Maize price dependent on national yield
By ZANGOSE CHAMBWA

GOVERNMENT says the floor price for maize will only be determined after the national crop yield is compiled.

Minister of Agriculture and Co-operatives, Brian Chituwo was speaking in Lusaka yesterday during a joint 2008/2009 Crop Forecast Exercise for his ministry and the Central Statistics Office (CSO).

He said the price for maize was not only for Zambia but for the whole southern African region.

“Our neighbouring countries are also vigilant of the floor price of maize in Zambia,” Dr Chituwo said.

He said data which would come out of the crop forecast exercise in two weeks time would be important to determine the price of the commodity by the first week of May.

Dr Chituwo said farmers who had already started selling maize at a lower price were not being genuine or fair to themselves.

“Although Zambian has a liberalised economy where farmers can sell their merchandise at any price, so much efforts and inputs are put into farming and farmers cannot afford to lose out,” he said.

Dr Chituwo also said Government was planning to make the crop forecast an annual event because it played an important role in determining the national food basket for the country.

He called on the private sector to share information with government on how best government could make certain decisions which affect all Zambians especially on agriculture.

“All the decisions which Government makes affect the private sector as well, so it is cardinal if we can partner with the private sector to come up with good decisions,” Dr Chituwo said.

He said the private sector plays an important role in supplementing government’s efforts.

Dr Chituwo said due to climate change which is affecting the world, farmers are being encouraged to diversify into other crops such as cassava and rice.

CSO director, Elfreda Chulu said the crop forecast exercise was important because it gave a clear picture of the food situation in the country.

Ms Chulu said the exercise was also important as it was able to provide early warning about the food situation depending on the data collected.

She urged the participants to take the exercise seriously as the nation would only be able to know about the national crop yield through the information they had collected across the country.

And Ministry of Agriculture director of policy and planning, Julius Shawa said crop forecast was a tool to determine the food security of the country.

Mr Shawa said through the joint exercise the team would be able to record if 2008/2009 farming season had a surplus or deficit.