Food Security Situation

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FOOD SECURITY SITUATION

PRESS RELEASE

MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE

11TH AUGUST 2009

The Minister for Agriculture Hon. William Ruto has released a government statement on the food situation in the country. He addressed a press conference at Kilimo House. The full statement is as follows:

FOOD SECURITY SITUATION

National maize stocks as at 30th July 2009 are 6.17 million bags. Current Maize stocks held by NCPB stand at 2,575,287 bags of 90 kg as SGR, and the rest of the national stocks are with millers, traders and farmers. The maize stocks are being replenished by imports and harvests in parts of the country. Cross border trade will supply about 300,000 bags within the month of August.

The "Long Rains" (March-April-May) 2009 rainfall season has ceased over most parts of the country. An assessment of the rainfall recorded from 1st March to 31st May 2009 indicates that the rainfall performance was poor over most parts of the country. The poor performance was reflected both in the amounts received and the distribution in time and space. The total rainfall amounts received over most of the country were below 75% of the Long-Term Means (LTMs).

Except for the western highlands, Lake Basin and parts of central Rift Valley, chances of crop rejuvenation are very low in most other areas considering the fact that the crop performance was already poor during the March-May rainfall season.

Due to the near total failure of rains in lower Eastern, expected production has been revised downwards by 46% from 1.3 million bags to 0.7 million bags in the long rains. Rift Valley Province may harvest 11.2 million bags in the long rains season down from the earlier projections of 13.5 million bags due to the continuing dry season. This is a reduction in production by 44% compared to 20 million bags achieved in the province in a normal season. In some parts of the province, farmers have been forced to replant twice others thrice. This has resulted in the crop being at different stages of growth.

Harvesting of maize has started in the South Rift (Sotik, loitokitok, Bomet and Narok). Maize is at drying and at harvesting stage in greater Meru and Embu areas of Eastern Province but there has been almost total crop failure in lower Eastern where rains have been very little and unreliable.

In summary the national expected maize production for the long rains is 20.4 million bags which is 70 percent compared to a normal season of 28 Million bags. Stocks of other cereals such as wheat and rice will be within normal years with some increase of rice from new irrigation projects. The supply of other foodstuff in the market will also be depressed; hence an increase in price and consequently inflation is expected in the remaining part of the year.

INTERVENTIONS

The Government has already put in place several interventions to address and mitigate the effects of the prolonged drought in the country. The Government is taking both short-term and long-term measures as follows:

1. Short-term Measures

a. Provision of Famine Relief:

The Government in collaboration with development partners is distributing food to all who are affected by drought to the extent that they have no food and no purchasing capacity. Through the World Food programme, we are feeding about 2.5 million people in the most affected districts and through the Government; we are feeding another two million people. The total number is expected to increase to about 6.5 million people. There is enough food from the SGR and donations from development partners to feed these people. The Ministry of State for Special Programmes is responsible for this exercise.

b. Livestock Off take and Feed:

The Government has provided funds for livestock off take to cushion pastoralists from total loss of their livestock. The off take will be carried out through the Kenya Meat Commission so that the animals can be slaughtered and the meat canned for future use. The Government has provided Ksh 700 million for this exercise. The Ministry of Livestock will also provide feed to the affected families for lactating cows and calves to provide milk.

c. Provision of Water and Health Care:

The Government through the line ministries has also made arrangements to provide water and medical care to the affected people.

d. National Supply of Grain:

To ensure there is adequate supply food grains for those who can afford to buy, the Government has allowed importation of maize duty free up to June 2010. Fortunately there is a lot of grain in the international market, and importers can now land maize year at Mombasa at about Ksh 1,700 per 90 kg bag. In addition, the Government has directed the National Cereals and Produce Board to open its depots especially in South Rift and start buying maize at Ksh 2,300 per 90 kg bags.

2. Medium and Long-term Measures

a. Food Production Campaign:

The Government has made arrangements to boost production during the next cropping season through concerted food production campaign through out Eastern, Central, parts of lift valley and coast province.

b. Free Famine Relief Seed:

The Government has made arrange to provide seed free of charge to the famine stricken families through out the affected districts. The Government has provided Ksh 300 million for this purpose.

c. Traditional (orphan) crop seeds:

The Government has made arrange to provide seeds for traditional crops to farmers during the next rainfall season. A total of KSh 316 million has been set aside for this exercise

d. Free Seed and Fertilizer for the Poor:

The Government has made arrangement to provide free seed and fertilizer (Kilimo plus) to the resource poor farmers in the district where the short-rains are most reliable. The Government with support from development partners has set aside Ksh 416 million for this purpose.

e. Affordable Fertilizer and Seeds:

The Government has also made arrangement for the provision of affordable fertilizers and seeds to all other farmers. The cabinet has today approved the sale of this fertilizer at Ksh 2,000 per of Double Ammonium phosphate (DAP) 50 kg bag and Ksh 1,400 for 50 kg bag of Calcium Ammonium Nitrate (CAN).

f. Irrigated Food Production:

The Government has initiated a special programme, dubbed “economic stimulus irrigated food production programme” throughout the country. The aim is put under irrigated about 1,000,000 acres in the next five years. In the next two months we will put about 35,000 acres of land under irrigated maize and rice production, to produce about 400,000 bags of maize and 800,000 bags of rice at a cost of about Ksh 2 billion.

g. Increasing Agricultural Productivity:

The Government with support from development partners has put in place long term agricultural extension, development and research programmes to increase agricultural productivity through out the country. The investment plan is for about US dollars 250 million (Ksh 16.7 billion) in the next 3 to 5 years. Last week, the Cabinet approved the National Agricultural Sector Extension Policy (NASEP) which is an instrument to implement these programmes.

It is important to note that most of the activities of the agricultural sector ministries deal with increasing agricultural productivity, hence long term food security issues.

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