



**STATEMENT
BY THE
MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE OF THE
REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA**

**HONOURABLE CHRISTIAAN DE GRAAFF
AT THE**

**SECOND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON NUTRITION (ICN2)**

**19 TO 21 NOVEMBER 2014
ROME, ITALY**

Your Excellency Chairperson of the Conference

Honourable Ministers,

Excellencies and Distinguished Delegates,

1. It is an honour and privilege to stand before you today to give you our country's status and reflections on food and nutrition security. Botswana is committed to ensuring that her people have access to food and nutrition. This is even enshrined in two of Botswana Vision 2016 Pillars namely: a prosperous, productive and innovative nation; and a compassionate, just and caring nation.

Mr. Chairperson,

2. Despite our commitment to ensuring food and nutrition security, some poor nutritional status indicators still suggest that there is a significant micronutrient deficiency in the country. Reports indicate that levels of wasting, stunting and underweight among children under the age of five (5) remain high. Prevalence of underweight is reported to be higher in rural areas than in urban areas. In addition, the Botswana Rural Livelihoods Baseline Profile Report of 2008 indicates that food insecurity at household level continues to be a major problem in Botswana.
3. Faced with these challenges, we have developed policies and strategies to mainstream issues of nutrition and food security across sectors in our interventions. These interventions, include, among others:

- a) The Livestock Management and Infrastructure Development (LIMID) project, aimed at improving food security for resource poor through improved productivity of the livestock subsector;
 - b) The Integrated Support Programme for Arable Agricultural Development (ISPAAD) for small holder farmers, emerging and commercial farmers, aimed at increasing grain production, food security and facilitating access to farm inputs and credit; and
 - c) The Poverty Eradication programme, aimed at eradicating poverty at household level through provision of packages that are health oriented, which include, among others, production of vegetables in backyard gardening and poultry.
7. These programmes are our noble attempts to enable the nation to have food and nutrition security. LIMID provides animal protein through packages such as Tswana chickens and small-stock, while ISPAAD provides variety of crops such as cereal grains, legumes and horticultural products. In this way, beneficiaries access well balanced, safe and nutritious foods. Also in growing and diversifying the agricultural sector, the value of nutrition is taken into consideration, hence promotion of the dairy sector, introduction of new food commodities such as potatoes and honey, among others.

8. Safety in processing of food is another concern for the Government. Regulatory bodies such as Veterinary Services and Ministry of Health's Food Control Legislation ensure that food processing is within set sanitary standards and is in compliant with international food processing practices.
9. Our National Plan of Action for Nutrition 2005 - 2010 is an outcome of the First International Conference of 1992 which Botswana committed to. The plan of action developed with the assistance of FAO is aimed at alleviating hunger and malnutrition. On behalf of the Government of Botswana, I therefore extend my sincere appreciation to FAO for this support. The plan of action enabled us to develop the Infant and Young Child Feeding Policy through the Accelerated Child Survival Development Strategy.

Mr. Chairperson,

10. To further implement the declaration from the First International Conference on Nutrition in 1992, Government introduced regulations that control marketing of foods for infants and young children to promote breastfeeding and iodations of food grade salt to address iodine micronutrient deficiency.
11. The Government of Botswana also introduced Nutrition Rehabilitation Centres for in-patient monitoring and treatment of severe malnutrition incidences. Issues of malnutrition are also integrated into social programmes such as destitute benefit, orphans and programmes for marginalised communities including those with disabilities. Such efforts will go a long way in addressing food and nutrition security.

12. It is our conviction that these interventions have brought about some improvements in reducing hunger and malnutrition in Botswana. According to the Botswana Family Health Survey, the percentage of children under 5 years who are stunted stands at 31.2%, underweight prevalence among under 5 years children has reduced from 17% to 11.9%, infant mortality rate reduced from 76/1000 live-births in 2007 to 17/1000 live-births in 2011, and under 5 years mortality rate reduced from 57/1000 live-births in 2007 to 28/1000 live-births in 2011.
13. Despite the above improvements, Botswana like other developing countries, still faces multiple challenges of nutrition including inadequate infant and young child feeding practices, inadequate child caring practices, childhood diseases, food insecurity, poverty, low adoption of agricultural technologies and low socio-economic status as the major contributors to malnutrition in both rural and urban areas.
14. We therefore wish to add our voice to calls for FAO and WHO as well as other international organisations to support national governments, especially in developing countries, in their efforts to develop, strengthen and implement their policies and programmes to address the nutrition problems in the 21st century.
15. Finally, **Mr. Chairperson**, let me take this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation to the host country, the Government and the people of Italy for their warm welcome and their generous hospitality.

PULA!!! Let it Rain!! I thank you all for your attention!