Govt reduces agricultural input packs under FSP

Written by Kabanda Chulu

GOVERNMENT has reduced the size of agricultural input packs under the farmer input support programme, formerly fertiliser support programme (FSP).

This year's input packs have been cut from eight 50 kilogramme bags of fertiliser to four bags per half a hectare in order to support 534,000 farmers from last year's 200,000 farmers.

And agriculture minister Brian Chituwo said extension services have been strengthened to teach farmers new methods and conservation farming practices so that they could this year produce 40 by 50kg bags of maize from the previous 20 bags.

Announcing the input distribution modalities under the revised farmer input support programme (FISP) for the 2009/10 farming season yesterday, Dr Chituwo said 106,838 metric tonnes of fertiliser and 5,341 metric tonnes of hybrid maize seed had been procured to support 534,000 farmers countrywide.

"The increased number of beneficiaries is due to the reduced size of the inputs pack from eight 50kg bags of fertiliser and 20kg bag of maize to four 50 kg bags of fertiliser and 10kg bag of maize seed to cover half a hectare and the available fertiliser include 6, 838 metric tonnes received as a donation from the Japanese government," Dr Chituwo said. "These inputs will continue to be distributed through cooperatives and farmers’ associations and farmers should only benefit from one organisation in cases where they belong to more than one organisation."

He said the FISP had incorporated the creation of camp agricultural committees that would include representatives of chiefs and community based organisations to improve on farmers’ verification and selection.

Dr Chituwo said the supply of fertiliser had been contracted to Omnia and Nyiombo Investments limited, who would supply 85,000 metric tonnes while 15,000 metric tonnes would be supplied by Nitrogen Chemicals of Zambia (NCZ).