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FRA to export more maize

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THE Food Reserve Agency (FRA) says it will export part of its 880,000 tonnes of maize surplus stocked in its countrywide storage facilities given the anticipated maize bumper harvest this year.

FRA marketing manager Lazarous Mawele said limited storage facilities and limited export markets will make it difficult to create space for this year's crop.

Mr Mawele said the challenge the country is currently facing is to export its surplus maize in the region which has also produced more maize.

He said this during a public discussion on "Who gained and who lost from Zambia's marketing policies," organised by the Economics Association of Zambia (EAZ) on Thursday evening at Taj Pamodzi Hotel.

"We have 880, 000 tonnes of maize in our storage facilities whose capacity is limited and we are anticipating another bumper harvest this year," he said.

He said Zambia's competitor, South Africa, has a maize surplus of seven million tonnes and other regional countries also have excess maize.

The only potential export markets are Zimbabwe and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Mr Mawele said last year, the agency injected K1.4 trillion in the rural communities when it purchased maize from small-scale farmers.

He said more investment in the road network in rural areas is needed to ease access to markets.

Mr Mawele said the private sector should work with the agency in scouting for export markets so that the maize surplus does not go to waste.

Earlier, at the same discussion, Food Security Research Project economist Thomas Jayne said Zambia needs to invest in maize production and storage facilities.

Professor Jayne said as the country is opening up more farm blocks, more commercial farmers will flood the market with maize.

"Zambia needs to address its storage facility and export markets, especially that the country knows that this year, another bumper harvest is coming," he said.

He said both the FRA and the private sector should actively participate in the export market so that the country benefits through increased foreign earnings.

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