

E-VOUCHER: TOWARDS A CLIMATE CHANGE RESPONSIVE E-VOUCHER PROGRAMME.

PRESS STATEMENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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On Thursday 3rd May, 2018 the Policy Monitoring and Research Centre (PMRC) launched its findings on a study focusing on the implementation of e-Voucher Programme in the 2017/2018 farming season. The key changes to the program included the establishment of a consolidated and harmonized National Database of Farmer Input Support Programme (FISP) beneficiaries which enhanced beneficiary verification and tracking resulting in the elimination of non-existent and duplicate farmers.

Further, there is change allowed for the tracking of all FISP transactions including payments in real-time. Key findings of the study relating to challenges experienced during the implementation of the programme included; Late commencement of the programme, Inadequate funds for programme sensitization, monitoring and implementation, delayed activations and uploading of farmers cards, lack of physical presence by contracted banks in some districts and the failure by Agro dealers to transact through the newly introduced system.

During the implementation of the e-Voucher in the current season Weather Index Insurance was introduced. Weather Index Insurance is used to compensate clients in the event of a loss due to risks associated with weather fluctuations, disease out breaks. A total of K100 was allocated from each of the farmers' package towards Weather Index Insurance. The impact of Climate Change can not be underestimated and it is of significant concern at global, regional and national level in relation to agricultural productivity. Like any other country in the world, Zambia is concerned with negative effects of Climate Change on the agricultural sector. In the past decade, the country has witnessed increased temperatures and reduced rainfall resulting in reduced agricultural productivity and increased poverty, especially among rural populations who depend on rain fed agriculture for their livelihoods.

During the 2017/2018 farming season, Zambia experienced dry spells, the early spells lasted between 20th December to 10th January and the late spell lasted between 11th January to 31st March 2018. The experienced dry spells resulted in reduced expected crop production as announced on the 4th May, 2018 during the 2017/2018 Crop Forecast Survey. Maize production is expected to reduce to 2.81 Million metric tonnes in 2017/2018 season compared to last season in which 3.17 Million metric tonnes were produced.

In view of the above, introduction of Weather Index Insurance is aimed at protecting farmers from the risks of weather fluctuations. Key findings of the study revealed that farmers had little knowledge on the roles and benefits of Weather Index Insurance in the programme.

PMRC therefore recommends for enhanced sensitization for farmers on the importance of insurance against weather fluctuations for all farmers including those not on the FISP programme.

Secondly, PMRC further recommends that the Government through the e-Voucher program encourages farmers to engage in drought resistant crop production and increase technical support for climate change adaptation and mitigation through enhanced extension services for small scale farmers.



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