

REPUBLIQUE DU CAMEROUN
Paix-Travail-Patrie

SERVICES DU PREMIER MINISTRE

SECRETARIAT GENERAL

REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON
Peace-Work-Fatherland

PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE

SECRETARIAT GENERAL

**PRESS RELEASE FOLLOWING CABINET MEETING OF THURSDAY
25 JUNE 2020**

Yaounde, 25 June 2020

The Prime Minister, Head of Government, **His Excellency Joseph DION NGUTE**, today Thursday 25 June 2020 at 10 a.m. in the Auditorium of the Prime Minister's Office, chaired a Cabinet Meeting attended by Ministers of State, Ministers and Ministers Delegate.

Three items featured on the agenda namely:

- *the situation of Cameroon's foreign trade;*
- *an assessment of actions to increase local rice and maize production;*
- *the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic in Cameroon and the medical follow-up of patients.*

Speaking on the first theme, after the introductory remarks of the Head of Government, the Minister of Trade first presented the trade situation in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, before giving prospects. He indicated that the containment measures taken by States in the context of the fight against COVID-19 have led to a global slowdown in production, processing and trading activities, as well as a contraction in the demand for goods and services. As a result, the overall price index for the main commodities fell by 42% between January and April 2020, particularly for raw materials such as copper, oil, natural gas, cotton and timber. As far as Cameroon is concerned, the overall volume of trade fell by 16% during the first half of 2020. Exports and imports fell by 14% and 16% respectively.

By way of prospects, the Minister of Trade stressed that the coronavirus pandemic offers Cameroon the opportunity to review its trade strategy by developing regional and sub-regional, trade given its potential, while reducing the volume of imports of food and manufactured products in order to reduce its dependence on the outside world. In this respect, he recommended a series of structural measures such as the accelerated implementation of the Industrialization Master Plan in order to increase the level of local processing of raw materials, the revival of the major export sectors as well as the development of fish farming and aquaculture. He also recommended support to Cameroonian companies, by matching their products to export markets, the development of sales points for locally made products abroad, the development of mentoring and networking of national export companies.

Speaking after him, the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development reviewed measures to increase local production of rice and maize, with a view to significantly reducing imports of these staple foods. He indicated, as regards rice, that the domestic demand is estimated in 2020 at 576,949 tons, for a national average production estimated at 140,710 tons. The actions implemented to increase production volumes in the rice sector include technical and financial support to cooperatives and agro-industries for the production of quality seeds, the extension of modern rice production techniques, as well as the improvement of harvesting and post-harvest techniques through various projects.

In addition, a programme to develop an additional 35,700 hectares of irrigated areas is being implemented, which will make it possible to market at least 350,000 tons of milled rice by 2023.

As for maize, national demand, which covers, among other things, the needs of human feeding, brewing industries and the animal and aquaculture sectors, is estimated at 2 858 220 tons, compared with national production estimated at 2 298 044 tons in 2019. To improve the performance of the rice and maize sectors, the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development said that emphasis will be laid on the acquisition of ploughing equipment and a new husking line, the development of areas for growing rain-fed rice, support for access to agricultural inputs and the rehabilitation of seed farms.

Finally, the Meeting followed the report of the Minister of Public Health on the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic in Cameroon and the medical follow-up of patients. He said that with the massive screening campaign underway, 12,592 people have tested positive for COVID-19 as of 24 June 2020, among whom 10,100 are healed, with 313 deaths. The case-fatality rate is 2.4% compared to a healing rate of 80.2%. The response strategy at work is based on three pillars, namely, "Tracking, Testing and Treating" the sick. As far as patient management is concerned, the approach adopted favours the follow-up of all cases, regardless of their clinical profile. In addition, the commissioning of COVID-19 specialized treatment centres in Yaounde and Douala has significantly increased the capacity to receive patients, which is expected to be strengthened through the involvement of district hospitals in the coronavirus response strategy.

At the end of the discussions that followed these statements, the Prime Minister instructed the Minister of Trade to work on the promotion of products with high export potential to international markets, with an emphasis on regional and continental markets. He instructed the Minister of Agriculture to work towards optimizing the production capacities of agro-industries and small producers of rain-fed rice and to proceed, in liaison with the Minister of Economy, with the multiannual budgeting of the financial resources required to support maize and rice production. The Head of Government instructed the Minister of Public Health to intensify the active search for cases of COVID-19 and to continue the rehabilitation of the technical facilities of Health Districts to enable them to fully get involved in the fight against the coronavirus.

The Meeting was adjourned at 1:15 p.m.

Yaounde, the 25, JUN 2020

FOUDA Séraphin Magloire
Secretary General,
Prime Minister's Office

