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Now Maize Exports Banned

The Nation (Nairobi)

NEWS

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By Lucas Barasa
Nairobi

The Government on Monday moved to secure food sufficiency by banning maize exports indefinitely.

Consequently, Agriculture minister William Ruto announced the re-opening of all 140 National and Cereals Produce Board depots and buying centres in the country.

They will start buying maize from farmers at Sh1,700, per 90-kilogramme bag.

On Tuesday, the State plans to sign the importation of 150,000 tonnes of fertiliser that would see the prices of the commodity drop by 40 per cent from the current Sh6,400 per bag in the case of DAP.

Addressing journalists at his Kilimo House office, Mr Ruto who was accompanied by assistant minister Mbiuki Kareke and permanent secretary Kiome Romano, said the ban of maize exports was gazetted on October 3.

"No person shall export any quantity of maize, with effect from the date of publication of these regulations until such a time when these regulations shall be amended or revoked. Traders who engage in anything to the contrary will face full force of the law. The ban is to ensure the country does not lose harvests to regions and other markets," Mr Ruto said.

He added: "Our priority is to feed Kenyans... business follows later."

The minister said the ban that will ensure maize that is harvested is used within the country will not affect free movement of the commodity within the country.

Current deficit

The country, he said, expects to harvest 31 million bags of the grain this year, compared to annual consumption of 32 million bags. The deficit will be imported by April.

Mr Ruto said the Government has since received 32,000 tonnes of maize from South Africa and Tanzania. Another 50,000 tonnes is expected by Friday and a final similar amount is expected by end of October to curb the current deficit.

Although maize was currently trading at Sh2,200 per bag, the Eldoret North MP said, the Sh1,700 offered by the Government will help stabilise the prices and prevent cost of maize flour from rising.

"The price of 2kg maize flour would have gone beyond Sh100 if we had not intervened," Mr Ruto said.

He said farmers can now deliver maize to NCPB depots and buying centres and that they will be paid promptly for their supplies.

He assured farmers that the maize imports, which come at a time when producers in major growing areas have just started to harvest their crop, will not interfere with prices.

Fertiliser prices

Tea farmers who have been complaining of high costs of inputs and some of who have been uprooting the crop will get 60,000 tonnes of the fertiliser that will be imported.

The ministers said that following the bulk importation, the price of CAN fertiliser will drop from Sh2,200 to Sh1,700.

The fertiliser, he said, will be stored in same NCPB depots and buying centres so that farmers can collect it when delivering their produce.

"We have committed government money so that we can keep the fertiliser prices as reasonable as possible," Mr Ruto said.

There are 111 NCPB depots in the country, but on Monday Mr Ruto said that 29 other temporary buying centres had been opened for maize buying.

Mr Ruto urged tea farmers (who have been uprooting their crop) to be patient as the Government intensifies efforts to lower costs of inputs to enhance their income.

