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Corruption in

No 11,640

Government

unsettles

Mwanawasa

By Andrew Lungu

PRESIDENT Mwanawasa has expressed concern at the current levels of corruption in the Government despite all the efforts he has put in to fight the vice.

Speaking at a rally in Mfuwe yesterday Mr Mwanawasa said he continued getting concerned because corruption retarded development.

He urged leaders in the MMD and the Government to desist from corruption and promote integrity amongst themselves if development was to be achieved.

Dr Mwanawasa also advised people in the Eastern Province to choose leaders with good track records.

He took a swipe at some people going around campaigning for MMD party presidency at the expense of development.

He said some people have been out of the country for a long time and did not understand the party but wanted to contest for the presidency.

"People should start by contesting for lower positions in the party such as branch level and understand what it takes to run a party and later a country," he said.

He also said he would not support any leader in the MMD who had a criminal record.

On the agriculture sector Dr Mwanawasa expressed disappointment at the manner the Fertiliser Support Programme (FSP) was being handled by cooperatives.

He said after meeting the chiefs during his vacation in Mfuwe, he was informed that some cooperatives leaders were smuggling the fertiliser to neighbouring countries.

He warned that people should not be surprised when Government scraps the programme because it was only benefiting a few individuals.

He said the Government would rather scrap the 40 per cent discount of the FSP and subsidise only five per cent to benefit all farmers across the country.

Meanwhile Dr Mwanawasa said he did not agree with the sentiments by second republican President Fredrick Chiluba that there was more corruption in Government now than in his administration.

He said Government worked hard to expose corruption and Dr Chiluba's statement was misleading.

Speaking earlier MMD provincial chairperson Lameck Mangani said 2008 was a year of action for the party because it would usher in new leaders.

He urged party members to participate in the elections for them to choose good leaders.

He warned that members should not elect people whose passion was only money but those with a heart for the people.

Eastern Province minister Charles Shawa said the province had enjoyed peace because of the good leadership of Dr Mwanawasa.

Mr Shawa said almost all sectors of the economy in the province were doing well owing to the prudent policies of the Government.

He particularly thanked the Government through the ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives for resuscitating the FSP that was suspended previously.

He said if the good rains continued, the province would have a bumper harvest.

Times - Sat 15-2008

Fertiliser crisis leaves

small-scale farmers foodless

THE recent suspension of subsidised fertiliser distribution by two Government agents has devastated many small-scale farmers across the country. Our staffer **CHARLES MUSONDA** reflects on the impact of this fertiliser crisis in some Eastern Province communities.

AT THE beginning of this farming season, thousands of small-scale farmers across Zambia were positively looking forward to yet another bumper harvest. But for most of them it looks like this dream has already been shattered.

The farmers depend on inputs that the government gives out under the Fertiliser Support Programme (FSP). Many of them have, however, not received the fertiliser they expected, and now they fear that their yields will be nothing to boast about.

"Already the maize we harvested last season was destroyed by the larger grain borer which broke out in our area. So how are we going to survive with poor yields which will result from this lack of fertiliser?" lamented Phenius Banda, a peasant farmer in the Eastern Province district of Chipata.

Mr Banda and other affected farmers contend that while the FSP was a good initiative to support agriculture development in Zambia, its mismanagement by some authorities was rendering the plan irrelevant.

While Zambia had recorded some positive developments such as increased out-grower schemes and contract farming, crop diversification, and changes in land management strategies, the private sector had remained constrained in providing input and output marketing services.

Government therefore designed the FSP to improve small-scale

farmers' access to inputs and to enhance the private sector's participation and competitiveness in the supply and timely distribution of adequate agricultural inputs.

In its first season (2002/2003) of implementation, the FSP assisted 120,000 small-scale farmers with about 48,000 metric tonnes of fertiliser and about 2,400 metric tonnes of maize seed, to grow about 360,000 metric tonnes of maize.

In the 2003/2004 farming season, the number of targeted farmers increased to 150,000 and they got 60,000 metric tonnes of fertiliser and 3,000 metric tonnes of maize, out of which they were expected to grow 450,000 metric tonnes of the grain.

In the 2004/2005 season, the number of beneficiaries reduced to 115,000, with 46,000 metric tonnes of fertiliser and 2,500 metric tonnes of seed.

During the 2005/2006 season, the government's subsidy remained at 50 per cent and the FSP provided 50,000 metric tonnes of fertiliser and 2,500 metric tonnes of seed to 125,000 farmers.

Last season (2006/2007), the number of beneficiaries increased to an all time high of 210,000 with 84,000 metric tonnes of fertiliser and 4,200 metric tonnes of seed.

Additionally, the government's subsidy increased to 60 percent, leaving the small-scale farmers to contribute only 40 percent of the inputs' selling price.

This season the number of beneficiaries again reduced to 125,000, based on the budget of K150

billion, which Parliament approved for procurement of 50,000 metric tonnes of fertiliser and 2,500 metric tonnes of maize seed.

Government's subsidy has remained at 60 percent and each eligible farmer is entitled to receive a standard pack of eight bags of fertiliser (four bags of D-Compound and four bags of Urea) which cater for one hectare.

MALPRACTICES

To avoid malpractices experienced in the last farming season, the government this season excluded officials who were involved in rampant misdeeds. However this seems not to have worked out as desired.

Despite the FSP's contribution to rebuilding the eroded base of farmers through direct income transfers, and creating demand and a ready market for the private input dealers and suppliers, problems arose in early stages of the 2007/2008 season.

The thorniest problem was that instead of benefiting poor farmers; in many cases inputs allocated under the FSP have continued corruptly land in wrong hands.

Last weekend, President Mwansa acknowledged this when he addressed a public rally in the Eastern Province district of Mambwe.

Dr Mwanawasa noted that people getting the fertiliser dubiously were either supplying it to local traders or smuggling it into neighbouring Malawi.

He warned that should this continue, the government would scrap the FSP and replace it with a much lower subsidy on fertiliser to benefit everyone.

Perhaps this justifies complaints by members of Kazimule Farmers Club located in Senior Chief Ndzamanai's area in

Chipata.

The farmers claimed that despite paying in full for 30 packs of fertiliser (240 bags) this season; they only received 10 packs (80 bags).

According to club chairperson Ackim Mbewe, Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives officials in Chipata promised to give the farmers additional or top-up packs but the promise has not yet been fulfilled.

Mr Mbewe said as if this was not enough, Omnia Fertiliser Company and Nyiombo Investments Limited suspended distribution of fertiliser

over the government's failure to pay the two companies on time.

"This has really affected us and we don't know what we are going to do because maize has already started tussling, and the plants are now turning yellow," Mr Mbewe said.

"Even if they give us top-up fertiliser, it will not be of any use because this is now January," he added.

EFFECTS

A check at various maize fields at Manjakazi Agriculture Camp in Kazimule revealed that the plants were indeed turning yellow and were in stunted growth.

Camp officer, Jophter Ndhlovu said the camp, which is made up of 1,071 members, only received a total of 80 packs (640 bags of fertiliser).

Mr Ndhlovu said it was now too late for the farmers to apply fertiliser "even if it is brought today because you can't start applying basal fertiliser in January."

"The rain pattern here is fair but with lack of fertiliser the yield will be very poor and this means more hunger," Mr Ndhlovu said.

He wondered how some farmers who got seeds in form of loans from an NGO called DD would pay back as they were required to

repay two 50 kg bags of maize for every one 10 kg bag of seed.

He appealed to Government to improve the distribution system and have more farmers benefit from the FSP to avoid perpetual hunger in the area.

Chipata District Farmers Association coordinator, Virgil Malambo challenged the Government to act promptly on the farmers' complaints.

Mr Malambo said his association had brought the matter to the attention of relevant authorities several times but they were just unfulfilled assurances.

He was surprised that even D-Compound fertiliser, which is manufactured by State-owned Nitrogen Chemicals of Zambia, was in short supply.

According to Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives permanent secretary, Sam Mundia, the government contracted NCZ to supply 25,000 metric tonnes of D-Compound fertiliser.

Dr Mundia was happy that NCZ had manufactured all the required D-compound fertiliser and had already sent it to all the districts.

But Mr Malambo

insisted the D-compound fertiliser manufactured by NCZ was in short supply and this would adversely affect yields this season.

He said the Government would spend more on relief food than it would have spent on ensuring timely and adequate distribution of inputs.

"Even if the government decides to give people relief food, are they are going to afford to give everyone because the trend is that not every person affected by hunger receives relief food," he said.

Post - SW April 16, 2008

Haantuba advises govt to focus on Food Security Pack

By Mvula Chansa in
Solwezi

GOVERNMENT should focus more on supporting the Food Security Pack than the Fertiliser Support Programme, Agriculture Consultative Forum (ACF) coordinator Dr Hyde Haantuba has said.

In an interview, Dr Haantuba said the Food Security Pack was more of a social safety net programme and tallied with the government's responsibility of offering social amenities to its people as opposed to the Fertiliser Support Programme that appeared to be more of a commercial exercise.

He observed that when both programmes were designed, their funding levels were equal but over the years, the allocation to the Food Security Pack

had been declining steadily.

"I think the idea was for these programmes to complement each other and not compete against each other. The idea was that when one graduated from the Food Security Pack, they would move to the Fertiliser Support Programme but over time, there has been a reduction in the allocation to Food Security Pack and more allocation towards the Fertiliser Support Programme," Dr Haantuba said.

He said the government needed to realise that its core function was social support because input distribution could even be done by the private sector that could not provide social support.

Dr Haantuba said food security was a fundamental programme that elevated people economically.

He said not much production could be achieved in the agriculture sector if there was more emphasis on fertiliser support because people first needed to be informed about proper fertiliser use, conservation farming, crop diversification all of which were programmes taught to beneficiaries of the Food Security Pack.

"We need to ask ourselves why the levels of productivity amongst our small-scale farmers have not increased despite our increased fertiliser support," said Dr Haantuba.

Dr Mulopa bemoans political interference in FSP implementation

By Mwila Chansa in Kabompo

KABOMPO District Agriculture Coordinator Dr Victor Mulopa has said political interference has made it difficult to effectively implement the Food Security Pack (FSP) programme in the area.

Dr Mulopa said it was difficult to make recoveries from beneficiaries of the FSP programme as most of them took it as a government grant where they were not supposed to pay anything.

He was speaking at his office last Thursday when members of the FSP national technical committee paid a courtesy call on him.

"The recovery rate has been very low due to non-payment by beneficiaries and sometimes because of political interference in the management of the pro-

gramme," Dr Mulopa explained.

He also said inadequate funding had also made it difficult to monitor field programmes.

Dr Mulopa also called for improved distribution of wetland inputs as late distribution led to loss of yields because of cob rot diseases.

He, however, said the programme had greatly improved the total household food security among the rural communities of the district.

And Programme Against Malnutrition (PAM) coordinator for North Western Province, Francis Mwanza said there was need for more sensitisation to beneficiaries as far as paying back was concerned.

Mwanza said some beneficiaries considered FSP a government grant and in some cases thought it was their area member of parliament that was

responsible for the distribution of those inputs from which they benefited.

Ministry of Community Development chief planner Gregory Mwanza said it was important to work on attitudes against defaulting.

Mwanza said it was meaningless for a farmer to have a good harvest and fail to pay back because recoveries made from pay backs were meant for more people to benefit from the programme.

Kapita explains increase in FSP allocation

By Joan Chirwa

THREATS of food insecurity necessitated government's decision to allocate additional resources towards the Fertiliser Support Programme (FSP), agriculture and co-operatives minister Ben Kapita has said.

Kapita, in an interview, said his ministry would not divert the additional K307 billion allocated to the FSP towards recapitalisation of the Nitrogen Chemicals of Zambia (NCZ) despite the institution's current state.

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Kapita explains increase in FSP allocation

From front page

"The Ministry of Finance and National Planning has given an additional K307 billion to the FSP, making a total of K492 billion from the K185 billion allocated in this year's budget," Kapita said.

"Prices of fertiliser have extremely gone up and this would have had a terrible effect on maize production if government did not take a proactive decision to ensure the small-scale farmers are assisted."

Agricultural experts have noted that the government should allocate money for the rehabilitation of NCZ as it had the capacity to produce adequate fertiliser which could be accessed at reasonable prices by the local farmers. NCZ, which has a production capacity of around 300,000 metric tonnes of fertiliser, currently requires urgent rehabilitation as most of the equipment is almost obsolete. The Ministry of Agriculture notes that NCZ could supply the whole Southern African region if its plant is rehabilitated.

Kapita explained that resources would soon be allocated for the rehabilitation of NCZ, realising its production potential in the SADC region.

He said the government had previously allocated money towards the recapitalisation of NCZ, but accused the previous management of misapplying the funds instead of undertaking rehabilitation works of the plant. According to NCZ's business plan, the plant requires around K143 billion for its complete overhaul. The requirement is half of the additional K300 billion the government has allocated to the Ministry of Agriculture for input subsidies in the 2008/2009 farming season.

"It is unfortunate that the previous management at NCZ mismanaged resources because government had been giving the parastatal money for rehabilitation but nothing was being done," Kapita said. "However, I'm very sure that the current management will make use of the money that government will soon give them for rehabilita-

tion of the plant."

From the total of K492 billion, the government hopes to provide 80,000 metric tonnes of subsidised fertiliser, increasing the number of beneficiaries from the previous 75,000 to about 200,000 small-scale farmers during the 2008/2009 farming season.

In view of the rising costs of agricultural inputs, experts warned that Zambia might record a major decline in food production as small-scale farmers that contribute about three quarters of total maize production could not afford the inputs. For example, in the 2007/2008 harvest season, small-scale farmers contributed about 75 per cent of the total 1.2 million metric tonnes of maize produced in the country.

Fertiliser prices have reached an all-time high of around US \$1,500 per tonne level from an average of US \$500 per tonne last year. The current trading price of fertiliser represents a 300 per cent increase over last season's figure of US \$500, on the back of rising oil prices on the international market and increasing demand of the commodity by agricultural producing countries worldwide. Converted at the current exchange rate, a tonne of fertiliser in kwacha now cost around K4.9 million. This means a 50 kilogramme bag of the commodity could even cost around K200,000.

Zambia's agriculture sector is largely composed of peasant and small-scale farmers who contribute three quarters of the country's maize production. Just before the onset of the 2007/2008 farming season, the Ministry of Agriculture and Co-operatives trimmed down the number of beneficiaries of the government subsidised inputs by almost half. The situation was compounded by rising costs of inputs such as seed and fertiliser across the country, with a 50 kilogramme bag of fertilizer fetching for an average K115,000. The agricultural season is just two months away and input prices have maintained an upward trend not only in Zambia but in other parts of the world as well where agriculture

is prominent.

Industry analysts have suggested that the current high prices have resulted from the increasing demand due to high food prices, a situation exacerbated by the current biofuel situation. Furthermore, China recently imposed an export tariff of between 100 per cent and 135 per cent on all fertilisers, which effectively took 2.4 million tonnes of urea out of the world market. The supply of phosphate is also an issue, which is mainly sourced from Morocco and China; where production is largely controlled by the government. With the current market situation, it seems unlikely that additional mining capacity will be granted, which would ultimately weaken the current price.

As fertiliser prices are becoming expensive, Kapita said farmers must also become productive.

"We need to work towards improving the yield per hectare," Kapita said. "This can only be done if we revamp the extension department in the Ministry of Agriculture and Co-operatives so that farmers can learn how to plant correctly, employ correct fertilisation and weeding methods. This can make a difference," Kapita said.

For example, a hectare requires a total of eight bags of fertiliser (both top dressing and basal) to produce around 100 bags of maize. This means an average small-scale farmer with a hectare of agricultural land needs about K1.7 million to produce an average of 100 (50 kilogramme) bags of maize if correct farming practices are employed. Adding up other costs such as seed and labour, the figure could exceed K2 million for a hectare's production. However, the Ministry of Agriculture says yields per hectare in the country have been far below the expected average of eight tonnes. From the previous season, yields per hectare have fallen to around 1.31 tonnes per hectare (about 1,300 kilogrammes or 26 of the 50 kilogramme bags of maize). And if yields per hectare remain at the current level, then farmers will end up incurring high

production costs with little crop coming out of their fields. For example, if yields are maintained at 1.31 tonnes per hectare from inputs worth K1.7 million - considering the current prices of fertiliser - a farmer will only get around K1.2 million, calculated at Food Reserve Agency (FRA)'s maize price of K45,000 per 50 kilogramme bag.

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II • BUSINESS

**By Kabanda Chulu,
Chiwoyo Sinyangwe
and Fridah Zinyama**

FORMER ZNFU second vice-president Kaniki Bwalya has challenged the government to review the fertiliser support programme (FSP), saying it is not serving the intended purpose.

And University of Zambia (UNZA) dean in the School of Agriculture Dr Judith Lungu has said the FSP still has a lot of bottlenecks that prevents the programme from enabling small holder farmers from becoming self reliant in purchasing fertiliser.

Meanwhile, the Food Security Research Project (FSRP) under the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives has observed that scarce resources should be directed at improving infrastructure rather than being consumed in expensive subsidy schemes for Zambia's agriculture sector to become efficient.

During campaigns for last month's presidential election, President Rupiah Banda directed that the fertiliser subsidy for small-scale farmers be increased from 60 per cent to 75 per cent, resulting in 'so called' 'vulnerable farmers' to access a 50 kilogramme bag of fertiliser at around K50,000 instead of the actual price of over K200,000.

This development increased government spending towards the FSP as an extra amount of over K300 billion was allocated to cover inputs for around 200,000 farmers compared to 125,000 farmers that benefitted from the facility during the 2007/2008 farming season.

President Banda, during campaigns, also announced that defence force personnel and civil servants who were involved in any form of farming were also eligible beneficiaries of the FSP, thereby defeating the whole purpose of the programme's target which seeks to support vulnerable but viable farmers.

The FSP, a government initiative introduced about six years ago, was meant to support small-scale farmers who do not have the capacity to purchase inputs for crop production. This government subsidy was aimed at increasing the country's food production capacity while maintaining food security at both national and household levels.

However, since inception, the FSP has been seen as a contro-

By Mwala KALAIUKU
FORMER finance minister Ng'andu Magande (right) on Thursday said the inclusion of civil servants as eligible beneficiaries in the government-funded Fertiliser Support Programme (FSP), is disadvantaging the peasant farmers.

And Chasfu FDD member of parliament Chifumu Banda has asked the government to drill water points in the Eastern Province following the vigorous support they gave to the MMD during the last presidential election campaign.

During the oral question and answer session in Parliament, Magande, who is Chilanga member of parliament, stood on a point of order and asked deputy Speaker Mutale Nalumango to rule whether agriculture minister Dr Brian Chituwo was in order to commence the distribution of FSP inputs without specifying who the beneficiaries were.

Magande also wanted to know if Dr Chituwo was in order to issue a ministerial statement in the course of the week where he was urging the distribution of more fertiliser.

"Last night, I saw him on TV instructing one of the companies to start distributing," he said. "There is confusion in my constituency between the civil servants and small, vulnerable but viable farmers. They are now going to get the fertiliser

and the peasant small-scale farmers are being clouded out of the process, which is a very good government programme."

Magande wondered if it was fair that such a well-intended public programme could end up benefiting non-vulnerable people, who were already rich.

"Is he (Dr Chituwo) in order?" asked Magande as the opposition side applauded him and told him that he had come back with a bang.

But Nalumango said she had not seen any contradiction between Dr Chituwo's ministerial statement and the situation on the ground regarding the distribution of FSP inputs.

"The ministerial statement was on the distribution of fertiliser," she said. "The chair is also careful to say that she did not watch the minister to give the instructions."

Nalumango said in view of that, it would be like operating in a vacuum to make a ruling on the matter.

However, Nalumango was in order to give the House the fact that fertiliser had been distributed.

And making an observation of the low number of boreholes in Lundazi despite the pursuit made by parliamentarians from the area to the Ministry of Local Government and

Magande condemns inclusion of civil servants in FSP



Housing, Banda said they had campaigned for the MMD during the elections. But local government minister Tetamashimba said the distribution of boreholes would not be based on who campaigned for the ruling party as the MMD government was for everyone, including the PF.

Post - Nov 29, 2008

The farmers Gazette

Nov - 2008

CONGRATULATIONS to the people of Zambia for conducting a peaceful election. In stark contrast to many of our neighbours, Zambia stands out as a bright beacon of hope in a region starved of democracy. This orderly transfer of power sends a welcome signal to a world looking for stable investment environments in emerging economies that Zambia is a reliable investment target.

If Zambia is to sustain this critical inward investment then our leaders need to refrain from the increasingly pervasive habit of exploiting the voiceless investor with political pronouncements that result in flash official visits from immigration, labour and other officials. Citizens and investors need to take comfort from the transparent application of Zambian laws by competent officials, not politicians looking for votes at the expense of investment. Because such investment has no political forum to register discontent the only way it can express dissatisfaction with policies is capital flight. This causes job losses, negatively impacts the exchange rate and reduces the pace of development in Zambia. While Zambian sovereignty is not for sale, the political impotency of investment may need some attention if we are to sustain this vital source of employment and development funding.

The Fertiliser Support Programme for the 2008/9 season is to cost more than half a trillion Kwacha. The subsequent FRA funding needed to purchase the crop will probably cost another K200 billion on top of this. When added to the Ministry of Agriculture costs of monitoring this exercise there will not be much change out of K1 trillion for the whole exercise of attempting to provide some of the nations staple.

This \$300 million investment into agriculture is probably the biggest sum ever invested in the sector in one year. At the end of the cycle the target of this national gift – the *small scale farmer – will be just as poor as he was at the beginning of the process.*

The gift will have been transformed into an urban food subsidy.

There has to be better way to feed Zambia than eating another copper bonus.

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Civil Servants to get Fertiliser

GOVERNMENT is working out modalities on how civil servants could benefit from this year's K500 billion Fertiliser Support Programme (FSP) according to Agriculture and Cooperatives Minister, Sarah Sayifwanda.

Ms Sayifwanda was responding to a question from a civil servant at the launch of the FSP in Lusaka.

Last month, President Rupiah Banda said he had received reports that some sections of society were not allowed to access fertiliser because they were getting a salary.

Mr Banda said personnel from the defence forces were entitled to the FSP as long as they proved that they were bona fide farmers.

Ms Sayifwanda said her ministry would look into ways to enable an extension of the programme to civil servants.

"We are looking into modalities on how it will be sorted out...to accommodate

for this extension. They are some civil servants who are also into small-scale farming," she said.

Ms Sayifwanda said the earlier the distribution of agriculture inputs was done, the greater output the farmers would achieve.

She said the 2007/8 farming season came with unexpected bad weather, especially floods that destroyed most of the crops for the small-scale farmers.

She also said increased fertiliser prices on the international market contributed to the negative adverse effects in the 2007/8 farming season adding that this prompted Government to review the subsidy allocation and level for the current season.

Government has since procured 80,000 metric of fertiliser and 4,000 metrics of maize seed from the budgetary allocation of K492 billion for the FSP for the 2008/9 farming season.

The primary target of the FSP has

Government has since procured 80,000 metric of fertiliser and 4,000 metrics of maize seed from the budgetary allocation of K492 billion for the FSP for the 2008/9 farming season.

always been resource-poor small scale farmers. An under-worked, over paid salaried civil servant who has just enjoyed a substantial pay rise does not appear to meet the criteria for benefits under the FSP.

However, as the officials entrusted with the implementation of the programme, there will now be space made for them at the FSP trough!

Hopefully there will be some fertiliser left for the original targets. [E]

Fertiliser Distribution Problems

FERTILISER suppliers contracted by the Government to distribute inputs for the 2008/2009 farming season under the Fertiliser Support Programme (FSP) are facing difficulties in reaching some parts of the country where they have no supply depots to receive the commodities.

Agriculture and Cooperatives Deputy Minister, Daniel Kalenga disclosed that Omnia and Nyiombo Investments are experiencing difficulties in the distribution of the fertiliser inputs in Northern, Copperbelt, North-Western and Luapula provinces because they do not have depots in these areas.

However Mr Kalenga said the delay in delivering the fertiliser was not the Government's fault but the suppliers'.

"We had given enough time to the two private suppliers to distribute the inputs to all the districts and the Government has already paid them for the service, in fact the contracts were awarded to them in June," the minister said. Mr Kalenga, said in other provinces, the

suppliers had no problems in distributing the inputs.

"Where the suppliers have depots the farmers have already received their inputs," he said.

The minister said a total of 80,000 tonnes of fertiliser and 4,000 tonnes of seed were expected to be distributed under the FSP for the 2008/2009 farming season.

Mr Kalenga said in Central, Province a total of 13,718 tonnes of fertiliser and 686 tonnes of seed would be allocated, for the Copperbelt about 10,000 tonnes of fertiliser and 500 tonnes of seed would be distributed.

In Eastern Province, 14,784 tonnes of fertiliser and 739 tonnes of seed would be distributed. In Luapula, 3,824 tonnes of fertiliser and 191 tonnes of seed would be distributed.

Lusaka Province will receive 5,760 tonnes of fertiliser and 288 tonnes of seed. Northern Province will get 11,337

tonnes of fertiliser and 566 tonnes of seed. The North-Western Province will receive 4,064 tonnes of fertiliser and 203 tonnes of seed. Southern Province will get 14,486 tonnes of fertiliser and 724 tonnes of seed and Western Province will get about 2,000 tonnes of fertiliser and 100 tonnes of seed.

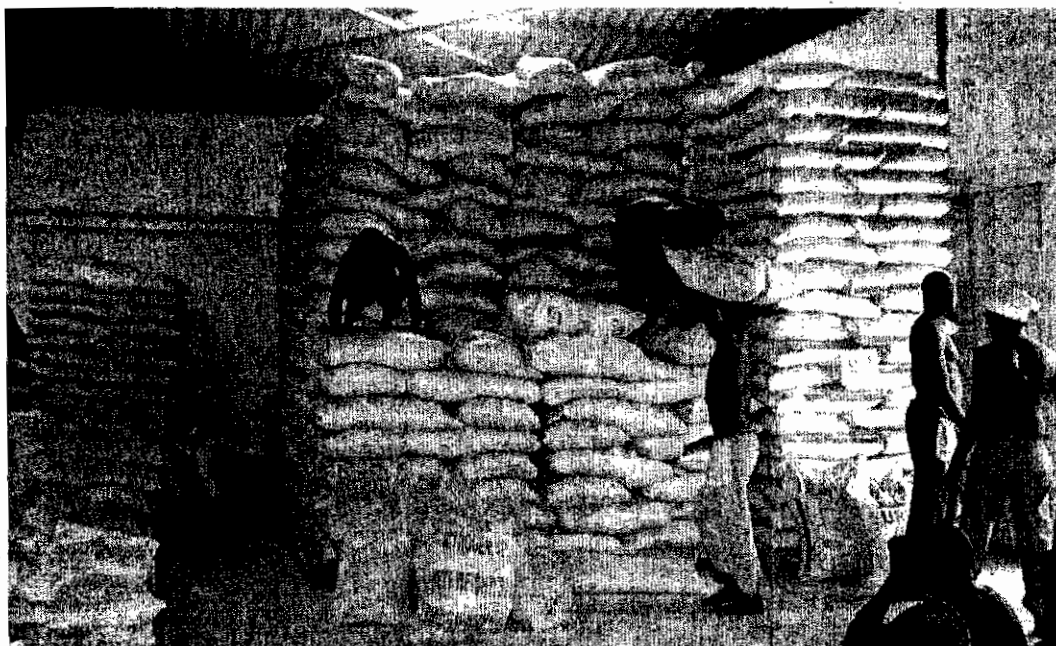
Mr Kalenga said a transparent system in the distribution of the fertiliser had been put in place and would help guide the Government on the number of farmers accessing the inputs.

The entire exercise will cost in excess of K492 billion! Then we will have the FRA funding requirements to buy the maize produced from the fertiliser – at least another K150 billion. There has to be a more cost effective way to meeting our food needs.

We are, once again, eating the Copper Bonus. Except that this time the bonus has ended with the collapse in copper prices.

Then what? [E]

Bwalya challenges govt to review FSP



During campaigns for last month's presidential election, President Rupiah Banda directed that the fertiliser subsidy for small-scale farmers be increased from 80 per cent to 78 per cent

versial undertaking as it has, on a number of occasions, been noted that very few of the vulnerable farmers were accessing the inputs. Several parts of the country have reported having people arrested or investigated for abuse of the facility as a number of inputs end up on the black markets instead of being utilised by the targeted groups.

Co-minister of Agriculture and Co-operatives Sarah Sayifwanda however, maintained that the FSP is only meant for the vulnerable but viable small-scale farmers, with a total of 200,000 expected to benefit from the government subsidised inputs during the 2008/2009 farming season.

Sayifwanda explained that the farmers who are expected to access inputs under the FSP

were those registered with different co-operative societies across the country.

"It is only the 200,000 registered farmers who are eligible to receive the subsidised fertiliser which is selling for K30, 000," she said.

And Bwalya said there is need to find better ways of increasing food production than throwing away billions of kwacha in subsidies at less efficient and ineffective farmers.

He said the FSP should be revised because in real terms, it does not exist and it does not support an increase in food production.

"Since inception of the FSP in 2002, no one has come up with actual figures of production and mainly it is targeted at same farmers every year and these

same farmers do not move to next levels so in real terms, the FSP does not exist and it should be reviewed to include associated services such as guidance and agriculture extension, for instance, one hectare of fertilised maize by commercial farmers normally produces over 100 bags but the vulnerable farmers only produce about 40 or less bags under FSP," Bwalya said.

He said the FSP was ideally introduced to increase food production but the reality on the ground was different.

"There is something which is not right about the FSP because why should farmers get almost free fertiliser but the yields do not grow but if the same fertiliser is applied by commercial farmers, the production is different and if the FSP is to achieve

its intended purpose, then government should also attach agriculture extension services and other forms of guidance," said Bwalya.

The revised FSP programme would result in procurement of 80,000 tonnes of fertiliser and 4,000 tonnes of maize seed to cater for 200,000 small-scale farmers, about 20 per cent of the total 1.3 million small-scale farmers in the country who are classified as vulnerable and are registered at various cooperatives across the country.

And Dr Lungu said there was need to strengthen monitoring mechanisms to ensure the continuous evaluation of the impact of the FSP in helping to make vulnerable farmers viable.

Dr Lungu however, said the quantity of the FSP allocation to

individual farmers may not be adequate to make a meaningful impact.

"One hectare of maize is not enough to enable a small holder farmer raise enough to move from being subsistent to be able to buy fertiliser and seeds for themselves for the next farming season and be able to graduate from dependence on subsidies. So that could be one of the reasons but of course, there have been a lot of studies that have been done on why FSP has not delivered to expectations," Dr Lungu said.

And Dr Lungu said there was need to evaluate whether the amount being demanded as contribution towards the FSP was affordable.

"The result is that some small holder farmers would get the fertilizer just for some people who can afford and not use it themselves. To some, even the 25 per cent being demanded before the farmer could access it might be too much...so they end up fronting for other," said Dr Lungu. "These are things that must be followed up but currently, there isn't that information."

And the FSRP policy survey report funded by the United States Agency for International Development and the Swedish International Development Agency, observed that 70 per cent of the budget for ministry of agriculture and cooperatives goes into fertiliser subsidies, maize marketing and stock holding programmes.

The report stated that improvement of infrastructure such as roads, electricity, extension services and education were important for the country's agriculture to become more efficient. It stated that market access was a key determinant in small scale farmer's income diversification and growth.

"Development of agriculture is important to bring about the structural change required for long-term growth but the introduction of subsidy programmes does not seem to be the most efficient route to develop agriculture and these subsidy schemes are problematic not only from an efficiency perspective but also from the distribution point of view," it stated. "Hence the scarce agriculture resources should be directed at improving infrastructure rather than consumed in expensive subsidy schemes if Zambia's agriculture is to become efficient thereby contributing to poverty reduction."

Lusaka Province would get 5,760.00 tonnes of fertiliser and 288.00 tonnes of seeds, with Northern Province receiving 11,337.60 tonnes of fertiliser and 566.88 tonnes of seed. North Western would receive 4,064 tonnes of fertiliser and 203.20 tonnes of seed while Southern Province is receiving 14,486.40 tonnes of fertiliser, and 724.32 tonnes of seed, Western Province would receive 2,009.60 tonnes of fertiliser and 100.48 tonnes of seed.

The government has since started distributing the subsidised inputs through its appointed agents Omnia and Nyilombo Investments, but these companies are facing difficulties in supplying the commodities due to lack of depots in some parts of the country.

Under the 2008/2009 FSP, Central Province would get 13,718.40 tonnes of fertiliser with 685.92 tonnes of seed while the Copperbelt would receive 10,016 tonnes of fertiliser and 500.80 tonnes of seed. Eastern Province would be supplied with 14,784.00 tonnes of fertilizer and 739.20 tonnes of seed while Luapula would get 3,824.00 tonnes of fertiliser with 191.20 tonnes of seed.

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FSP not serving intended purpose

As demand for food increases – fuelled by growing populations, rising incomes and global integration – Zambia needs to critically strategise on improving its agricultural production for household and national food security.

The starting point for Zambia is to recognise the fact that the country has an enormous agricultural potential, in terms of land, water and labour. And recognising the fact that maize is Zambia's staple food, the government has over the years supported a sizeable number of small-scale farmers, vulnerable but viable farmers, in maize production through the provision of subsidised inputs through the Fertiliser Support Programme (FSP). This Initiative has been in place since 2002, but as has been observed, it has not fully served its intended purpose.

We say so because we believe during every farming season, only a few of the targeted group have access to the government subsidised fertiliser, while the larger part of the allocation either finds itself on the black market or is given to those farmers who have the capacity to fully finance their own crop production.

There are several hiccups or weaknesses of the fertiliser support programme, but just to point out a few, we also feel that its objective needs to be revisited to ensure that it targets vulnerable farmers and assist them to graduate to a level where they will have the capacity to finance their own; while leaving room to new entrants to benefit from the agricultural subsidies.

Recently, during campaigns for the October 30 presidential election, President Rupiah Banda announced that government has enormously reduced prices of fertiliser to K50,000 per bag, and he urged civil servants and defence personnel to also access the facility. But the question is: are the civil servants and defence personnel vulnerable farmers? If they are not, then why allow them to access inputs under the Fertiliser Support Programme when they have the capacity to purchase elsewhere? We will not be wrong to say that this announcement was for political expediency because going by the objective of the Fertiliser Support Programme, this facility is not meant for civil servants, defence personnel or even those farmers who can manage to fund their crop production without needing subsidies from the government. We will not be surprised to learn of abuses of the facility because it seems the Fertiliser Support Programme is slowly losing its focus.

We are aware of the fact that Zambia has over a million small-scale farmers. From this figure, three quarters of the small-scale/peasant farmers require government support in one way or the way, and input subsidies in this situation can prove to be an attractive incentive to increase production and household and national food security. From this year's allocation, we know that 200,000 vulnerable small-scale farmers are supposed to benefit from the FSP inputs. But this will not happen if we allow rich farmers with enough resources to purchase their own inputs and civil servants to access the inputs under the Fertiliser Support Programme and deny the vulnerable farmer an opportunity to produce. We know that prices of fertiliser have drastically increased to unprecedented levels of around K220,000, but this should not be cause for the government to even allow rich farmers and civil servants to enjoy benefits of the Fertiliser Support Programme instead of it focusing on vulnerable farmers.

Post -
 Nov 11, 2008

By raising these issues, we only hope that distribution for these FSP inputs reaches the intended beneficiary and not allow those who are not supposed to benefit from this arrangement to have access to subsidised fertilisers. Granting subsidies to farmers can enhance agricultural production, although the practice can be financially unsustainable for the government. But as the situation stands now, Zambia cannot do without subsidies to the vulnerable but viable small-scale farmers as they constitute the largest part of the farming community, and produce over half of Zambia's total maize production.

For example, during the oil boom of the early 1980s, Saudi Arabia became self sufficient in wheat production because it paid its farmers 30 times the world market price, meaning that with subsidies, farmers can almost produce anything anywhere. However, this is normally financially unsustainable for the government. The trend in maize production should tell us more and is a warning that so much needs to be done in the agriculture industry. In 2005/2006 season, we got around 1.8 metric tonnes per hectare. In 2006/2007, the country produced about 1.57 metric tonnes per hectare, and then in the 2007/2008 season, we came to 1.31 metric tonnes per hectare. We believe there is still so much more that needs to be done rather than focusing on subsidies, for example, enhancing agriculture extension services so that farmers can get first hand information from experts on crop production. Without this and without tackling the weaknesses of the FSP, we will see that maize production will continue to dwindle until we reach levels where cultivation of the crop will no longer be viable and profitable.

We also need to realise that developing the agriculture sector adequately can assist Zambia to attain the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. Having passed the midpoint of the MDG achievement date, Zambia is among countries in the region that have been listed by experts as having made some progress on a few goals, remaining with a big challenge on halving extreme poverty and hunger – especially in rural areas – by 2015.

We, therefore, believe that a productive and profitable agriculture sector can play a critical role in assisting Zambia meet the MDGs by 2015, since it plays a multi-faceted socio-economic role in Zambia, mainly as a source of employment, income and nutrition. For this reason, the sector is crucial to social and economic development.

Govt considers engaging private sector in farming input distribution

By Florence Bupe, Joan Chirwa and Chlwoyu Sinyangwe

ZAMBIA is about to experience the most disastrous man-made agricultural season, an economic advisor has warned.

And Zambia Agricultural and Commodities Exchange (ZAMACE) Limited has called on the private sector to lead the way in seeing the business case and enhancing the state of the agricultural commodities sector in the country.

Meanwhile, agriculture minister Dr Brian Chituwo has disclosed that the government would next year consider engaging several companies in the distribution of farming inputs under the Fertiliser Support Programme (FSP).

The agricultural sector has seen a massive rise in the cost of inputs this year compared to the previous farming season, with a 50 kilogramme bag of fertiliser now being sold at an average price of K250,000. This price is far beyond the reach of most small-scale farmers in the country who contribute over half of the country total maize output. The situation, according to agricultural experts, is expected to reduce maize production levels by both commercial and small-scale farmers as the crop is seemingly becoming unprofitable and costly.

"Even commercial farmers realize that a 200 per cent increase in the price of fertiliser is not cost efficient," said Chibanba Kanyama, an economic consultant. "Anyone who grows maize knows that the actual price of maize will equally have to rise to more than K120,000 per 50 kilogramme to recover the cost."

Kanyama said the high prices of farming inputs would ultimately impact on mealie-meal prices.

"The difficulty then will be about the price of mealie-meal. Government will not accept a steep increase in maize meal. Many commercial farmers will not see any value in growing maize this season," he said.

Kanyama said the high input prices would result in a further increase in food prices, which would ultimately impact on the country's inflation rate.

He further attributed the expected food price increase in

Zambia to government's failure to meet the high demand for fertiliser under the FSP.

"The sudden rise in food prices has made more people get involved in farming, and everyone, including civil servants, who are seeking to access fertiliser under the FSP. The demand is so huge that government will not cope. It is becoming increasingly worrying that maize belt regions remain uncultivated despite the reasonably good start to the planting season as rains have at least been adequate," said Kanyama.

And Dr Chituwo last Friday said the government was also looking at ways of revamping Nitrogen Chemicals of Zambia (NCZ) to enable it contribute to the country's fertiliser needs unlike the current situation where Zambia imports the commodity.

"We are looking at increasing the number of companies in the fertiliser programme. And I think the two companies (Omnia fertilisers and Nyiombo Investments) should know that closing the depots is not the way to do business," said Dr Chituwo. "We should solve our problems through dialogue and I hope this is the last time the occurrence of this nature is happening."

A couple of months ago, the Zambia National Farmers Union (ZNFU) warned that engaging only two companies in the distribution of farming inputs under FSP was not working well for the industry.

It noted that the two companies held government at ransom for unpaid monies once contracted to distribute inputs to small-scale farmers.

Only last week, Omnia Fertiliser had suspended the distribution of inputs to farmers owing to government's failure to offset the 50 per cent balance of the total payment in line with the contract agreement signed between the two parties prior to

the commencement of the exercise.

And ZAMACE Limited said it was evident that the commodities market in Zambia, like many countries in Africa, faced a multitude of market imperfections that stifle growth in the wider agriculture sector.

"These imperfections include but not limited to the poor market information and intelligence, very little reliable data on trade flows, a large proportion of informal trade, poorly defined industry-wide quality standards, poor communication, low levels of transparency and trust, limited enforceable contracts and dispute resolution mechanism and high transaction costs associated with quality variations, and the physical movement of goods," stated Brian Tembo, ZAMACE Limited's executive director. "It is cardinal that the private sector leads the way in seeing the business case and enhancing the state of the agricultural commodities sector in the country. Of course, this cannot happen in isolation from the government as they have a key role to play as facilitator of business. A lot of people seem to have a subsistence mindset when it comes to agriculture. Success stories like Zambeef Products Plc demonstrate that with the right mix of skills and combination of assets, a living can be made from agriculture."

Tembo said agriculture was one of the activities that penetrate to the grass roots.

"Food is very important for a healthy nation both from the social and economic point of view. The cost of food has a significant contribution to the inflation figure. The current high inflation figures are a direct result of the increase in the cost of food. The result of high inflation is an increase in the cost of borrowing which in turn increases the cost of inputs and general conduct of busi-



ness," Tembo said. "Zambia needs to attain the level where all these factors are recognised and properly tackled. The other major contributor to the cost of doing business is not within our control - oil. Faced with a multiplicity of variables, we can at the barest minimum manipulate factors that are in our control. For the second year running, we have professed as a nation that agriculture will be our main priority followed by tourism. The aim one would imagine is to

reduce the dependence on copper. To make any level of agricultural activity work, there is need for the produce to have a market. A formal market that has integrity, standards for the commodities so traded and rules of conduct and procedure."

ZAMACE was established in May 2007 as a direct result of considerable demand by the majority of stakeholders in the agricultural sector for a formalised market mechanism.

THE POST, Monday December 22, 2008

By Christopher Miti In
Chipata

POLICE in Chadiza have launched a man-hunt for the chairperson of Kavumo Farmers Corporate Society in Vubwi for disappearing with over K100 million meant for the Fertiliser Support Programme (FSP).

Chadiza district commissioner Maximo Chitambi confirmed the incident but could not give more details, saying the relevant authorities were pursuing the matter.

But police sources in Chadiza said the chairperson disappeared with the money about three weeks ago when he was sent to deposit it in Chipata.

The source said over 250 intended beneficiaries of the FSP in Vubwi would not get inputs because the money had not yet been deposited.

Man disappears with K100m meant for fertiliser

The sources said the suspect was apprehended last Friday and that police were still investigating the matter.

And most tobacco farmers in Eastern Province are stranded after some sponsoring companies denied them fertiliser.

Former Chipangali UNIP member of parliament Lucas Phiri confirmed the development in an interview over the weekend.

Phiri appealed to the government to help bail out the stranded farmers.

"These farmers were ready for tobacco farming this year but now in the last minute, some sponsors are saying they will not give them fertiliser, now am urging government to show leadership and help the farmers because they

can't manage to buy fertiliser on their own," Phiri said.

He said it was sad that people were buying fertiliser at higher prices compared to prices of their crops.

"The prices of most crops are very low but fertiliser is always high. I strongly feel government can do something to help the people. If there will be hunger next year, then it will be created by the government for failing to help the people," Phiri charged.

He said government should ensure that right people benefited from the Fertiliser Support Programme.

"Let the government swallow its pride and honour its promises to the people of Zambia," said Phiri.

Mambwe DC prevents resale of FSP fertiliser

By Christopher Miti in Chipata

ABOUT sixty bags of fertiliser and seed under the Fertiliser Support Programme (FSP) that was meant for resale in Chipata have been impounded in Mambwe.

Mambwe district commissioner John Chilowa said his office impounded bags and suspected that some beneficiaries of the FSP could be behind the scam.

"The fertiliser is coming from Lubaneni Cooperative Society which is in chief Mnkhanya's area while the other fertiliser was from Akwiza Cooperative Society within chief Jumbe's area," he said.

Chilowa expressed disappointment over the behaviour of some farmers who were reselling fertilizer.

"I just want to express a lot of disappointment that government efforts are being shot down with this type of behaviour because these are the same people who say they are not receiving fertiliser. I am very disappointed with these cooperatives because this fertiliser is not meant for resale. It is even clearly written on the bag that it is not for resale," he said.

Chilowa said one of the vehicles that was used to transport the fertiliser had no registration number but his office managed to get rid of the fertiliser and offloaded the inputs.

Chilowa said his office had launched investigations into the matter.

Daily Mail - Dec 29/08

Punish fertilizer re-sellers

CHIEF Siachitema of the of Kalomo has called for stern action against his subjects who are re-selling fertiliser received under the Fertiliser Support Programme (FSP).

The chief said some of his subjects were re-selling fertiliser just at the point of collection.

He called for an audit to determine how many farmers have applied the fertiliser received.

The traditional leader said this at his palace when Southern Province Minister, Daniel Munkombwe, paid

a courtesy call on him recently.

"I want an audit of all cooperatives that have received fertiliser under the Fertiliser Support Programme. There is need to take stock of all members and to ask them where they have taken the fertiliser," he said.

And Mr Munkombwe said it would be difficult for his office to fight for more fertiliser when beneficiaries were selling it.

And government has allocated a total of 9,848 packs of farming inputs to

farmers in Kalomo.

District agricultural coordinator, Max Choombe, said this meant that 9,848 individual farmers and 625 cooperatives have benefited from this year's fertiliser support programme.

He said there was an increase from last year's 6,000 packs that were received in the district.

Dr Choombe said this in Kalomo when Mr Munkombwe toured maize crops in the district. - ZANIS

Mambwe DC orders probe into abuse of FSP farming inputs

By Mathias Zulu in Mambwe

MAMBWE district commissioner John Chilowa has directed the district agriculture coordinator to conduct thorough investigations on reports of abuse of FSP farming inputs this season.

Chilowa issued a directive following the disappearance of 120 bags of fertiliser and 15 by 10 kilogramme bags of seed believed to be for Luwaneni Co-operative and the impounding of 59 by 50 kilogramme bags of

fertiliser which were about to be smuggled out of the district.

He confiscated the bags of fertiliser a week ago from an unregistered container truck after a tip-off from members of the community.

Province permanent secretary and provincial agriculture Coordinator and made available to the National Agricultural Information Services, Chilowa expressed great disappointment at the manner in which the FSP programme was handled.

He stated that the mishandling of the FSP farming inputs had resulted in the district losing a good number of bags which had been smuggled to other districts for re-sale.

"You are no doubt aware of the government's deliberate policy of alleviating hunger and poverty through programmes like the Fertiliser Support Programme," stated Chilowa. "I, however, wish to register my utmost disappointment at the way the programme was handled. This has definitely resulted in the district losing a good number of bags which have been smuggled to other districts for re-sale."

Records from the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives in

Mambwe show that the district received 3, 584 Compound D and 3, 584 Urea for the 2008/2009 farming season. The amount received plus balances from the previous farming season brought the total number of inputs

in the district to 3, 948 and 4, 069 for basal and top dressing fertiliser respectively.

The district targeted 1, 002 farmers but some farmers, despite paying for the inputs, had not received the fertiliser.

Times- Dec 30, 2008

Jica bails out Kapiri farmers

By Times Reporter

KAPIRI MPOSHI District has received K6 billion worth of fertiliser from the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (Jica) for the next farming season.

Central Province Permanent Secretary, Denny Lumbama said in Kabwe that it was gratifying that Jica, which last week gave Kabwe District K6 billion worth of fertiliser, had replicated the gesture in Kapiri Mposhi.

Mr Lumbama said in an interview yesterday that the

fertiliser, which was supposed to be used during this farming season, would instead be used in the next season as the inputs had come late.

"Jica procured fertiliser worth K12 billion for Kapiri Mposhi and Kabwe districts in its quest to supplement the Government's efforts in the farming sector," he said.

Mr Lumbama welcomed the donation and said that it would help supplement the Government's efforts to enhance agriculture in the two

districts.

"We wish other partners to emulate the gesture by Jica not only in the agricultural sector but many other areas of the economy too. The Government is currently overburdened and with the current global economic crunch, any efforts aimed at assisting us are welcome," Mr Lumbama said.

The fertiliser has already started arriving in Kapiri Mposhi and will be kept by Nyiombo Investments until the next farming season for distribution.

Daily Mail / Dec 30 - 2018

Mwinilunga round-up by NKWETO MFULA

MP gets tough on fertiliser use

MWINILUNGA West member of Parliament Elijah Muchima says he will monitor distribution and application of fertiliser in his constituency to ensure optimum use of the commodity by beneficiaries.

Mr Muchima said he would work with the office of the district commissioner to carry out fertiliser audits.

He said in an interview in Mwinilunga that he had received reports that some farmers were selling fertiliser to farmers in neighbouring Angola and Democratic Republic of Congo.

"It appears some people are selling agricultural inputs such as fertiliser, which is the reason we need drastic measures to monitor use of the commodity," he said.

Mr Muchima, said who is Deputy Minister of Information and

Broadcasting Services, said he had informed the office of the district commissioner about the issue.

He said subsidised fertiliser was being sold to small-scale farmers to enable them graduate to commercial farming.

Mwinilunga district commissioner Webster Samakesa said the district had received 1,000 bags of fertiliser from the required 5,000, adding that it had been distributed to cooperatives.

He called on Miombo Investments, the company contracted to distribute fertiliser, to hasten delivery of Compound D fertiliser to enable farmers apply it on time.

Mr Samakesa said the district was waiting for the remaining number of bags to be delivered.

He said Miombo had been further directed to repack 239 seed packs which were underweight.

Mail - Dec 31 - 2008

'Explain subsidised fertiliser distribution'

From **WALLEN SIMWAKA**
in Choma .

SOUTHERN Province minister Daniel Munkombwe was on Monday told by Chief Macha and his subjects to explain the system used in the distribution of subsidised fertiliser and other farm inputs.

Chief Macha accused some cooperatives of abusing subsidised farm inputs by allegedly allowing unscrupulous businessmen to access them.

He said, although, his subjects had paid for the farm inputs, most of them had not received the fertiliser packs.

Chief Macha advised government to carry out an inventory of the cooperatives in his chiefdom to determine how many beneficiaries had received the inputs.

He alleged that there was no coordination between some of the cooperatives and the Fertiliser Support Programme (FSP) beneficiaries.

Mr Munkombwe was in Choma touring selected farm blocks to assess how the subsidised fertiliser was being distributed.

Chief Macha said unless government improved its monitoring mechanisms, many vulnerable but viable farmers would not benefit.

Mr Munkombwe admitted that government had not come up with a water-tight mechanism of monitoring the distribution process.

He said it was true that most of the subsidised fertiliser had found its way onto the black market where it was fetching between K200 000 to K250,000.

Mr Munkombwe said government was getting embarrassed by persistent reports of people reselling subsidised farm inputs.

He admitted there had been a lot of cheating by people who were supposed to be beneficiaries.

Mr Munkombwe said he decided to visit some peasant farmers to have a true picture of what the beneficiaries were doing with the fertiliser.

"We have discovered that most of the subsidised fertiliser does not reach the intended beneficiaries. As government, we are getting embarrassed as people take advantage and denounce us. A lot of the fertiliser is finding its way onto the black market because there has been a lot of cheating on the part of some cooperatives and their members," he said.

Chituwo blasts DCs over farming inputs

By Gillian Namungala

AGRICULTURE minister Dr Brian Chituwo has expressed disappointment with district commissioners who are not reporting people reselling the government subsidised farming inputs under the Fertiliser Support Programme (FSP).

In an interview, Dr Chituwo said as government representatives in various districts, district commissioners (DCs) were supposed to report those misdirecting inputs under the FSP.

"It is unfortunate that it had to take this ministry to



Dr Chituwo

send a team of officers to go round the country to get facts on the ground when government has representation in these areas," Dr Chituwo said. "Why should we waste money sending people out there to get this information when we have people who can access this information and avail it to us?"

Dr Chituwo however commended Mambwe district commissioner John Chilowa for reporting those who were diverting the farming inputs and called on other DCs to emulate him.

He said his ministry was concerned with recent reports of people reselling FSP farming inputs.

Dr Chituwo, who said the FSP was a good project meant to help vulnerable farmers, wondered why people in charge where misdirecting the inputs to those who were not entitled.

"I question what is happening because they are people charged with the responsibility to ensure that the inputs reach the intended small-scale farmers but why this is happening makes me wonder," Dr Chituwo said.

He said it was unfortunate that in some areas, those in charge of the FSP were the ones dividing the inputs.

Dr Chituwo said it was sad that despite his ministry not using its own personnel the vice has continued.

"This time we used people in the community and cooperatives to register the small scale farmers but this has not helped going by the reports of reselling the inputs," Dr Chituwo said.

Asked whether the FSP was going to continue this year with civil servants receiving the inputs, Dr Chituwo said the project was currently under review and that his office was waiting for a report.

He added that the report would help in deciding whether the project would continue or not.

And Dr Chituwo has said he would respect the opinion of those saying he had been misplaced at his new ministry.

"Managing a ministry is all about understanding a human being and work with them hence one does not need to have qualifications for that," said Dr Chituwo. "I am not misplaced, all I need to do is work with experts in this ministry to answer the how. I want to contribute to sustaining agriculture by engaging all the experts and various stakeholders."

By Staff Reporters

NATIONAL Peasant and Small Scale Farmers of Zambia (NAPSFZ) has described this year's inputs distribution exercise as the worst since the fertiliser support programme (FSP) was implemented.

And Chikankata member of parliament Minji Habeezu has urged the government to urgently send independent auditors to Mazabuka to investigate the reported abuse of inputs under the Fertilizer Support Programme (FSP) meant for vulnerable but viable farmers.

Meanwhile, Zambia Co-operative Federation (ZCF) president Webster Shamfuti has warned that he will take to court co-operatives that will be caught selling farming inputs under FSP.

In an interview, NAPSFZ president Rogers Phiri said this year's fertiliser distribution exercise was the worst as the vulnerable farmers who are the intended beneficiaries had not accessed the inputs.

"The FSP this year has not reached the intended beneficiaries because of poor distribution mechanisms which have been implemented this year," he said.

He complained that most of the co-operatives that had applied for farming inputs had not been given the seeds and fertiliser.

Phiri said agricultural production in Zambia would be negatively affected if the implementation of the programme continued in the same manner in the coming years.

involved in theft of farming inputs, but said investigations were underway in areas where reports of theft had been reported.

And acting Mouze district commissioner Holland Musanka said he was surprised at the number of small scale farmers claiming to have

been left out of the government supported FSP despite having paid for the inputs. Bwengwa UPND member of parliament Highvic

Hamududu has since threatened to organise a peaceful demonstration in protest against the non availability of farming inputs in the district. Yesterday, agriculture minister Dr Brian Chinwo also expressed disappointment at reports of thefts of farming inputs in some areas.

Habeenzu said it was unfair for the police and other senior government officials to remain aloof and watch government property being abused by selfish individuals.

But Mazabuka district commissioner Tyson Hamanaba explained that police in the area had incensed the investigations and had since launched a manhunt for a named farmer who allegedly received 240 bags of fertiliser which were not meant for his cooperative.

And Shamfuti who expressed sadness at the rampant reports of theft of farming inputs however said statements being issued were not accompanied by facts.

"Let's not turn into a talking industry. We must act so those with facts should bring them forward so that they are taken to court," he said.

Shamfuti who said co-operatives had so many branches said it was difficult to identify co-operatives that were

"To avoid a reduction in contribution by small scale farmers, government should ensure that they revise the FSP and put in place distribution mechanisms that will work to the benefit of the farmers," said Phiri.

And Habeenzu yesterday said hundreds of farmers in his constituency had been left out from accessing government subsidised inputs despite meeting all the set conditions under the FSP because the fertiliser had been diverted to unknown places by a named transporter.

He charged that police who were supposed to arrest individuals and transporters allegedly linked to the fertilizer scam had done nothing to assist the government in recovering the missing fertiliser or prosecuting the culprits.

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SO much has been reported about the distribution process of the farming inputs under the Fertiliser Support Programme regarding thefts and misapplication of the facility which is meant for our vulnerable but viable farmers.

It is said that several farmers from different parts of the country are complaining of not having accessed the subsidised inputs despite registering with co-operatives and making payments for the fertiliser. It is also disturbing because a lot was said about this fertiliser support arrangement just before the October 30 elections, with announcements that farmers could access fertiliser at a reduced price of K50,000 per bag. However, what is on the ground is totally different from what the farmers were told a few months ago.

Right from President Rupiah Banda's pronouncements that the price of fertiliser had been reduced to K50,000, we questioned the motive behind that. Of course, we knew it was done for political expediency. Worse still, Rupiah went on to say that even civil servants and the military personnel could also access the subsidised inputs. But the question is: are the civil servants and defence personnel vulnerable farmers? If they are not, then why allow them to access inputs under the Fertiliser Support Programme when they have the capacity to purchase elsewhere? Again, we say this announcement was for political expediency because going by the objective of the Fertiliser Support Programme, this facility is not meant for civil servants, defence personnel or even those farmers who can manage to fund their crop production without needing subsidies from the government. We are not surprised to learn of abuses of the facility because it seems the Fertiliser Support Programme is losing its focus at a much faster rate than was anticipated.

We are aware of the fact that Zambia has over a million, small-scale farmers. From this figure, three quarters of the small-scale or peasant farmers require government support in one way or the other and input subsidies in this situation can prove to be an attractive incentive to increase production and household and national food security.

From this year's allocation, we know that 200,000 vulnerable small-scale farmers are supposed to benefit from the Fertiliser Support Programme inputs. But this has not happened because Rupiah and his sponsors allowed rich farmers with enough resources to purchase their own inputs and civil servants to access the inputs under the Fertiliser Support Programme, thereby denying the vulnerable farmer an opportunity to produce. We know that prices of fertiliser drastically increased to unprecedented levels of around K250,000. But this should not be the cause for Rupiah and his sponsors to even allow rich farmers and civil servants to enjoy benefits of the Fertiliser Support Programme instead of it focusing on vulnerable farmers.

It is not surprising that all these complaints are now coming forth. This is always the result of telling so many lies — a lie will always catch up with the one who has told it. Rupiah targeted the issue of farming inputs during his campaigns because he was trying to solicit votes from the poor farmers. This is totally unacceptable because agriculture is not an area that needs to

unsustainable for the government. But as the situation stands now, Zambia cannot do without subsidies to the vulnerable but viable small-scale farmers as they constitute the largest part of the farming community, and produce over half of Zambia's total maize production.

The trend in maize production should tell us more and is a warning that so much needs to be done in the agriculture industry. In the 2005/2006 season, Zambia produced around 1.6 metric tonnes per hectare. In 2006/2007, the country produced about 1.57 metric tonnes per hectare, and then in the 2007/2008 season, we came to 1.31 metric tonnes per hectare. We believe there is still so much more that needs to be done besides granting subsidies, which, anyway, don't even reach the intended beneficiaries. For example, Rupiah and his friends need to enhance agriculture extension services so that farmers can get first-hand information from experts on crop production. Without this and without tackling the weaknesses of the Fertiliser Support Programme, we will see that maize production will continue to dwindle until we reach levels where cultivation of the crop will no longer be viable and profitable.

As demand for food increases — fuelled by growing populations, rising incomes and global integration — Zambia needs to critically strategise on improving its agricultural production for household and national food security. The starting point for Rupiah's government therefore is to recognise the fact that the country has an enormous agricultural potential, in terms of land, water and labour. Given the different agro-ecological zones in one country, this should enable the country to grow almost anything, anywhere. We have the high rainfall area of about 1,200 to 1,500 millimeters of rain every year, which covers Northern, Luapula and North Western provinces. We also have the medium rainfall area of about 800 to around 1,000 millimeters of rain per year. Copperbelt and some parts of Western, Central and parts of Eastern and Lusaka provinces are some of the places with medium rainfall patterns. Then we have the low rainfall areas of 500 to 800 millimeters of rain per year, predominantly in some parts of Southern and Eastern provinces.

Immediate gains in poor households' welfare can be achieved through agricultural growth, which can help the poor overcome some of the critical constraints they now face in meeting their basic needs. Although agriculture accounts for only 25 per cent of Zambia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), it is still the main source of livelihood for most of the country's population, including the majority of the country's poor who live in rural areas where the incidence and severity of poverty is greatest.

We therefore believe that an improvement in agricultural performance has the potential to increase rural incomes and purchasing power for a large number of people. With greater prosperity, the consequent higher effective demand for Zambian industrial and other goods will induce dynamics that will be a significant source of economic growth and employment in urban areas.

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Fertiliser Support Programme

be played around with. A lot of poor farmers now cannot even afford just four bags of fertiliser because they need not less than K1 million. We obviously know what this means for our country — less yields and more hunger, malnutrition and poverty among the rural households, even among urban dwellers, just because a few selfish individuals opted to enrich themselves at the expense of many suffering citizens.

We all know that Zambia is heavily dependent on agriculture, especially for its food needs. That is why politicians should not be allowed to play games with the agriculture sector, like in the case now.

We are aware of vulnerable farmers even in places such as Lundazi who have not accessed a single bag of fertiliser because their co-operatives either refunded them their membership fees or were delaying to give them the inputs because the fertiliser is simply not there. Where the inputs have gone is the question that needs to be answered.

But going by past experiences, it seems the government never learns lessons and never strives to correct past mistakes, and improve on weaknesses of some of these critical developmental programmes.

Over the years, the government has been supporting some small-scale farmers, vulnerable but viable farmers in maize production through the provision of subsidised inputs under the Fertiliser Support Programme. This initiative has been in place since 2002. But sadly, it has not fully served its intended purpose. We say so because we believe that during every farming season, only a few of the targeted group have access to the government-subsidised fertiliser, while the larger part of the allocation either finds itself on the black market or is given to those farmers who have the capacity to fully finance their own crop production.

There are several hiccups or weaknesses in the Fertiliser Support Programme. We also feel that its objective needs to be revisited to ensure that it targets vulnerable farmers and assist them to graduate to a level where they will have the capacity to finance their own production while leaving room to new entrants to benefit from the agricultural subsidies.

Granting subsidies to farmers can enhance agricultural production, although the practice can be financially

January 4, 2009

Sunday Times
of Zambia

Fertiliser programme gobbles K592 billion

By Sunday Times Reporter

THE Government has spent over K592 billion on the Fertiliser Support Programme (FSP) for the current farming season compared to last year's K240 billion.

Agriculture and Cooperatives Minister, Brian Chituwo who disclosed this, however, expressed disappointment that the programme was marred by dishonesty that had resulted in loss of a lot of money.

The minister has proposed that cooperative societies should be strengthened to ensure that only genuine farmers registered as members to obtain full benefits from the FSP.

The FSP is a Government initiative meant to empower small-scale farmers with subsidised inputs.

Under the programme, the Government targets farmers perceived to be vulnerable but viable.

Dr Chituwo said the FSP experienced bottlenecks during the past year such as fraud because of the large number of fake farmers and cooperatives.

Last month, the Copperbelt provincial administration initiated a probe into an alleged scam in which unscrupulous dealers have been accessing fertiliser under the FSP.

The investigation followed reports of an increase in fake cooperatives that have dubiously registered under the FSP and are benefiting from the programme at the expense of peasant farmers.

The ministry has decided to conduct a review of the FSP to ensure that such hiccups are addressed to increase production from all corners of Zambia.

In an interview during the week, Dr Chituwo said agricultural officers were already in the field collecting data after which a comprehensive report would be submitted.

"As soon as this report is done, we will review the FSP and come up with mechanisms that will ensure that only the intended recipients benefit," he said.

On the supply of inputs, Dr Chituwo said there was need for early tendering of suppliers for fertiliser to ensure efficient distribution of the commodity.

Recently, one of the contracted distributors, Nyiombo Investments had difficulties transporting the commodity from Dar-es-Salaam in Tanzania to Zambia and caused a delay in the distribution process.



•CHITUWO

The minister said he had asked the ministry's permanent secretary to start the process of procurements.

"It would be great for the agricultural sector if we could have more players on board to ensure that this vital farming input is readily available throughout the year," Dr Chituwo said.

On plans for this year, Dr Chituwo said the ministry would work to strengthen partnerships among the various stakeholders to ensure sustainability.

He said among the priorities, the ministry would seek to improve food security in Zambia, especially in view of the current global economic recession which had contributed to the escalating food prices.

Dr Chituwo said it was encouraging that a cross-section of people had started realising the key role that agriculture played in national development.

While there was more attention given to the mining sector in the past, the Government had, through the Fifth National Development Plan, prioritised agriculture, tourism and manufacturing, among others areas, he added.

This year, the ministry will also strengthen its extension services to help impart knowledge to small-scale farmers who contribute about 60 per cent of the farming products in Zambia.

"We want to assist our small-scale farmers increase their production and we also plan to help them have easy access to markets. The Government will this year also help the small-scale farmers maximise their yields as a way of sustaining food security," he said.

Dr Chituwo said there was need to intensify conservation farming because of its efficiency in retaining soil nutrients.

He said most fertile soils in the country had been affected as a result of overdependency on fertiliser.

January 4, 2009

Sunday Times of Zambia

Sunday Times
of Zambia

COMMENT

Fertiliser fraudsters should be dealt with

EVEN in the face of economic and other challenges that jolted the national Budget last year, the Government did not falter in meeting its obligations to cushion the lives of its citizens, especially those mired in poverty.

Against the backdrop of many competing needs, the commitment to ensuring that vulnerable small-scale farmers were put back on the rails has been demonstrated through the elevated funding to the Fertiliser Support Programme (FSP).

From K240 billion during the 2007/8 season, the Government lifted the allocation to K592 billion for the current season in maintaining its vision on food security for all.

However, we are appalled by the conduct of some treacherous people who have decided to cheat their way into the programme by pretending that they are genuine farmers when in fact they are only interested in lining their pockets.

Agriculture and Cooperatives Minister, Brian Chituwo has not masked his disappointment with people who are hiding behind the veil of dubious cooperatives so that they are considered eligible for the FSP.

Huge amounts of money are being lost because some people who are not entitled to subsidised fertiliser are squeezing themselves into the programme through dishonest conduct.

It was because of similar deeds that the Copperbelt provincial administration last year launched an investigation into reports that a number of dubious cooperatives had been formed with the sole aim of siphoning off millions of Kwacha from the FSP.

In light of this, it is important to digest the proposal by Dr Chituwo that cooperatives should be strengthened to seal any loopholes. Only genuine farmers should belong to cooperatives and enjoy the benefits of the subsidised farming inputs.

It will also be necessary to pursue and prosecute people who have benefited from the FSP fraudulently so that such conduct is discouraged in the future. Any acts that frustrate a noble initiative such as the FSP should be condemned by all well-meaning citizens.

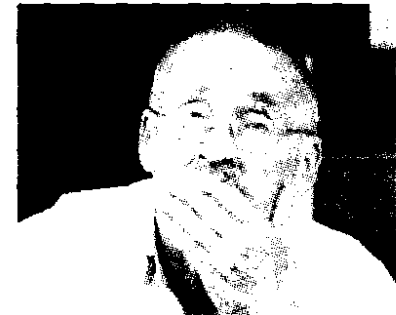
FERTILISER SUBSIDY WAS AN ELECTION GIMMICK - SCOTT

By Mwala Kalaluka

RUPIAH Banda's increase of fertiliser subsidies were just an election gimmick, Patriotic Front (PF) vice-president Guy Scott (right) charged yesterday.

And chairman for the Parliamentary Committee on Agriculture Request Muntanga yesterday said the MMD government's politically-motivated decision to entice non-vulnerable groups into the FSP has bred serious corruption in the country.

To page 4



Fertiliser subsidy was an election gimmick – Scott

From front page

Commenting on reports of misapplication of farming inputs in various parts of the country, Scott accused President Banda of carrying out the distribution of subsidised fertiliser under the Fertiliser Support Programme (FSP) in a very sloppy manner.

"This huge fertiliser handout was just an election gimmick and we are going to have a very poor season because the commercial farmers are going to plant just half of what they usually plant because of the problems of fertiliser," Scott said. "The whole FSP exercise is just a waste of time and if you start opening the door to people who are not vulnerable farmers, these are the people who will buy the cheap fertiliser. This is the trouble. This is why the Soviet Union failed and this is why all these systems failed."

Scott charged that President Banda's administration had not put in

place serious logistical monitoring mechanisms to back the increase of fertiliser subsidies.

"This is a major logistical undertaking and you need proper information and there are no such logistics in place," he said. "Even if there was no theft, by the time the fertiliser is distributed, it is past the time for planting. These subsidies are being wasted because they are not reaching the people on time."

Scott said food shortages would continue as long as the current government did not come up with a clear plan on fertiliser distribution.

And Muntanga said President Banda's government should shoulder the blame for such corrupt tendencies because they had enticed people that were not farmers to access the cheap FSP fertiliser.

Muntanga said it was unsustainable and unrealistic to expect that the FSP would be devoid of any corrupt activities when the price of the gov-

ernment subsidised fertiliser was way cheaper than the one being sold by other fertiliser dealers.

"The extension officers are some of the people that are selling the fertiliser. They have started using it as a fundraising venture," he said. "We have decided to reduce fertiliser only for a small section while the other remains at the market price of around K200, 000."

He said a lot of officers in the agriculture sector would be fired because the subsidised fertiliser had excited most of them to start misapplying the inputs at the expense of the vulnerable farmers.

Muntanga said from one pack alone, an individual could pocket about K22 million.

Muntanga said the only way forward was to have a general subsidy on fertiliser inputs within the agriculture sector.

"These profiteering middlemen will not go forward," he said. "Our

view is that if you generally subsidise fertiliser, you will kill corruption."

But Muntanga said the MMD government had exacerbated the corruption in the distribution of fertiliser through the inclusion of civil servants and military personnel in the FSP bracket.

Muntanga said the inclusion of the above group defeated the purpose the FSP was created for as civil servants and soldiers had monthly incomes with the capacity to buy off the fertiliser and resale it at blotted prices.

"It means that that the 200,000 farmers targeted will not be 200,000. You must understand that farmers must be actual farmers in the field," said Muntanga. "This is the confusion that the MMD caused."

Agriculture minister Dr Brian Chituwo could again not comment on the matter as he was reportedly attending another meeting by press time.

Daily Mail - JAN 5, 2009

FSP farm inputs stolen in Mazabuka

FARM inputs worth millions of Kwacha under the Food Support Programme (FSP) have gone missing in Mazabuka.

Chikankata member of Parliament, Munji Habeenzu said in Mazabuka that unless Government intervened, many farmers would not grow maize.

He alleged that people suspected to have got the inputs were being protected from prosecution.

Mr Habeenzu said it was regrettable that people allegedly involved in the scam had been left free despite incriminating evidence against them.

He said he would protest to the Inspector-General of police over the allegedly suspicious manner in which the case was being handled.

Mr Habeenzu said police should realise that they had a duty to protect Government property from being stolen.

He said the diversion of 240 bags of fertiliser which police had allegedly ignored despite incriminating evidence was disappointing.

But district commissioner, Tyson Hamaamba said investigations into the scam had not been concluded.

He said police had since opened a docket against the culprits. - ZANIS.



Post - JUNE, 2009

60% of FSP fertiliser was smuggled out, reveals ZNFU

By Joan Chirwa

ZAMBIA National Farmers Union (ZNFU) president Jervis Zimba has said about 60 per cent of the FSP fertiliser was smuggled out of the country.

Commenting on reports of misapplication of farming inputs under the Fertiliser Support Programme (FSP), Zimba said the farmers union was extremely disappointed at government's failure to handle the programme which was meant to develop the potential of small-scale farmers across the country.

"The FSP is a disaster of the worst kind. We totally agree with all the observations that have been made regarding the implementation of this facility," Zimba said. "We have given advice on several occasions on how this facility should proceed but the government has not heeded our advice."

Zimba suggested that a special team comprising stakeholders be formulated to find ways of how the FSP could be enhanced.

"Government should accept that this FSP has had serious problems. During [former agriculture minister Ben] Kapita's time, many agriculture coordinators and co-operatives were taken to court over the FSP. This in itself tells a story," said Zimba. "That is why we believe that poverty in Zambia is self-inflicted because we have capable people, educated people, who can help in the way the FSP is being implemented. Malawi and Tanzania copied the FSP from us, but these two countries are running it properly."