

THE SPREAD OF TSETSE FLIES AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

PRESS STATEMENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



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Dear Friends and Colleagues

Worldwide economic growth and development over the last century has resulted in an unprecedented loss of biodiversity and a consequential reduction in ecosystem services and this has led to an increase in the emergence of biodiversity related diseases. The link between biodiversity and disease exist naturally in wildlife population, which form a reservoir of infection with sporadic spill over into human population. Ecological factors such as climate change, rainfall and vegetation support insect species such as tsetse flies.

Zambia has a vast area of national parks, game management areas and reserved forests, which support the tsetse fly population. Statistics indicate that about 30 - 40% of Zambia's land is infested with tsetse flies, notably in Eastern and Southern provinces of Zambia (Luangwa valley and Kafue land areas). When these flies feed on human and livestock blood, they cause a disease in humans referred to as, Human African Trypanosomiasis (HAT) and in animals called African Animal Trypanosomiasis (ATT). An Increase in the presence of tsetse flies has had negative consequences in infested areas in the growth of the agricultural and tourism sectors and loss of many lives. In His Speech to the 12th Session of the National Assembly, the Republican President His Excellency Edgar Chagwa Lungu stressed Government's commitment to diversifying from an economy based on copper mining to depend heavily on agriculture and that this must be achieved against all odds.

The need for economic diversification in the country away from the mining sector to the agricultural and tourism sector has lead to the expansion of these sectors. The agriculture and tourism sectors have been recognised by the government as alternative sources of employment creation. The increased spread of tsetse flies in the country has an impact on livestock production, this means that 60% of the country's livestock is at risk, while the tourism sector is being affected by the transmission of diseases to wildlife in the national parks. Inability to control the effects from the flies will definitely affect the economic diversification especially in the agricultural sector. Sleeping sickness cases have been reported in Zambia before and failure to manage these cases has consequences on human health. The livestock sector remains key in supporting the entire agricultural production sector by providing animal draught power; protein and milk for improved nutrition; income generation and providing green energy to households

(Biogas) and providing households and communities with healthy foods through organic manure.

We are aware that once these commitments are fulfilled, Zambia will boast of a resilient food system but also a great source of employment to improve livelihoods. The livestock sector remains key in supporting the entire agricultural production sector by providing animal draught power; protein and milk for improved nutrition, income generation, providing green energy to households (Biogas) and providing households and communities with healthy foods through organic manure. Zambia would do well to invest more in the livestock sector to mitigate the current high and unaffordable prices of fertilisers.

During the 34th African Union International Council for Trypanosomiasis Research and Control Conference in Livingstone, His Excellency President Edgar Lungu, reaffirmed that the Government would support initiatives to eradicate tsetse flies and he further challenged scientists and livestock stakeholders to eradicate tsetse flies through research and development. This reaffirmation has come at the right time when organisations have come together to fight tsetse flies such as Hivos Zambia, Policy Monitoring and Research Centre, Bio vision and Millennium Institute who have created models that will help in the implementation of the diversification agenda and are further proposing for the Government to introduce and implement technologies that can combat the incidences to ensure that livestock restocking and promotion achieve results

Therefore as organizations we propose the following recommendations;


- 1- Increased funding in the research and development to help contain tsetse flies.
- 2- Increase opportunities for capacity building for farmers in agricultural extension services and disease control.
- 3- Increased public awareness on prevention, identification and treatment procedures for HAT and AAT.



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