



**SPEECH BY HON. PETER MUNYA, MGH, CABINET SECRETARY,
MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, LIVESTOCK, FISHERIES & CO-
OPERATIVES DURING THE LAUNCH OF BT COTTON SEEDS IN
BUSIA COUNTY**

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives me great pleasure to officiate on this occasion as we officially launch first BT cotton seeds in the Country as part of revitalization of Kenya's cotton, textile and apparel sector.

As some of you may be aware, cotton production and the textile industry used to be a major employment and income earner for many communities before the industry was brought down by inappropriate macro-economic policies that included unregulated importation of second hand clothes into the country.

As a consequence, a vibrant textile and apparels industry that had matured into a major export earner for the country collapsed leaving in its wake closed industries such as KICOMI, MOUNTEX and Thika Textile Mills; and abandonment of upstream cotton industry support infrastructures such as ginneries.

Investments worth millions of shillings that had painstakingly put into this industry were destroyed, many jobs lost and livelihoods destroyed; while townships that were supported by these vibrant textiles industries became ghost-towns. I am informed that at its peak, KICOMI employed over 3,000 people directly in those days.

Ladies and Gentlemen

As we launch BT Cotton today, it is clear in my mind that the destruction of major cash crops such cotton, pyrethrum and coffee among others through reckless economic policies of the past occupies a prominent part of our dark economic history.

However, with the advancement of science and technology such as BT cotton, opportunities now exist for roll out of interventions that can turn the sector around quickly.

We must therefore move with speed to quickly rekindle the great fortunes of cotton industry and create real jobs and wealth for our farmers. As the National Government, we have already demonstrated serious commitment to revive and modernize all vital agricultural value chains that include coffee, tea, dairy, sugar and cotton through targeted and deliberate interventions that include increased budgetary allocations, supportive fiscal regimes and institutional reforms.

With specific reference to cotton, the Cabinet has already approved commercial farming of BT cotton in the country after successful research

and trials; and all other policy ingredient that include necessary legislation are in place for successful revival of cotton farming in the country.

I am delighted to launch this project in Busia county because this county and the cluster of counties in the Lake Region hold the most promising potential for cotton growing in the country.

I want to thank HE Governor Sospeter Ojaamong, his colleague Governors from this region and their Governments for embracing this cotton farming revitalization programme.

Ladies and Gentlemen

BT cotton is currently planted in 15 countries globally covering an area of 24.1 million hectares. The top three leading BT cotton producers are India (11.6 Million hectares), USA (5.06 Million Hectares) and China (2.93 Million Hectares).

In Africa, Kenya is now joining six other countries that have already taken up BT cotton namely South Africa, Sudan, Ethiopia, Malawi, Nigeria and eSwatini. This is ample evidence that the continent is slowly picking pace in the adoption of this modern cotton farming technology.

The global experience with BT cotton adopting countries show that the improved variety is a viable intervention to help boost cotton production by addressing the challenges caused by pests in addition to increased yields per unit area and lower cost of production.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Agriculture is the primary driver of Kenya's economy, contributing 33.3 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and another 57 per cent of GDP indirectly through linkages with other sectors of the economy.

Additionally, the sector employs over 40 per cent of the total population, and more than 70 percent of the country's rural population. In recognizing the prominent role that agriculture will continue to play in our country's economic transformation plan in the medium to long term, the National Government has identified manufacturing and food and nutrition security as central pillars in the Government's Big Four Agenda (B4A) that will have significant bearing in the modernization of the agricultural sector as whole.

While the focus of the food and nutrition security pillar will be on improved and increased food production to make the country 100% food secure in the short to medium term; the Manufacturing pillar has identified back-ward and forward linkages with the agricultural sector through agro-processing and value addition as a critical success factor.

Moreover, Kenya's overarching policy document, the Vision 2030 has also profiled agriculture value addition as central themes under the industrialization pillar.

At the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Cooperatives, we have crystalized all those important policy directions into the Agricultural Sector Transformation and Growth Strategy (ASTGS).

This strategy acknowledges that no large country has ever achieved any significant socio-economic growth without modernizing its agricultural sector. Today, Science, Technology and Innovation provide us with solutions to numerous challenges the agricultural sector has faced in the past; and the success of BT cotton globally is one such example.

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is apparent that the cotton industry revitalization programme we are launching today will create numerous jobs along the value chain for our country. These job opportunities will be in cultivation, processing or trading in locally manufactured garments and clothes.

Most importantly, cultivation of BT cotton by our farmers will guarantee a constant supply of raw materials to ginneries and cotton processing industries thus supporting value addition and job creation up the value chain.

On the demand side, Kenya's textile and apparel products have preferential market access to the United States of America under the AGOA framework.

In addition, Kenya has other attractive market access agreements with the European Union while the EAC, COMESA and AFTA provide significant export opportunities for our textile and apparels. There is therefore ample market opportunities for our textile and apparel products in the world.

Ladies and Gentlemen

To-day we launch our first BT cotton on-farm demonstration farm in Busia and our target is to establish one thousand (1000) demonstration farms in the twenty-three (23) cotton growing counties for training cotton farmers prior to commercial farming.

Each of demonstration farms will train at least 40 farmers to create a pool of at least 40,000 cotton farmers that will form the initial catchment of BT cotton farmers in readiness for commercial BT cotton farming in the country.

Our target is to have over 200,000 acres under commercial BT cotton cultivation by 2022 creating over 25,000 jobs for Kenyans along the value chain.

Ladies and Gentlemen

In order to properly anchor this programme and guarantee long term success, the Government will implement the following policy intervention in all cotton growing areas as a matter of priority:

- a) Revive cotton co-operatives and smallholder cotton farmers cotton development organizations;
- b) Building capacity in governance and leadership in cotton farmers' cooperatives;
- c) Facilitate provision of quality cotton seeds and other inputs;
- d) Modernizing cotton ginneries and establishing new ones to serve clusters of cotton growing counties; and
- e) Enhance value addition and market acquisition.

Considering that agriculture is indeed a devolved function and the central role that county Governments must play to guarantee success of this programme, I call upon the county Governments in the respective cotton growing counties to support this programme by providing complimentary support services that include extension services to farmers.

I look forward to engaging with you and all other stakeholders as we make this programme a success.

Thank you.

God Bless You. God Bless Kenya.