

**SPEECH BY THE MINISTER OF LANDS, AGRICULTURE,
FISHERIES, WATER AND RURAL RESETTLEMENT,**

HON DR. A. J. MASUKA,

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE 2021 WINTER CROPPING
INDABA**

APRIL 15, 2021

RAINBOW TOWERS, HARARE

SECRETARY FOR LANDS, AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES, WATER
AND RURAL RESETTLEMENT, DR J. BHASERA

CHIEF DIRECTOR, WATER RESOURCES PLANNING AND
IRRIGATION DEVELOPMENT

SENIOR OFFICIALS FROM THE MINISTRY HERE PRESENT

ZINWA CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, ENG T. MAURUKIRA

ZINWA SENIOR MANAGEMENT AND STAFF HERE PRESENT

OUR ESTEEMED STAKEHOLDERS

MEMBERS OF THE MEDIA

INVITED GUESTS

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

Good morning

I am privileged to join you this morning. I am told that, for the first time, we have brought together diverse stakeholders to share views, experiences, challenges and insights on water availability, water accessibility and water affordability. This Indaba is therefore both timely and relevant. Timely because it is coming, as it does, just after a record rainfall season. And relevant because an exciting winter cropping season is beckoning.

Today's Indaba brings together major stakeholders in the irrigation water sector. I commend the Zimbabwe National Water Authority for bringing all stakeholders together. Such is the hallmark of the Second Republic's inclusivity and servant leadership approach as espoused and exemplified by the President, His Excellency, Dr ED Mnangagwa.

Through dialogue and participatory planning, government is of the firm view that we can enhance cooperation, improve collaboration, and ensure cost-efficiencies in irrigation water management, especially as we anticipate an unprecedented area to be put under wheat this season.

Ladies and Gentlemen

This must become an annual event.

Through the Agriculture and Food Systems Transformation Strategy, and more specifically the Accelerated Irrigation Rehabilitation and Development Plan government envisages a putting 350 000 ha under irrigation in the next three seasons. This is to climate proof our agriculture as Zimbabwe is predicted to become drier in the decades ahead.

This should spawn opportunities for value chain actors, from research and development for innovative methods and ways to modernise irrigation systems, to manufacturing and input suppliers, to farmers who should be excited that they will have better control of their production leading to increased production, higher productivity and enhanced profitability.

Ladies and Gentlemen

In line with the Agriculture and Food Systems Transformation Strategy, food self-sufficiency, import substitution, increased exports, increased value addition and beneficiation, increased employment and improved livelihoods can be better guaranteed by a vibrant water sector, anchored on robust, transparent, fair and accountable management of the sector.

Irrigation will continue to have a prominent role in propelling agriculture in the context of Vision 2030. In this regard, efficient water use, through efficient irrigation systems, must be advocated.

Today's cereals Indaba is coming at a time when the country has received abundant rains. This is the second best season in 51 years, since 1970. Lake Tugwi-Mukosi spilled for the first time since commissioning in 2017, while the second largest, Lake Mutirikwi has surpassed the 95% mark. All seven catchments are at an average 92% full.

Ladies and Gentlemen

I also hope that this Indaba will provide insights into improved catchment management as some dams, sadly, are yet to even get to 50%. This is the case with Mazowe dam.

The total capacity of our dams is 8.128 billion cubic metres. They currently hold 7.538 billion cubic metres, excluding Lake Kariba. The water held in our various dams is capable of commanding 184 227 hectares of irrigable land at a rate of 15 ML per hectare. Of this total 78 204 hectares are already committed in the major dams, leaving a balance of potential irrigable land at 106 023 hectares.

Ladies and gentlemen

Government expects at least 3 million tonnes of maize, 1 million tonnes of traditional grains, 360 000 Mt soya bean and 360 MT wheat in the next two seasons due to improved water harvesting, development and deployment of new and efficient irrigation and increased water efficiencies. However, all these targets can only be achieved when there is sufficient and efficient utilisation of water.

Ladies and gentlemen

In agriculture, water is the second most strategic resource, after land. We must harness, conveyance, and conserve this scarce resource. In this regard, catchment management, elimination of harmful practices, inclusive of river bed mining, stream bank cultivation and siltation must be given urgent attention. Water sector reform is also required. The Water Act and the ZINWA Act will be reviewed to overhaul the governance and operations of our government departments and ZINWA while priming them for the massive development in the water sector. We also expect strides to be made in the efficient management of waste water, and to limit pollution of rivers and water sources.

Government will continue to provide an enabling environment for water sector development to meet, not just agricultural requirements but also industry, mining and drinking water purposes. In this regard, both underground and above ground water resources will be the subject of the review of current legislation.

Today's discussions will, among other things, focus on water availability for winter cropping, water tariffs, dam maintenance and safety as well as the legal framework around accessing water for winter cropping, issues that are pertinent in the overall success of our winter cropping this year and beyond.

Ladies and gentlemen

I am aware that there has been some misunderstanding and sometimes outright resistance by farmers to sign water abstraction agreements and to pay for water provided to them by ZINWA from the various dams it operates and manages. This has led to serious inconsistencies and inefficiencies in the allocation of water among the competing needs of users. This Indaba will help align different perceptions while paving the way for a better winter cropping season. It is high time that ZINWA and irrigating farmers, who are among its biggest debtors, find each other and work together for the good of the

country. ZINWA is owed ZWL 1.9 billion dollars. To this end, I have directed the Board to collect this amount without fail and without fear and favour.

Government is developing a National Dam Safety Strategy to help ZINWA strengthen its dam maintenance capacity and improve efficiency.

As I conclude, Ladies and gentlemen, it takes all of us to author our own success. This Indaba must continue in provinces, in districts, in wards, in villages, in households, on farms and around dams.

I now declare this inaugural Indaba officially opened.

I THANK YOU