



**CLOSING REMARKS BY THE SECRETARY FOR
AGRICULTURE, IRRIGATION AND WATER DEVELOPMENT**

II

Dr. J.H. Luhanga

Delivered

at the

**CLOSING CEREMONY OF THE CONFERENCE ON
“UNLEASHING AGRICULTURE’S POTENTIAL FOR
IMPROVED NUTRITION AND HEALTH”**

HELD at

CROSSROADS CRESTA HOTEL

on

27th SEPTEMBER 2011

- Representative of the Ambassador for the Embassy of Ireland,
- Representative of the Ambassador for the United States,
- The Head of 2020 Vision Initiative, International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)- Washington DC, Rajul Pandya-Lorch,
- Government Officials,
- Representatives of the development partners,
- Representatives of the Non State Actors,
- The Academia,
- The Media,
- All invited participants,
- Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is again a great pleasure for me to stand before you this afternoon to preside over the closing ceremony of the conference on “Unleashing Agriculture’s potential for improved nutrition and health,” that was organized by the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development in

conjunction with the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI).

As we are all aware, Ladies and Gentlemen; the main objective of the conference was to inform, influence, and catalyze action by key stakeholders to better use investments in Agriculture in order to sustainably reduce malnutrition and ill health for vulnerable people in the country. I am sure a lot of ideas have come up from the audience on how best the sectors of Agriculture, Nutrition and Health should work together to make sure that Agriculture is responsive to issues of nutrition and health in Malawi, and let me take this opportunity to commend all of you for the good work done.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen; on our programme, we had a knowledge fair which showcased a number of initiatives that various players in the sector are championing and this was done based on the value chain analysis. It was really impressive to see different outcomes of the Agriculture, Nutrition and Health linkages throughout the themes.

Secondly, there were a number of panel discussions that were done under a number of themes that guided our deliberations during the two days. These ranged from Global, regional and national perspectives; Evidence on Agriculture's contribution to nutrition and health outcomes; Policy frameworks and programme; to Strengthening Agriculture's responsiveness to nutrition and health. There were also parallel sessions where issues of Policies, Capacity development and programme delivery, Advocacy and communication, and Research/Extension and technology, were discussed. A lot of brainstorming was done in these parallel discussions and a lot of issues on strengthening agriculture in responding to nutrition and health have been suggested and recommended. In addition, there was a panel discussion at the end of the programme by the three sectors whereby issues that have been recommended from the conference were discussed in detail.

Ladies and Gentlemen, without wasting much of our time, let me share with you some of the major issues that have been suggested and recommended from this gathering:

- There is need for a common framework to integrate nutrition across the Agriculture, nutrition and health sectors with national, district and community level advocacy including private sector involvement,
- We need to develop clear sectoral nutrition objectives and budgetary commitments to catalyze action,
- There is need for decision makers' active participation in planning, implementation and reviews of nutrition policies and programmes to enhance their buy in,
- There is evidence of research and outreach models of Agriculture interventions that respond to nutrition and health needs. However, the research agenda needs to be made more demand driven considering farmer and consumer needs.
- While the ASWAp is a key instrument for achieving food security, there is need to clearly spell out nutrition implementation arrangements in coordination with

other sectors to achieve the broader goal of
NUTRITION SECURITY

- Deliberate sectoral coordination is of prime importance for unleashing agriculture's potential for improved nutrition and health in Malawi.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, in summary these are the issues that have been suggested within the two days of our deliberations. The issues were so many and I believe more can still be suggested if more of such meetings are organized. As such, there is need for more collaboration among stakeholders in the Agriculture, Nutrition and Health sectors to ensure that Agriculture indeed responds sustainably to issues of nutrition and health, hence food and nutrition security in this country. It is my hope that the **Action Note** to be drawn from this conference will be shared and harnessed by all stakeholders for further development into an Action Plan.

Ladies and Gentlemen, let me take this opportunity to thank again the organizers of this conference (Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development, and IFPRI) for the good work done, USAID and Irish Aid for their financial support towards the conference. Secondly, allow me to thank Cresta Cross Roads Hotel for hosting this function and most importantly the speakers and all participants including the exhibitors for their contributions to this conference. We don't take this for granted and I encourage you to keep up the good spirit.

With these few remarks, Ladies and Gentlemen; I declare this conference officially closed. For those participants from outside Lilongwe, I wish you all the best as you go back to your respective homes. God be with you.

THANK YOU AND GOD BLESS YOU!!