

Zambian Government targets K12 Million tree nurseries

By Victor Kawanga



GOVERNMENT plans to establish 11 large-scale tree nurseries in all the provinces and a forestry research centre in Kitwe at a cost of K12 million in a bid to address deforestation. Minister of Lands, Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Wylbur Simuusa says government intends to raise 17.5 million tree seedlings in the large-scale forest nurseries.

Mr Simuusa said in a ministerial statement in Parliament recently that about 5,000 local people will be employed during the planting of the seedlings.

He said an outgrower scheme to produce eight million seedlings valued at K1 million will be developed while traditional leaders, schools, health facilities and the church among other community-based institutions will be involved in the tree planting exercise. The minister said government is aware about the current high rate of deforestation and environmental degradation, which can lead to desertification if left unchecked. Mr Simuusa said the effects of deforestation are being witnessed in certain parts of the country like Mweru wa Ntipa in Kaputa and other parts of Northern, Central, Southern and Western provinces.

“A well managed forest resource is vital for the maintenance of the ecosystem, which we so much depend on,” Mr Simuusa said. He said the amount of water discharge from the source of the Zambezi River has drastically reduced due to human activity on the environment. Mr Simuusa said the reduction in the water levels threatens the future of socio-economic development in the Southern African Development Community region. “Forests are being indiscriminately cleared to pave way for unsustainable poor agricultural methods of farming and charcoal production, with very little consideration of the negative consequences on the environment,” he said.

Mr Simuusa said the planting of trees has potential to turn around Zambia’s economy hence the need for people to take keen interest in the programme. He said each district will plant a nursery of two to three hectares and 1,550 tonnes of soil will be collected for the exercise. The minister said 452 workers will be engaged per province and at forestry research centres. Mr Simuusa cited Pinus for timber, Eucalyptus for poles, Faldreherbia Albida for animal fodder and nitrogen fixation and Moringa Oleifera for medical purposes as the trees which will be planted.

He said others are fruit trees including the Guava, Lemon, Pawpaw, Pomegranade, Mango and Avocado, which have great food value. Mr Simuusa said forests are renewable natural resources which, with prudent management, can sustain Zambia’s economy by providing forest goods, employment opportunities and a balanced eco-system. He said once the tree planting programme is rolled out, it will create 200,000 jobs.