

BOOST» MORE THAN 100,000 FARMERS TO BE HELPED TO UPGRADE TO COMMERCIAL AGRICULTURE

Kenya, EU in joint plan to improve farming in counties

The public/private partnership will enable small scale farmers from eight counties to get certified agricultural inputs and banking services

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The government and European Union have launched a programme to help smallholder farmers to invest in commercial agriculture and earn better returns.

The public/private partnership will enable small scale farmers from eight counties to get certified agricultural inputs and banking services in order to increase crop productivity.

Farmers from Bungoma, Kakamega, Nandi, Nakuru, Trans Nzoia, Embu, Tharaka Nithi and Kitui counties are to benefit from the plan that is also aimed at attracting the youth to invest in agriculture as a business.

The International Fund for Agricultural Development

more job opportunities," said Bungoma governor Ken Lusaka.

An estimated 60,000 farmers will be trained on appropriate use of agricultural inputs and modern farming practices. About 40,000 others will be supported to graduate to commercial agriculture.

About 20,000 will be funded to grow maize, 13,200 to cultivate sorghum and 6,800 to grow millet.

"The new programme is based on a public/private partnership and will set up an electronic voucher scheme for smallholder farmers to access agricultural inputs and inclusive banking services," explained Mr Lusaka.

The Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization (KALRO) will be implementing partner charged with dissemination of

30,000

Number of farmers

targetted under the joint project between Kenya and European Union.

8

The number of counties that will benefit from the new farming initiative.



research-based technical packages, soil sampling and mapping.

The Cereal Growers Association (CGA) will be responsible for farmer group development, advisory services and capacity building of county agricultural officers.

Mr Lusaka said 7,500 farmers in Bungoma County will be supported in capacity building and post-harvest management.

"New warehouses will be constructed and support farmers in processing-shelling, threshing, cleaning and packaging of the cereals," added Mr Lusaka.

He disclosed that 18,000 "resource poor" farmers will be provided with maize seed and fertiliser this planting season through its farm input supply scheme launched three years.

"Some 400 people from each of the 45 wards will benefit from the scheme to boost crop productivity and attain food security," said Mr Lusaka.

The county government, he said has also acquired three mobile soil testing laboratories to ensure farmers use appropriate farm inputs.

"Four weather stations are now located at Sirisia, Kapsokwony,

Tongaren and Bungoma Town to guarantee correct weather information flow for use by stakeholders," the governor said.

The initiative comes when North Rift maize farmers, who borrowed loans from financial institutions to plant this season's crop, have experienced difficulties of repaying the money after the produce was damaged by drought.

The farmers yesterday said they risked having their land auctioned by the creditors to recover the money.

"Government intervention is required to cushion farmers against sale of their parcels of land by financial institutions due to failure to repay loans as a result of crop failure," said Amos Kipchirchir from Moiben, Uasin Gishu County.

Most maize farmers in the region had obtained credit from Agricultural Finance Corporation (AFC) to prepare land and purchase farm inputs for the planting exercise.

"The productivity of the crop has been affected by the moisture stress that resulted in poor germination that will lead to low yield and poor income to farmers," said Wilson Too from Chepkumia, Nandi County.