

**THE SPEECH BY THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE FOOD
SECURITY AND COOPERATIVES HON. JUMANNE ABDALLAH
MAGHEMBE (MP) DELIVERED AT THE WORKSHOP ON THE
PROMOTION OF FRUIT AND VEGETABLES FOR HEALTH
(PROFAV) ON 26TH SEPTEMBER 2011 AT MOUNT MERU HOTEL IN
ARUSHA**

**Honourable Chairman of the Horticultural Development Council of
Tanzania**

Excellencies,

The Regional Commissioner for Arusha,

The District Commissioners for Arumeru Municipality,

**Country Representatives of the World Health Organization and the Food
and Agricultural Organization,**

Representatives from the East African Community,

Other Development partners from within and outside Tanzania,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great privilege and deep sense of gratitude that I welcome all of you to Tanzania and in the City of Arusha in particular. I hope you will find your stay as comfortable as possible. I am particularly humbled by your choice of Tanzania to host and for me to officiate this workshop on **the Promotion of Fruits and Vegetables for Health.**

I have taken note of the rich diversity of expertise and experience available in this room. First, that of brothers and sisters from 23 Sub-Saharan Africa countries. Secondly, that of various experts from the Food and Agriculture and the World Health Organizations of the United Nations, and thirdly, the various institutions working in agriculture and health within Tanzania and at various international levels. I take this opportunity to congratulate the organizers for bringing us all together today.

Distinguished guests, I am informed that this workshop is an FAO-WHO CIRAD, NEPAD and Globalhort initiatives to promote the production and consumption of fruits and vegetables for health. I consider this move to be very important since all of us need to be in a stable health condition in order to carry out our daily responsibilities. I am grateful to the organisations that came up with the idea to conduct this workshop and we thank you for choosing Tanzania as the host of this important workshop. By all of you being here, our experts and the rest of the Tanzanians especially farmers are more likely to access the outputs of this workshop with ease. I therefore commend the Horticultural Development Council of Tanzania (HODECT) for championing the process of organizing this workshop here. I now see HODECT delivering for its stakeholders in Tanzania and beyond through these kind of gatherings.

Mr. Chairman, allow me also to recognise the presence of other Tanzania institutions in this workshop in particular the Tanzania Food and Nutrition Centre (TFNC), Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA), and the

Ministries responsible for Health and Education sectors in both the Mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar. We thank you all for coming.

Mr. Chairman, I understand that consuming fruits and vegetables is good for our health. Someone once said and I quote *“an apple a day keeps the doctor away”* it is not that we don't want doctors amidst ourselves. Not at all, all we want is to be in their presence for other than illness good reasons.

Mr. Chairman, fruits and vegetables contains many things that are good for our health. These include multi vitamins, minerals, fibre, proteins, micronutrients and bio functional components that are essential for life. When consumed daily, fruits and vegetables are known and proven to be able to prevent a number non-communicable disease, including cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, cancer, and obesity. These diseases have become a major health concern in the world today. Studies have shown that 6 out of every 10 deaths are due to non-communicable conditions with cardiovascular diseases leading in the list of causes of deaths. In the year 2004 for example it was recorded that cardiovascular diseases were responsible for almost 32% of all deaths in women and 27% in men.

Mr. Chairman, the situation is alarming not only in developed countries, but also in developing countries. I am informed that there are currently twice as many deaths caused by cardiovascular diseases as in developed countries. It is estimated that insufficient intake of fruits and vegetables causes around 14% of gastrointestinal cancer deaths, about 11% of ischemic

heart related deaths and about 9% of stroke deaths worldwide. Currently, low fruit and vegetable intake is among the top ten selected risk factors for global human mortality and poor health.

Mr. Chairman, I have also learnt that the overall per capita consumption of fruits and vegetables in our countries falls far short of the daily recommended level by the WHO. Intake is generally in the range of 20-50 % of the minimum recommended levels, and this is largely attributed to poverty and food insecurity. Women and children, and those affected with HIV/AIDS suffer disproportionately because of their relatively higher needs for vitamins, minerals and micronutrients.

Chairman and Distinguished guests; the seriousness of the situation is not well addressed by many of our countries. This situation calls for effective interventions to address the determinants of insufficient consumption and enabling all consumers to have easy and affordable access to fresh fruits and vegetables. It is therefore necessary to make collective institutional efforts to encourage and boost production and consumption of fruits and vegetables. Therefore, support is needed at all levels from national, regional and international collaboration in promoting production and consumption of fruits and vegetables and through sharing of experiences, transfer of technologies, and joint research and development initiatives in developing new varieties, production and post harvest technologies for fruits and vegetables.

Therefore, the **consumption** of sufficient quantities of a variety of fruits and vegetables must now be considered an integral part of promotion of a healthy diet, which together with physical activity is an effective way to prevent or combat diseases and enhance human health, longevity, and productivity. Allow me again to quote from the popular saying *“prevention is better than cure”*. Given the state of health services in many of our countries the saying - speaks it all. Since we now know the means and that means is through increased production and consumption of fruits and vegetables, lets now all work harder in our individual capacities and through collaborative efforts like this workshop to make it happen.

Mr. Chairman, I hope that in the next five days of the workshop, participants will be able to share experiences, develop strategies and programs leading to realistic and cost effective approaches to promote production and consumption of fruits and vegetables in our countries and in Africa as a whole. It is also my hope that you find time to visit and enjoy various world class tourist attractions in Arusha and Kilimanjaro. I sincerely encourage you to experience Tanzania and Zanzibar as it will remain in your memories too as it has been the case for thousands before you.

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Distinguished delegates, I wish again to thank you for availing me this opportunity to address this important gathering and may I now officially declare this workshop opened.

Thank you very much for your attention.