



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

KEYNOTES ADDRESS

BY

**HON. VERNA SINIMBO (MP), DEPUTY MINISTER OF
INDUSTRIALISATION AND TRADE**

**AT THE STUDY LAUNCH: PROMOTING FOOD SECURITY BY
IMPROVING POST-HARVEST SUPPORT FOR LOCAL AND
TRADITIONAL FOOD VALUE CHAINS FOR YOUTH AND WOMEN LED
ENTERPRISES.**

**25 September 2020, 11H00
Avani Hotel, Windhoek**

- 1. DIRECTOR OF THE PROGRAMME,**
- 2. YOUR EXCELLENCY KATE AIREY, HIGH COMMISSIONER OF THE UNITED KINGDOM TO NAMIBIA**
- 3. STACEY PINTO, THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF NAMIBIA TRADE FORUM AND YOUR ABLE TEAM**
- 4. EMINENT SPEAKERS AND PARTICIPANTS**
- 5. REPRESENTATION OF PUBLIC ENTERPRISES AND GOVERNMENT**
- 6. DISTINGUISHED INVITED GUESTS;**
- 7. FRIENDS FROM THE MEDIA;**
- 8. LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,**

I express my appreciation today for the invitation to speak briefly at this gathering relating to the official study launch of the promotion of food security through the improvement of post-harvest support for local and traditional food value chains for the youth and women led enterprises.

I begin my conversation in the spirit of reflecting that I am captivated by the amplification of local and traditional food value chains for youth and women led enterprises.

As a Nation, our aspirations is to grow and prosper, and our point of departure is food security where such is accomplished through the efforts of the youth and women.

Director of Ceremony,

I am intimated that Namibia Trade Forum had embarked on a study that assessed the food security situation in Namibia during and post Covid-19 pandemic. I am further informed that the study aimed to inform policy instruments relevant in the mitigation of food risks and security, resultant from the effects of the current pandemic or similar future events.

I felicitate eminent speakers who eloquently and richly spoke before me about *this particular aspect*, your perspectives have been very enriching, I thus say salutations and appreciations.

According to the data from the Namibia Statistic Agency, Namibia is food trade dependent as revealed by food imports statistics, a situation that women and the youth may change for the better.

As a nation, we need to develop an emergency response to the food security situation for us to build resilience at the local level. Food self-reliance is critical now than ever before. Testimony to this is, the world is witnessing countries imposing export and Import restrictions, there is rising trade protectionism and ongoing tariff wars. Instead of globalization, major economies are acting **pro de-globalization**, with more inward looking policies being introduced.

Clearly, as a country, our nationals are spending much of their resources on foreign imported food that our women and youthful farmers have potential to produce and process into final products. Should Namibia's production reach the desired levels, food will be more affordable.

We acknowledge that Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in short term changes in food demand in the country. As the government, we must mitigate any food security challenges linked to Covid-19 and transform with time to avoid a repeat of such challenge.

The visible impacts of Covid-19 on the local economy include loss of income and jobs which has affected to a larger extent, our youth and women's ability to afford and buy food, which is a major necessity. Therefore this calls for our youth and women to build Namibia's resilience, through a food security emergency response, to ensure that Covid-19 does not surpass beyond a health crisis by threatening our food security situation.

The **broader study objective of** Namibia Trade Forum was to assess the local food security situation, to identify the most pertinent gaps and to provide policy options for improving post-harvest support for local traditional food value chains – primarily for enterprises led by vulnerable groups such as young women and the youth. The specific objective of the study assessed the impact of Covid-19 on food security in Namibia and how to strengthen government policy to develop priority actions and responses, particularly those that drive, promote and strengthen local food trade scenarios.

We are all aware that across the country, young women, men and youth are trying their level best to achieve food security by contributing to agro-industrial growth through agri-business development.

The study established however, that there is a need to support the reduction of post-harvest losses in through improved on-farm storage and processing on the one hand as well ensuring access to markets for all surplus production.

As producers, the private sector and the government, we need to develop policy instruments and responses to address these challenges.

This study thus aims to highlight some of these shortcomings.

The study will further assist us by enumerating specific recommendations directed at strengthening our policies to adequately respond to the needs of our people.

As part of the Ministry's Growth Strategies and Value Chain Development which are aiding the "**Growth at Home Strategy**" food production has a huge component through agro-processing, Seafood Industry and Associated Value Chain and Game Meat Associated Value Chain. This shows the Ministry's commitment to ensuring that relevant strategies are in place to drive food sufficiency in the country.

There are parallel studies and initiatives taking place across the country such as the roll-out of niche local value chains for development under the **Harambee Comprehensively Coordinated and Integrated Agricultural Development Programme (HACCIADep)** scheme, which is aimed at

facilitating market access for small and medium-scale agricultural producers across key value chains.

In conclusion, to complement ongoing Government interventions aimed at Food Security Promotion, the Food Security study raises pertinent questions related to the following:

1. How can we ensure the optimal utilisation of our scarce resources and available arable land to increase agricultural production and output in support of our goal to achieve food security for all?
2. How can we support and strengthen local food trade avenues to build the resilience for SME's to respond to the food needs of the country and to participate in local economic development and trade?
3. What role can government play in ensuring that we minimize post-harvest losses, optimize local and traditional food system flows and ensure that all of the country's local and domestic harvest is absorbed?
4. How can Government stimulate value addition, agro-industrial growth and food trade at the local level?

The **Food Security study** will address and the above pertinent questions to enable the Government and the Private Sector to formulate the relevant policy options and solutions that will promote domestic food trade.

The outcome of the study is expected to strengthen the role of government as a policymaker to better respond to the development of agriculture, to promote value addition and local food trade; and to take robust interventions that will position the agro-industrial sector for growth.

With those few words, I would like to leave you with a quote ***“In the face of adversity, we have a choice. We can be bitter, or we can be better”*** a quotation compliments of **Caryn Sullivan**

I thank you!