



Republic of Botswana

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS DELIVERED BY MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE
HONOURABLE FIDELIS M. MOLAO AT THE
28TH NORTHERN BUSINESS TRADE FAIR HELD IN FRANCISTOWN**

ON

23RD MAY 2024



Director of ceremonies

- Mayor of Francistown -
- Kgosi -
- Member of Parliament -
- Business Botswana President
- Business Botswana Vice President North
- Business Botswana CEO
- CEO's here present
- Molaodi and other Senior Government officials
- Business Botswana members and stakeholders
- Members of the media fraternity
- Exhibitors and members of the public

Ladies and Gentlemen, I greet you all.

1. It is a great honour and privilege for me to officiate at the 28th Business Botswana Northern Trade Fair. An initiative whose primary objective is to bring together businesses from across sectors to enhance not only their business and trading skills, but also to provide a platform for them to market themselves to optimise growth opportunities, through innovative solutions.
2. Ladies and gentlemen, it is important to realise that trade fairs are the apt medium for doing business today, and in a special manner, I would like to acknowledge Business Botswana for persisting in

ensuring this ideal platform to promote products and services to a wider range of audience, takes place annually. Equally important, Francistown is an ideal and central meeting place for industry professionals from different sectors to share their creative ideas and business initiatives for promoting creative content and services.

3. Ladies and gentlemen as we gather here today under the theme ***"Sustainable Innovation: Building a Greener Tomorrow,"*** we embark on a journey of discovery, collaboration, and action towards a more sustainable future for generations to come. In a world facing unprecedented environmental challenges, the imperative for sustainable innovation has never been clearer. Climate change, resource depletion, and pollution, demand urgent attention and decisive action. However, amidst these challenges lies an opportunity—a chance to harness human ingenuity, creativity, and technology to forge a path towards a more sustainable and resilient future. Sustainable innovation is crucial for building a greener tomorrow.
4. As our planet faces increasing environmental challenges it is essential to prioritize sustainable practices and technologies in order to mitigate the impact of climate change, reduce pollution and preserve our natural resources for future generations. The strategies in place by my Ministry and the Government of Botswana will be shared with you at a later stage in my speech. Collaboration between governments and businesses is essential in

driving sustainable innovation forward. By working together we can accelerate the development and adoption of sustainable technologies and create green jobs that contribute to preserving and restoring the environment.

5. Director of Ceremonies, the Government is proud to have Batswana here today as innovators, entrepreneurs, policymakers, and stakeholders from across industries to showcase their cutting-edge initiatives, products, and solutions that prioritize sustainability. From renewable energy technologies to eco-friendly products, from circular economy models to sustainable Agriculture, each exhibitor represents a beacon of hope in our collective quest for a greener tomorrow in our country as envisioned in our Vision 2036.
6. In fact, we can say it is envisioned globally through the (Sustainable Development Goal) SDG Pillar 3, which speaks to having a sustainable environment, ensuring sustainable and optimal use of natural resources to transform the economy and uplift the livelihoods of Batswana. This is also aligned to the global agenda for sustainable development and the principles of the Africa Agenda 2063.
7. Distinguished guests, it is vital to note that sustainable innovation is not just about developing new technologies or products; it is about fundamentally reimagining our systems, processes, and mind-sets. Mindset change as presented by our President, His Excellency, Dr. Mokgweetsi E.K Masisi, requires us to challenge

conventional wisdom, embrace collaboration, and prioritize long-term sustainability over short-term gains. It necessitates a holistic approach that considers not only environmental impact but also social equity and economic prosperity.

8. As you already know, the agriculture sector is dualistic, as in we have subsistence/traditional farmers and then we have commercial farmers. Botswana is dominated by subsistence farmers, whom we all know have helped build the country and raise its people, that includes you, me, and everyone else in the country. The sector is highly reliant on rainfall, which are very unreliable, erratic and generally low. You may recall that we are currently going through a drought season and it has not been a pleasant journey to date.
9. The sector, despite going through severe drought is one of the strategic sectors for economic diversification, employment creation and income generation. In addition to these, there is great amount of policy support from things like the horticulture import ban, VAT exemption on agricultural implements, and last but not least, liberalisation of the meat sector through the establishment of the Meat Industry Regulatory Authority.
10. There are various investment opportunities available in the agriculture sector. Value addition in terms of processing and packaging are one such available opportunities, investing in the value chains available. Through the use of the various support programmes such as the recently launched Thuo Letlotlo, Temo

Letlotlo, and the AIS, just to mention a few, one can indeed contribute to a sustainably innovative and green tomorrow.

11. I therefore:

- a) Challenge and encourage Batswana to play an active role in green economy, for example, each one of us here must plant a tree, every yard to have a backyard garden, and so forth;
- b) **Encourage sustainable farming, and its benefits.**

12. As we explore the exhibits and engage in discussions over the coming days, let us not forget the urgency of our mission. The decisions we make today will shape the world of tomorrow. Therefore, let us commit ourselves to action, to embracing sustainable practices in our businesses, communities, and daily lives.

13. To the innovators and entrepreneurs, I urge you to continue pushing the boundaries of what is seemingly impossible and make it possible, to never settle for the status quo, and to always strive for excellence in sustainability. Your efforts have the power to inspire change and transform industries.

14. To Business Botswana, I call upon you to continue to engage with Government offices, so that we work together to create an enabling environment for sustainable innovation, to enact policies that incentivise green practices, and to foster collaboration between public and private sectors for the greater good.

15. And to all attendees here today, I invite you to not only witness the innovations on display but to also become agents of change in your own spheres of influence. Whether you are a business leader, a consumer, or an educator, each of us has a role to play in building a greener tomorrow.

16. In closing, let us remember that the journey towards sustainability is not a sprint but a marathon—a journey that requires perseverance, determination, and collective action. Together, let us seize this opportunity to create a future where innovation and sustainability go hand in hand, and where our planet and country thrives for generations to come.

17. Thank you.