

DRAFT SPEECH

WELCOME SPEECH BY DR. MICUS C. CHIMBOMBI, PERMANENT SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE PUBLIC-PRIVATE DIALOGUE WORKSHOP ON BEEF VALUE CHAIN DEVELOPMENT, GLOBAL EXPO 2014, 17 – 19 NOVEMBER, 2014, GABORONE, BOTSWANA

Director of Ceremonies

Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Trade and Industry

Agricultural Hub Coordinator

Honourable Head, European Delegation for Botswana and SADC

Deputy Permanent Secretaries

Heads of Parastatals

Heads of Departments

Invited guests from the EU, Kenya and SADC

Chairperson, Botswana National Beef Producers Union

Delegates of the various Producers/Farmers

Members of the Private Sector

Ladies and Gentlemen

Director of Ceremonies

Allow me to welcome you all to this very important Public-Private Dialogue workshop on the beef value chain development conducted within the 2014 Global Expo week. I must say, the value chain approach is one of the initiatives that the Ministry of Agriculture has

adopted to drive commercialisation and diversification of the agricultural sector in Botswana. In this regard, in May 2011, my Ministry launched the Botswana Agrifood Value Chain Project with the aim of facilitating the diversification and commercialisation of the agro-industry sector to create jobs and improve incomes for all value chain actors. This project was conceived on the realisation for the need for a thorough assessment of the main agricultural sub-sectors in order to guide policies and programmes that promote competitiveness taking into account economic, social and environmental issues. We have, therefore, identified a number of subsectors for which we will map the value chain. The process has started with mapping the beef value chain, a study which was completed and published in 2013. The project was undertaken by my Ministry with technical and financial assistance from the Food and agriculture Organisation of the United Nations.

The beef sub-sector was prioritised in this project for a number of reasons, but most importantly because of the role it plays in the lives of Botswana more especially those in the rural areas. In spite of its importance, the study has revealed the existence of some critical gaps along the value chain that have prevented the attainment of the sector's full potential. (The report is available in the Ministry website as well as the Ministry social media such as facebook and twitter). The related study, which is going to be the focus of discussion for the next 3 days has built on the beef value chain study we did in 2013, coming up with a comprehensive Action Plan for supporting the local beef industry and developing it to meet regional and international market requirements. This study, as the colleague, from the Ministry of Trade and Industry has already indicated, is a latest development in the beef sector analysis and has just been completed this year, by the Centre for the Development of Enterprise (CDE) of the European Union (EU) in partnership with the

International Trade Centre (ITC) of the United Nations under the framework of the Private Sector Development Programme (PSDP).

Director of Ceremonies

While challenges that our beef industry faces are numerous as I believe will be revealed during presentations later on, there are a few that I think I need to highlight upfront. I must say one of the main challenges that our beef industry has in the recent past undeniably faced was the inefficiencies of the Livestock traceability system that we were using, the reticular bolus. Issues with the system ranged from animals that would have more than one bolus to those where the bolus could not be detected by the bolus reader. Farmers were at times prevented from selling their cattle due to identification issues. This not only inconvenienced the sellers, but also exacerbated the already serious problem of under supply of cattle to processing facilities, thereby undermining the profitability of the sub-sector as a whole.

Director of Ceremonies

I wish to also underscore the low uptake of existing genetics of indigenous cattle. As a country, we have our own breeds of animals that have been developed taking into account our own climatic conditions and our natural resource base. One such is the Musi breed which we launched in 2010. The utilisation of these resources remains low and I wish to implore my fellow farmers, as I am one, to seriously consider these resources. The other issue that we cannot afford to ignore is that of poor rangeland management. With our current communal grazing system stocking are difficult to control,

resulting in overgrazing. Lastly, the other challenge which challenge which our agriculture faces, and which requires concerted effort is the issue of climate change. This calls for an urgent need for strategies that will counter the negative effects of the developments such as low rainfall, changes in seasons, increased temperatures and many more.

Director of Ceremonies

I have been informed that this Public-Private sector Dialogue workshop is going to present findings emanating from the recently completed CDE-PSDP-ICT study on the beef value chain. The main focus will be on the proposed interventions and the action plan, which I call upon all of you interrogate to ensure that what comes out is a practical and actionable product that will yield a dynamic and competitive beef industry.

Director of Ceremonies

This initiative is a commendable effort to which I want to guarantee the full support of my Ministry as the lead implementing agency for agricultural projects and programmes. Because of the important role that the cattle industry plays in our country, we always make it a point that we take advantage of any initiative geared towards supporting this sub-sector. I want to also encourage our investment arm in the Ministry of Agriculture, the Agricultural Hub to be alert for opportunities therefrom the presentations which offer potential for investment.

With those remarks, I once again welcome you all to this Public Private Sector Dialogue and **WISH you FRUITFUL DELIBERATIONS.**

PULA!!! PULA!!! PULA!!!