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Press Release

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Zambia records a bumper harvest, forecast estimates for 2016-2017 season

“The just ended farming season has paid off because of the good rains we had”, Minister of Agriculture Dora Siliya announced as she released the Crop Harvest Forecast that Zambia has recorded a Maize bumper harvest for the 2016-2017 estimates of over 3,606,549 metric tonnes. Maize production estimate has increased slightly from 2.10 metric tonnes per hectare to 2.19 metric tonnes. Millet from 29,973 metric tonnes to 32,566 metric tonnes, rice from 26,675 metric tonnes to 38,423 metric tonnes, groundnuts from 131,562 metric tonnes to 168,699 metric tonnes and soya beans from 267,490 metric tonnes to 351,416 metric tonnes. The minister further said that FRA will only buy 500,000 metric tonnes for the country’s strategic reserves in case of any eventualities in the coming year. In order to encourage the private sector to actively participate in maize marketing, government has since lifted the ban on export of maize and maize products which was put in place to stabilize the price of mealie meal and to ensure that Zambia does not run out of maize.

It is vital to note that the production of maize, millet, rice, groundnuts and beans has increased and the JCTR desires to see an increased production in other crops like sugarcane, wheat, potatoes and many other crops that are suitable to grow in our country. With this bumper harvest it is therefore expectant that the country will have a reduction and stable mealie meal price which have remained above K90 for a while. The JCTR also urges that FRA should buy maize from small scale farmers especially those who are in typical rural areas who fail to find easy access to the market.

The immediate benefits of lifting the export ban is increased agriculture percentage contribution to GDP which has been a key objective for government. This might also promote foreign exchange inflow thereby stabilizing Kwacha exchange rate which has been performing poorly and has ranged between K9 and K10 per US dollar for some time now. Agriculture exports will also increase incomes of many Zambians who will engage in export of maize. According to his Excellency President Edgar Lungu, government intends to make the food reserves agency (FRA) a procurement agency that will be able to supply maize to other countries. FRA will change from buying maize from farmers for national reserve to buying maize for export. This move will help in creating a market for many farmers and will reduce on the maize wastage that farmers have been experiencing due to lack of market for their products. It has also been noted that most of Zambia’s neighbouring countries are in maize deficit, this should be explored and Zambia should benefit from this by increasing its maize exports.

JCTR hopes that increased agricultural production will spur value addition and ultimately economic transformation. Value addition remains a big challenge in our country as most farmers sell their crops without adding any value to them which makes our products less competitive and low priced. Value addition will ensure increased demand in our crops not just locally but regionally as we shall have the capacity to compete on the regional market. JCTR also observes that marketing of maize and other agricultural crops needs to be improved if the projected bumper harvest has to have positive impacts on the lives of the people.

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