



**SPEECH BY THE CABINET SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, LIVESTOCK AND FISHERIES MR. WILLY BETT, EGH, DURING THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE 1<sup>ST</sup> NATIONAL FODDER AGRIBUSINESSS CONFERENCE HELD AT SAROVA WOODLANDS HOTEL, NAKURU ON DECEMBER 14, 2017**

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H.E the Governor of Nakuru County

Director of Livestock Production,

Director Kenya Agricultural Research Institute,

Chair Person-National Fodder Agribusiness Conference Secretariat

Managing Director, Kenya Dairy Board,

Vice Chancellor, Egerton University,

Managers of Financial institutions

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to be with you here today as we assemble for this historic first ever National Fodder Agribusiness Conference in Kenya. Due to the great potential in the fodder value chain, it has become increasingly necessary to organize this stakeholder dissemination forum.

It is my hope that this National Fodder Conference, which brings together value chain actors: policy makers at National and County Governments, Researchers, Development Partners and the Private Sector among others into a common platform will indeed attempt to re-position the fodder value chain in policy, legislation and investments at farm, input and support services levels.

The overall Objective of this conference is to review the status of the fodder value chain in Kenya including challenges and opportunities and to identify viable interventions by public and private sector to support competitive development of the sector. I believe that the key deliverables from your discussions should seek to support Policy review and formulation towards commercial fodder production.

The theme of the conference *“Re-Positioning the Fodder Value Chain for Sustainable Livestock Production”* is timely especially coming at a time when we are coming out of drought which occasioned massive livestock feeds shortage in the country. The theme therefore attempts to highlight the key issues, challenges and opportunities in the fodder sub-sector and coming up with practical solutions.

### **Ladies and gentlemen**

In recognition of the importance of livestock contribution in the growth of our economy my Ministry continues to review and formulate policies and legal frameworks in order to create a favourable environment for the sector to realize its optimal potential. These policies and legal frameworks are geared towards promoting sustainable livestock production which contributes effectively to improved livelihood of our people and national economic growth.

To further cushion the pastoralists from extreme drought conditions which cause livestock loses, my Ministry has established emergency a livestock restocking Fund which helps the pastoralists to restock their livestock.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen**

Allow me to now turn into areas of relevance to the deliberations in this forum. The importance of livestock in Kenya’s economy cannot be overstated as it contributes about 12 percent to the Gross

Domestic Product (GDP), accounts for over 30 percent of the farm-gate value of agricultural commodities, and employs over 50 percent of the agricultural labourforce.

According to the Livestock Sub- Sector report (2017) the population of the major livestock species used for food agriculture are as follows: 21 million heads of cattle of which 4.5 million are dairy breeds, 27 million goats, 19million sheep, 3.2 million camels and, 43 million chicken among other livestock species.

Livestock is the only source of livelihood in the ASAL, where over 70% of Kenyans ruminant livestock are found: providing food security; employment and support for other social obligations in those areas.

In the high potential areas, dairy and poultry production competes favourably with other agricultural production such as horticulture, tea and coffee and may be the best enterprises in terms of providing a stream of regular and stable income throughout the year. With the expected increase in the role of livestock production in Africa, the demand for livestock products is expected to rise and therefore livestock is going to provide the engine for growth in the agriculture sector.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen**

Despite the progress made within the subsector, livestock productivity in the country is constrained by a number of production factors, the major ones being; Low productivity resulting from under feeding and poor management; weak organization of marketing groups or cooperatives; high disease and pest incidences; high cost of inputs such as feeds, drugs, housing and breeding stock and Limited access of financing and high cost of credit among others. For the livestock productivity to be enhanced in the country, these constraints must be addressed for the benefit of the farmers and the people of Kenya.

I note that many collaborators have come on board to partner with the Government to address some of the issues facing our farmers. My Ministry will continue to work very closely with all industry the players to achieve our mutual goals and objectives of a prosperous livestock sub-sector.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen**

While the exact fodder demand is not clear due to the inadequate data and information on acreages under fodder production and conservation, available fodder value chain studies suggest that Kenya suffers large deficits of livestock feeds, particularly forage for ruminants. The deficit is estimated at over 3.6 billion bales of hay annually worth USD 9 billion. In addition the observed demand for fodder is expected to increase in view of the emerging fodder demand by neighbouring countries.

It is therefore important to note that unless targeted interventions on fodder are undertaken on a national scale, productivity of livestock is likely to be grossly affected resulting in reduced milk production, long calving intervals, emaciated livestock and hence reduced meat yields in the medium and long term.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen**

In order to mitigate these challenges facing the livestock feeds and fodder sub-sector, my Ministry has put in place a number of strategies which include: provision of supplementary feeds in drought-stricken areas; finalization of the Animal Feeds Policy-which is now at draft stage; review of the Animal Feeds Bill tracked and operationalization of the Fertilizer and Animal Food stuffs Board which is now in progress.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen**

I thank all those who partnered with the Government through the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock & Fisheries to plan for this event.

I call upon the same collaboration in planning for the 2018 Grass Conference to be held in Nairobi. I trust that my Ministry together with the stakeholders will fully participate in the planning for this very important event.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen**

As I conclude, I wish to thank the Chairman and the organizing Committee for organizing this very important and first ever National Fodder Agribusiness Conference, and for inviting me to preside it over. I hope discussions by the delegates will contribute to our livestock industry development efforts. It is our good intention that with support from industry stakeholders, we will consider elevating/prioritizing this conference into an annual event within our Ministry's calendar of events.

Lastly, I would like to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year 2018.

It is now my pleasure and humble duty to declare the 1<sup>st</sup> National Fodder Agribusiness Conference officially open.

**Thank you and may God Bless you all**