



PRESS BRIEFING

DATE: DECEMBER 30, 2020.

VENUE: ASMARA HOTEL-LUSAKA

TIME: 08:00 HOURS

PRESS BRIEFING –STATEMENT BY NBA COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER SANDRA LOMBE

GOODMORNING,

I WELCOME YOU ALL TO THIS BRIEFING. THANK YOU THAT YOU FOUND TIME FROM YOUR BUSY SCHEDULE TO COME.

THE NATIONAL BIOSAFETY AUTHORITY (NBA) HAS ENJOYED A CORDIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE MEDIA FRATENITY. WE APPRECIATE YOUR SUPPORT. THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

THE YEAR 2020 HAS HAD ITS OWN CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES AND THE AUTHORITY HAS HAD A SHARE OF ITS FATE WHILE EXECUTING ITS DUTIES.

CHALLENGES

THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC AFFECTED US JUST LIKE ANYONE ELSE. THE PANDEMIC SLOWED DOWN PROGRESS ON A NUMBER OF OUR PLANNED ACTIVITIES.

THE BAN ON PUBLIC GATHERINGS ALSO AFFECTED SOME OF OUR ACTIVITIES AND WE HAD TO PRIOTISE AS WELL AS RESCHEDULE A NUMBER OF THEM.

THE NBA FAILED TO PARTICIPATE EFFECTIVELY IN THE INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS PHYSICALLY AS MOST OF THEM WERE RESCHEDULED OR

CANCELLED DUE TO THE PANDEMIC. HOWEVER, AS A NEW NORMAL WE DID PARTICIPATE IN MOST OF THE VIRTUAL MEETINGS BOTH LOCALLY AND INTERNATIONALLY.

WORKING FROM HOME SOMEHOW AFFECTED SURVEILLANCE, SPOT AND COMPLIANCE CHECKS IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE YEAR. WE HAD TO WORK ON A ROTATION BASIS SO AS TO ADHERE TO THE COVID-19 PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES.

THE GREATEST CHALLENGE THAT WE STILL FACE IS THE KNOWLEDGE GAP ON THE GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS (GMOS), MYTHS AND MISCONCEPTIONS SURROUNDING GMOS AND MATTERS RELATED TO THE STATUS OF BIOSAFETY AND BIOSECURITY IN THE COUNTRY. WE NOTE WITH SADNESS HOW THE GENERAL PUBLIC ARE FED WITH MISINFORMATION ON GMOS.

POROUS POINTS IN SOME BORDER AREAS IS ALSO A SOURCE OF SERIOUS CONCERN TO US, AS THESE MAYBE ENTRY POINTS FOR SMUGGLED GMOS AND THEIR PRODUCTS.

DESPITE THE CHALLENGES, WE SCORED SOME SUCCESSES TOO.

SUCCESSES

WE CONTINUED TO ENSURE THE SAFETY OF HUMANS, ANIMALS AND THE ENVIRONMENT THROUGH INSPECTIONS AND RISK ASSESSMENTS AS PER OUR MANDATE. AS AN AUTHORITY THE SAFETY OF HUMANS, ANIMALS AND THE ENVIRONMENT IS OUR CORE BUSINESS.

AT THE END OF THE THIRD AND IN THE FOURTH QUARTER, WE MANAGED TO CATCH UP WITH MOST OF OUR ACTIVITIES AND CAN SAFELY SAY 2020 HAS BEEN A SUCCESSFUL YEAR.

THIS YEAR (COMPARED TO LAST YEAR) WE ACTUALLY DID MORE BACKSTOPPING AND MONITORING OF ENTRY POINTS. WE WENT TO ALMOST ALL THE PROVINCES IN THE COUNTRY INCLUDING FAR AREAS EXCEPT MUCHINGA, NORTHERN AND LUAPULA PROVINCES. WE HOPE TO GET TO THERE IN THE FIRST QUARTER OF 2021.

WE CONDUCTED SURVEILLANCE, SPOT AND COMPLIANCE CHECKS AND IN SOME CASES SEIZED SOME PRODUCTS WHICH MAY CONTAIN GMOS. **SEIZED AND DESTROYED GOODS WERE WORTH OVER K150, 000.** THE LATEST SEIZURE BEING DURING OUR VISIT TO EASTERN PROVINCE LAST MONTH.

MOST SHOP OWNERS WERE ALSO WARNED FOR FAILURE TO DISPLAY PERMITS FOR PLACING ON THE MARKET PRODUCTS OF GMOS AND GMO PRODUCTS

WORTH ABOUT K2 MILLION WERE SEIZED ON SITE UNTIL THE TRADERS PRODUCED THE REQUIRED PERMITS. WE CONTINUE TO CALL ON THE DISTRIBUTORS AND SUPPLIERS TO ENSURE THAT THEY GIVE COPIES OF PERMITS TO THE PEOPLE (TRADERS/ RETAILERS) THEY SUPPLY GMO PRODUCTS. THIS IS SO AS TO AVOID BEING INCONVENIENCED AND LOSE OUT ON BUSINESS BY HAVING THEIR GOODS SEIZED ON SITE UNTIL THEY PRODUCE PERMITS. IT IS ALSO AN INCONVENIENCE ON OUR INSPECTORS AS THEY WAIT TO CONFIRM THE PERMITS WITH THE TRADERS.

IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT PERMITS MUST ONLY BE SHARED WITH AUTHORIZED TRADERS ONLY.

WE WOULD ALSO LIKE TO CAUTION THE TRADERS NOT TO SHARE THE COPIES PERMITS WITH THOSE WHO MAY BE DEALING IN PRODUCTS THAT MAY CONTAIN GMOS ILLEGALLY. ONCE FOUND NECESSARY PUNITIVE MEASURES WILL BE TAKEN AGAINST THEM, SUCH AS WITHDRAW OF THE PERMIT AS WELL AS OTHER PENALTIES.

RESEARCH FACILITIES ENGAGED IN DEALINGS INVOLVING GMOS WERE MONITORED FOR COMPLIANCE TO BIOSAFETY STANDARDS SO AS TO ENSURE SAFETY FOR HUMANS AND THE ENVIRONMENT.

WE ALSO DEVELOPED A MANUAL FOR INSTITUTION BIOSAFETY COMMITTEES (IBC) AND SET UP ONE IBC FOR THE NEW HIV RESEARCH ACTIVITY. AN IBC IS A COMMITTEE THAT ENSURES SAFETY WHEREVER A RESEARCH ACTIVITY IS UNDERTAKEN.

WE ALSO SUCCESSFULLY CONDUCTED PUBLIC AWARENESS, SENSITIZATION AND EDUCATION IN THE SEVEN PROVINCES EXCEPT IN LUAPULA, MUCHINGA AND NORTHERN. THIS TIME AROUND WE DECIDED TO GET CLOSER INTERACTING WITH THE COMMUNITIES BY HAVING SOME PROGRAMMES IN LOCAL LANGUAGES. WE NOTED A POSITIVE RESPONSE DESPITE THE KNOWLEDGE GAPS, HENCE THE NEED TO DO MORE AWARENESS AND EDUCATION PROGRAMMES IN LOCAL LANGUAGES.

WE HELD A NUMBER OF STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS SUCH AS CLEARING AGENTS, COTTON GROWERS, GINNERIES AND OTHER OFFICIALS ON THE NBA MANDATE AND THE GMO STATUS IN THE COUNTRY.

WE TRAINED PORT HEALTH INSPECTORS WHO HAVE SINCE BEEN DEPLOYED AND ARE STATIONED AT THE CRITICAL PORTS OF ENTRY (AIRPORTS AND BORDER POINTS). THIS HAS HELPED INTENSIFY THE MONITORING, SURVEILLANCE AND INSPECTIONS. IT HAS ALSO HELPED INCREASE THE NBAS VISIBILITY.

WE ALSO ENGAGED THE MEDIA THROUGH INTERACTIONS AND SENSITIZATIONS. THIS IS AN ONGOING PROCESS AND IT IS OUR SINCERE HOPE THAT WE REACH AND ENGAGE THE MEDIA ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

PERMITS

FROM JANUARY TO DATE WE HAVE ISSUED **SEVEN IMPORT PERMITS AND 33 PERMITS FOR PLACING ON THE MARKET**. WE HAS ALSO GRANTED **ONE RESEARCH PERMIT** FOR THE HIV CLINICAL TRIALS, THIS BRINGS THE TOTAL NUMBER OF RESEARCH ACTIVITIES INVOLVING GMOS TO **FIVE** SINCE 2015.

DURING SURVEILLANCE THE AUTHORITY TOOK SAMPLES SUSPECTED TO CONTAIN INGREDIENTS OF GMOS **FROM THREE MAJOR SHOPS** FOR TESTING AND THE RESULTS CAME OUT POSITIVE. ALL THE SUSPECTED PRODUCTS WERE NOT LABELED AND HAVE SINCE BEEN SEIZED. HOWEVER, WE HAVE ASKED THE CONCERNED SHOPS TO APPLY FOR PERMITS FOR THE SAID PRODUCTS IF THEY ARE TO USE THEM.

WE ALSO INTERCEPTED ABOUT **50 TRUCKS THAT WERE CARRYING SUSPECTED GMO MEDIA FOR SOME PLANTS**. HOWEVER, AFTER THOROUGH CHECKING, IT WAS DISCOVERED THE PRODUCTS ARE NOT GMOS. WE WANT TO THANK THE PUBLIC AND OUR OFFICERS FOR BEING ALERT.

THANK YOU.