



**REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA  
OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER**

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS**

**AT**

**LAUNCH OF THE NATIONAL FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY POLICY**

**BY**

**SAARA KUUGONGELWA-AMADHILA, MP  
PRIME MINISTER**

**02 DECEMBER 2021**

**OKATANA CONSTITUENCY**

**OSHANA REGION**

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- Director of proceedings
  - Hon Ministers and Deputy Ministers;
  - Honourable Elia Ilimari, Regional Governor of Oshana Region;
  - Honourable Governors from other Regions;
  - Honourable Regional Councillors and Local Authority Councillors;
  - Dr George Simataa, Secretary to the Cabinet;
  - Dr George Fedha, Country Director of World Food Programme
  - Representatives of other UN Agencies in Namibia;
  - Executive Directors and other Government Officials;
  - Mr Eliakim Namboga Project Manager of Nakalega Irrigation Project and other project members;
  - Distinguished Community Leaders;
  - Invited Guests;
  - Ladies and Gentlemen;
  - Members of the Media.

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1. I am delighted to be here today, at Nakalega Irrigation Project in Okatana Constituency of Oshana Region, to signal the launch of the revised National Food and Nutrition Security Policy for Namibia. At the onset, allow me to extend my appreciation to the Governor of Oshana Region, his team and to the Promoters of Nakalega Project, for agreeing to hold this event here today.

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2. We have gathered here today to launch the revised National Food and Nutrition Security Policy for Namibia. After a comprehensive review and extensive consultations, the revised Policy was approved by the Cabinet in September 2021. The policy is underpinned by four objective which aim to:

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- increase investment in food and nutrition security.
  - increase domestic food production and enhance processing, marketing, and consumption of food;
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- reduce the prevalence of undernourishment and of stunting through nutrition sensitive interventions; and
3. I am delighted that the launch of this policy is taking place at a site where we put meaning to the objectives under the Policy. The decision to hold the launch here is informed by intent of Government to engage with stakeholders to promote the food systems and to transform the agriculture potential in our country. What we are witnessing at this project here is highly commendable and the valuable lessons learnt here are worth emulating elsewhere in Namibia. I wish to, therefore, congratulate the promoters of Nakalega Irrigation Project for the initiative and the development of the project.

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  4. Food and nutrition are fundamental aspects of humanity. It is for that reason that Government endeavors, through this Policy, to guarantee their security. There are global emerging trends which provides impetus for new designs and implementation strategies for food and nutrition security programmes. Global commitments to social development, through the sustainable development goals, place “no poverty” and “end hunger” at the top of the 17 global commitments of sustainable development goals (SDGs).

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  5. There is also evidence that there are multiple factors that are responsible for malnutrition, which must be addressed by using a food systems approach involving multiple stakeholders.

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  6. This year, 2021, the United Nations hosted the global Food Systems Summit, which were preceded by National Dialogue of Food Systems. These platforms provided an opportunities for a whole-food-system-approach, and ensured that the discussions extend to all aspects and balanced investment of resources throughout the value-chain, from input supply, farm production, aggregation, processing, marketing to consumption.

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  7. Through the food system approach, which is also the scope for this Policy, the focus is on all aspects of food from preparation to consumption. This approach brings all

stakeholders together, so that any constraints in the supply and demand are identified and solved.

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8. I am, therefore, pleased that today here, we not only have the producers of food, but we also have processing entities that add value to such, we have distributors who are crucial in the movement of food from supply to demand, and we have the retailers and wholesalers and the ultimate consumers. The actions steps in this Policy takes into consideration the whole value chain of food systems.

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  9. The arid nature of our country requires that we find optimal way of utilizing water to increase local production of food in order to lessen reliance on importation of foods. The recent statistics indicates that Namibia imports up to 12.6 per cent of its local food requirements, with South Africa being the largest source of food import into Namibia, followed by Zambia. This, from the business point of view, is a business opportunity for us, Namibians, to engage in food production, as it confirms a local market for the products that are currently imported, thereby supporting local economic growth and dealing with joblessness which is pervasive, especially amongst women and the youth

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  10. Further, with fragility in the global economy caused by the global economic downturn and the concomitant effect of the Covid-19 pandemic that causes supply chains disruptions, too much reliance on imports for basic foods is a security risk due to possible shutdowns, lockdowns and slowdown in global trade.

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  11. The recent studies on Filling the Nutrient Gap and Cost of Hunger shows incidences of stunting among our children. This is a concerning situation that undermines sustainable development and must be thus be urgently and decisively addressed.

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  12. It is estimated that stunted children are 23.6 per cent more prone to repeating grades at school than the non-stunted children, with associated high costs estimated at N\$295.5 million. The stunting impact on adults is manifested in less productivity, leading to annual loss in GDP of N\$410 million annually. The study also shows that households do not consume sufficient quantities of fruit and vegetables.
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13. The other fundamental problem undermining human development is child malnutrition. The continuation of this phenomenon amongst our populace undermines our efforts to reduce child hunger poverty. And this initiative to enhance food production at household and community levels is to increase healthy food availability, and address the challenge of malnutrition.

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14. About 18% of our population is food insecure and depend on food relief programs, although this trend dropped from 34 per cent five years ago. Namibia has good food functioning markets, and these create dependence of households on markets and less growing of food at household level.

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15. The study shows that there are households whose food purchases are up to 95 per cent, meaning virtually all that is consumed, is bought from the market. Little or nothing is grown at home. The key questions we are asking now are how do we reverse the trend on too much imports, and how do we address stunting and malnutrition in our country. The answers to such fundamental questions lies in our ability to transform the way we look at food systems.

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16. The government remains committed to drive this transformational journey, following the principle of “do not give them fish, but teach them how to catch the fish”.

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17. The strategies to be championed in transforming food systems include the following:

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- Increasing nutrition specific interventions to prevent all forms of malnutrition; Promotion of optimal maternal nutrition;
  - Promotion of universal access and utilization of quality primary health care services to all people;
  - Enhancing and sustaining equitable access to safe water, hygiene, and sanitation interventions;
  - Improving school nutrition and nutrition awareness;
  - Strengthening local production of safe and nutritious foods.
  - Improving processing, storage and preservation of nutritious foods;
  - Strengthening capacity for implementation of nutrition sensitive interventions;
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- Strengthening the resilience capacity of households to various shocks; and
  - Mainstream food and nutrition security into our plans.
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18. These strategies require a range of stakeholders to implement. Under this revised policy, commitment is made to streamlining efforts and coordination, with the establishment of key structures, starting with the Council at the apex to review food and nutrition security policy implementation. The Steering and working committees are also established, at both national level, chaired by Secretary to the Cabinet and at Regional Level to be embraced under Regional and Constituencies Development Committees.

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19. We know that building effective multi-stakeholder collaboration is complex. However, with the new functioning coordination mechanism, from national to grassroots, supported with good advice and expertise, it shall yield greater success in food systems transformation. Together, we have a collective obligation to deliver strong outcomes.

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20. In the wider sense, we must work together to connect national dialogues on food systems to global agendas around climate, biodiversity, governance, resilience, inclusion, and poverty at the country-level. And our action must be able to generate transformational outcomes. For example when we review our plans we should be able to show the number of small holder farmers capacitated to successfully implement smart agriculture.

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21. The role of the private sector and collaboration with development partners remain important in this transformational journey. In this vein, It is pleasing that the UN agencies and other development partners are ready to work with us to transform food systems in our communities, focusing on homegrown food for school feeding programmes, and thereby empowering our communities. The approach to be followed in empowering communities include capacity building, developing and translating of new technologies and approaches to food production, and development of e-commerce and e-platforms to reach and to access markets.

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22. I am pleased that we have in our midst Honourable Governors of various Regions. To bring to realization the vision of this policy, which is “optimal food and nutrition security for a healthy and productive nation”, each Region must have functioning food basket initiatives.

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23. The resolve as a nation is to strengthen our ability to grow, process, store and consume our own locally produced food. I invite all stakeholders in the corporate sector and as individuals, to buy of our local produce and to join hands with growers to improve the grading and standards of our products. Government has committed to do the same.

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24. Equally, I am calling on all citizens to develop smallholder home gardens, where they can get food and fruits to supplement their daily diets. Fresh fruits and vegetables contribute to a nutritious diet.

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25. As I draw to a close of my address, I wish to emphasize that this journey require us to hold hands. And together, we should “press the re-set button”. This transformation needs to be sparked & driven at the community-level, and culminate into National Dialogue to strengthen our transformation efforts. Such dialogues are founded upon the principles of inclusion and participation, which is key to re-formulate the governance of our food systems.

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26. We must not remain behind as the world is moving on and our transformation must leave no one behind - from farmers, consumers, nutritionists and economists - to marginalized communities , women, and young people.

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27. With these remarks, it is now my distinct honour and privilege to officially launch the revised National Food and Nutrition Security Policy, its Coordination Structures and the Implementation Action Plan.

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I thank you.

