OWING TO THE HIGH COST OF PRODUCTION;
3. INCREASING THE MAIZE YIELD PER HECTARE IN PARTICULAR FROM THE CURRENT **1 - 2** TONNES PER HECTARE, ESPECIALLY BY OUR SMALL-SCALE FARMERS;
4. INTENSIFYING WORKS ON RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT WITH REGARD TO COMBATING PESTS AND DISEASE INFESTATION;
5. PROMOTING CLIMATE RESILIENT AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES, ESPECIALLY IN LIGHT OF EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE;
6. COMMERCIALISING THE PRODUCTION OF OTHER HIGH VALUE CROPS SUCH AS CASSAVA IN THE SPIRIT OF PROMOTING AGRICULTURAL DIVERSIFICATION;
7. THERE IS ALSO URGENT NEED TO ENSURE THAT IN THE NEXT SEASON, INPUTS ARE DELIVERED BEFORE THE ONSET OF RAINS UNDER THE FARMER INPUT SUPPORT PROGRAMME (FISP); AND
8. WITH REGARD TO THE FOOD RESERVE AGENCY (FRA), I EXPECT THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE TO MAKE RESOURCES AVAILABLE IN TIME FOR PURCHASING THE PRODUCE FROM OUR FARMERS.

MR. PRESIDENT,

I AM AWARE THAT THE TOBACCO INDUSTRY HAS BEEN FACED WITH A NUMBER OF CHALLENGES ARISING FROM ARCHAIC REGULATORY FRAMEWORKS WHICH NOW REQUIRE AMENDMENTS.

HOWEVER, I AM PLEASED TO NOTE, ONCE AGAIN, THAT THE MINISTRY HAS TAKEN A STRONG STANCE TOWARDS RESOLVING SOME OF THESE CHALLENGES BY ENGAGING THE CONCERNED STAKEHOLDERS.

I AM CONFIDENT THAT LASTING SOLUTIONS WILL BE FOUND IN THE SHORTEST POSSIBLE TIME. THE TOBACCO INDUSTRY HAS THE POTENTIAL TO INCREASE FOREIGN EXCHANGE EARNINGS FOR THE COUNTRY.

IT IS ALSO GRATIFYING TO NOTE THAT LIVESTOCK AND FISH PRODUCTION IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF OUR AGRICULTURAL DIVERSIFICATION AGENDA.

THE SECTOR IS EQUALLY A CRITICAL CONTRIBUTOR OF FOOD AND NUTRITION, AS WELL AS INCOME GENERATION FOR OUR FARMERS AND THE NATION AT LARGE.

THIS IS WHY THE PATRIOTIC FRONT GOVERNMENT SPECIFICALLY CREATED THE MINISTRY OF FISHERIES AND LIVESTOCK TO ADMINISTER THIS IMPORTANT SECTOR OF AGRICULTURE. THIS IS ANOTHER AREA WITH A HUGE POTENTIAL FOR FOREIGN EXCHANGE EARNINGS.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

IT IS THEREFORE IMPERATIVE FOR ALL FARMERS TO ENGAGE IN ALL ASPECTS OF AGRICULTURE INCLUDING LIVESTOCK AND FISH PRODUCTION.

I AM EXCITED TO NOTE THE INCREASED INTEREST SHOWN BY A NUMBER OF ZAMBIANS IN FISH PRODUCTION. THIS IS COMMENDABLE, AND I WISH TO ENCOURAGE ALL THOSE ENGAGING IN THIS VENTURE TO CONTINUE DOING SO.

IN RESPECT OF LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION, PARTICULAR ATTENTION MUST BE FOCUSED ON DISEASE CONTROL, A PROBLEM WHICH THE LIVESTOCK SECTOR HAS BEEN REELING IN FOR A LONG TIME. SURELY, THERE HAS TO BE A LASTING SOLUTION TO THIS.

LET ME NOW TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO THANK ALL THE FARMERS IN THE COUNTRY FOR WORKING SO HARD IN THE LAST AGRICULTURAL SEASON, DESPITE HAVING EXPERIENCED PROLONGED DRY SPELLS, PARTICULARLY, IN THE SOUTHERN PART OF OUR COUNTRY.

IT IS MY SINCERE HOPE THAT DESPITE ALL THESE NEGATIVE ADVERSE EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE, THE COUNTRY WILL MANAGE TO PRODUCE SUFFICIENT FOOD.

I WISH TO ASSURE THE NATION THAT GOVERNMENT HAS TAKEN ADEQUATE STEPS TO ENSURE THAT THE COUNTRY REMAINS FOOD SECURE, DESPITE EXPERIENCING THE POOR AGRICULTURAL SEASON THIS YEAR.

I AM ALSO DIRECTING THAT FARMERS AND AGRO

ALLOW ME TO NOW CONCLUDE BY EXTENDING MY PROFOUND GRATITUDE TO THE ZAMBIA NATIONAL FARMERS' UNION AND ALL THE DISTINGUISHED PLAYERS AND SPONSORS FOR SUCCESSFULLY ORGANISING THIS IMPORTANT AGRITECH EXPO.

I AM CONFIDENT THAT YOU WILL CONTINUE WORKING WITH MY GOVERNMENT SO THAT, TOGETHER, WE CAN MAKE OUR COUNTRY A MORE PRODUCTIVE AGRICULTURAL COUNTRY, AND INCREASE EXPORTS TO OUR NEIGHBOURING BROTHERS AND SISTERS.

WITH THESE FEW REMARKS, IT IS NOW MY SINGULAR HONOUR AND PRIVILEGE TO DECLARE THE 2019 AGRITECH EXPO OFFICIALLY OPEN.

I THANK YOU AND GOD BLESS YOU ALL.