Fertiliser procurement procedures to be reviewed

By Times Reporter

THE Government is working at reviewing the procurement procedures for fertiliser so as to allow for the participation of more firms in the distribution exercise.

In a ministerial statement in Parliament yesterday, Agriculture and Cooperatives minister Brian Chituwo said that the process to review the procedures followed complaints from the various stakeholders.

He said that the procurement process would be in conformity with the dictates of the Zambia Public Procurement Authority (ZPPA).

“I wish to assure this House that Government is looking at ways of reviewing procurement procedures to ensure that more firms take part in the distribution exercise,” Dr Chituwo said.

He said that with effect from this year, the Fertiliser Support Programme (FSP) had been named Farmer Input Support Programme (FISP) saying the move was meant to capture inputs such as maize seed and rice seed.

As a measure of improving the effectiveness of the programme, he said that from this year’s farming season, the input pack had been reduced from 8x50 kg bags fertiliser and 20 kg maize seed to 4x50 kg bags fertiliser and 10 kg maize seed which he said was enough for half a hectare per farmer.

Dr Chituwo said that the reason for the reduction was to encourage smallholder farmers use hybrid seed, improved technologies and weed management among others.

He said that the programme would cover 500,000 smallholder farmers and the Government anticipated that between 1.5 million to 2.0 million tonnes of maize would be produced in the 2009/2010 farming.

Dr Chituwo said that the Government further anticipated that corruption in the distribution exercise would reduce as stringent measures had been put in place.

He said this when he responded to concerns raised by Mazabuka MP Garry Nkombo (UPND) and his Isoka West counterpart Paul Sichamba (MMD).