

African Agri Magazine



July- September 2024 Issue

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The Marel logo, featuring a stylized red 'm' followed by the word 'arel' in a bold, sans-serif font.

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CASE STUDY

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Recently, Vineyard Layout Services in California engaged MCCruise to help resolve issues with their Yamaha ATV, which struggled to maintain a precise speed because of the CVT transmission belt drive.

MCCruise recommended switching to a Kubota with their QuadCruise system and Trimble EZ Steer Assisted Steering System. The Vineyard Layout Services team opted for a Kubota RTV-X1100 with an enclosed, air-conditioned cab, allowing for greater comfort and longer working hours in all weather conditions.

A year later, they reported that this upgrade, featuring MCCruise's cruise control, increased efficiency on some projects by up to 500% and generated additional revenue for the business exceeding six figures.

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THE SETUP

Kubota RTV-X1100

MCCruise Cruise Control
with Spray Switch

Trimble EZ Steer

Vineyard Layout Services
Paint Spot Marker
Technology





EDITOR'S NOTE



Welcome to the July/September Edition of African Agri Magazine!

As we delve into the vibrant world of African agriculture this quarter, we are thrilled to bring you a diverse array of insights and innovations shaping the industry. Our mission remains steadfast—to provide you with the latest trends, breakthroughs, and success stories that define the agricultural landscape across our continent.

In this edition, we feature some of the most dynamic and forward-thinking brands making significant strides in their respective fields:

McCruise Vineyard Layout Services

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As always, we aim to keep you informed and inspired. The agricultural sector is the backbone of our economies and communities, and it's through innovation and dedication that we continue to thrive. We hope this edition provides you with valuable insights and sparks new ideas for your own agricultural ventures.

Thank you for being a part of our growing community. Happy reading!

Warm regards,

Brenna
Editor, African Agri Magazine



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OUR TEAM

Editor

Brena Shumbamhini
Editor@africanagrimagazine.com

Accounts & Admin

Collen Geza
admin@africanagrimagazine.com

Design & Layout

Kuda Keith Mgari
kudakmgari@gmail.com

Sales

david.brunn@afriagrimagazine.com
brenna@afriagrimagazine.com
talent@afriagrimagazine.com
richard.whitley@afriagrimagazine.com
raymond@afriagrimagazine.com

Contact Details

+27 67 812 9099

Address

8854 Kosovo Crescent
Roodepoort,
Johannesburg
2188,
Gauteng,
South Africa



Saudi Arabia to set up farm equipment manufacturing plants in Nigeria

The Minister of Agriculture, Senator Abubakar Kyari, said the government of Saudi Arabia has expressed interest in setting up manufacturing factories in Nigeria for farming equipment.

Kyari made this disclosure in a statement on his X (formerly Twitter) account on Saturday following a meeting with stakeholders from the Middle East state.

He said the aim is to support Nigeria's agricultural sector through mechanization by establishing the plants in the country.

He also said the Middle Eastern country has pledged to purchase from Nigeria 200,000 metric tons of red meat annually, as well as one million tons of soya.

According to him, this initiative will further strengthen the agricultural sector and increase the country's production capacity.

"Following our fruitful discussions, the Minister of Agriculture of Saudi Arabia paid a return visit to Nigeria. During his two-day stay, we facilitated engagements with our agri-business entrepreneurs. These interactions were highly productive, leading to far-reaching discussions and mutual understanding.

"Shortly after the visit, we received an expression of interest from Saudi Arabia, indicating their desire to procure 200,000 metric tons of red meat annually, as well as one million tons of soya. I want to assure everyone that the supply of these valuable commodities will not affect Nigeria's domestic consumption.

"Additionally, the Saudi government has expressed their willingness to support our country with mechanization by establishing factories for the manufacture of farm equipment. This will further bolster our agricultural sector and enhance our capacity for sustainable production," Kyari said.

What you should know

Nigeria is currently battling a food security crisis with

food inflation at 40.5% as households struggle to provide for their family across the country.

Furthermore, the price of staple foods especially grains has seen an over 100% increase in prices in the past year.

The steep rise in food prices is significantly burdening households nationwide, intensifying the challenges within an already precarious economy.

With projections indicating that approximately 31 million Nigerians could confront severe food shortages by August, the situation demands urgent attention and strategic interventions.

Recently, the federal government announced plans to share N50,000 to 100,000 households across the country's 36 states for three months and purchase food items worth N155 billion to be distributed across the country.

President Tinubu disclosed this during the National Economic Council (NEC) meeting held in the Presidential Villa on Thursday where he rolled out construction, housing and other support programs for Nigerians.

The president also called on state Governors to work towards meeting the food security needs of their states.





Italian agriculture machinery firms to scout for business in Nairobi

Twelve Italian farm machinery companies who are scouting for business in Kenya met with officials from the Ministry of Agriculture and the Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization (KARLO).

The meeting took place in Naivasha on Wednesday, June 12, and saw them engage the officials for investment opportunities in the Kenyan agricultural sector through their rich mechanical expertise.

“Mechanisation remains our key priority to support the government achieve their goal of food security. At the moment we are trying to scale up far equipment and machineries that are appropriate to the right crop of framers and that are affordable,” said Engineer Simiyu Wangete from the Ministry of Agriculture.

The companies will be scouting for investment opportunities to provide their machinery and expertise in the sector at affordable rates.

“Probably now with the help of Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization (KARLO) we can start to work together to find solutions to the machinery and equipment needs of Kenyan farmers,” said Giuseppe Manenti, ITA Director.

The companies are here in Kenya courtesy of the Italian Trade Agency (ITA) and have been at the Agri Tech Africa Expo which is currently taking place at the Kenyatta International Convention Centre (KICC).

They are under a consortium FederUnacoma, which represents seven industrial associations aiming to promote mechanization and technological innovation to meet the needs of the sector.

The Expo will end on Friday and it focuses on the incorporation of technology in farming to maximise profits and reduce losses.

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The agency supports the business development of Italy’s companies abroad and seeks to attract foreign investments in the country.

The firms will include Silesfor DP, Sfoggia, Ocmis Irrigazione, Nardi-Harvesting, Murator, Mecmar, Mascar and Irriland. Others are Contro Fratelli, BCS Group, Alpego, ADR and FederUnacoma.

Italy is interested in Kenya’s Agriculture since it contributes approximately 33 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employs more than 40 per cent of the total population.

In the rural areas people directly benefiting from agriculture are 70 per cent of the total population.

However, Kenya has found herself often relying on her neighbours like Uganda for maize which is considered a staple food as well as other types of food. The expo comes at a time when the government plans to continue growing its investment in agriculture.



County Steps Up Efforts To Promote Mechanised Farming

The County Government of Nakuru has initiated a partnership with the National Agricultural and Rural Inclusive Growth Project (NARIGP) to encourage the adoption of technology and mechanised farming among smallholder farmers to improve production and the quality of their produce.

The devolved unit has announced that it is crafting public-private partnerships to set up a mechanisation hub, which will also link providers of mechanised farm services to smallholder farmers who do not have agricultural machinery.

The County Executive Committee Member (CECM) in charge of Agriculture, Livestock, and Fisheries, Mr. Leonard Bor, said the initiative was aimed at giving younger farmers opportunities to embrace better mechanised food production to increase yields, in addition to making farming attractive to the younger generation.

“We envision a situation where smallholder farmers have access to subsidised mechanization. This will help reduce overreliance on human labour, which is not economical. Farmers will enjoy increased yields on their farm produce. We want to set up at least five mechanisation hubs across the county,” stated Mr. Bor.

Speaking when he received four tractors and agricultural equipment for a potato mechanisation project under the NARIGP initiative, the CECM noted that technological advancements have enabled the manufacture of light and cheaper machinery that can help smallholder farmers revolutionise agriculture both in terms of quantity and quality of products grown and processed.

Mr. Bor said the notion that mechanisation is only for those in large-scale farming was misguided and a threat to Kenya's food security.

“The need to boost crop yields to feed Kenyans is becoming a priority. Technological advancements and innovations can help small-scale farmers improve productivity, thus making agriculture more profitable. The county is seeking ways of enhancing food security through mechanised farming, irrigation, and the use of quality seeds and appropriate fertilisers,” he further said.

Mr. Bor noted that mechanised farming contributed to the timely preparation of land, efficient land use, and increased production. It also reduced the cost of production and created more employment opportunities, particularly among the youth.

The equipment also included one disc plough, two three-row ridgers, two 20-disc double-offset harrows, two chisel ploughs, two potato planters, two harvesters, and two tipping trailers.

The CECM said there was a need for traders and dealers in agricultural machinery to equip smallholder farmers with technical know-how to operate and maintain the machinery through field days, workshops, farm visits, and seminars to enable them to become commercially successful.

Mr. Bor stated that the county was working with dealers and manufacturers of farm machinery to ensure that their products targeting small-scale farmers were built with simplicity of design, unsurpassed reliability, outstanding fuel economy, and minimal maintenance requirements.

“We are encouraging dealers in farm equipment whose services should consist of genuine spare parts centres and nationwide mobile service coverage to set up shop in Nakuru.

We are working with several institutions that will extend farmers financing to purchase modern equipment. Asset financing should be tailor-made to suit the abilities of both small holders and large-scale farmers.

Since some new farmers lack experience with planters, tractors, and implements, dealers are encouraged to put training in place as part of the package for new owners. This should entail showing buyers how to maximise the use of their machinery to boost their food production by using mechanisation,” said the CECM.

While noting that the equipment will be used by the Nakuru Potato Cooperative Union, which comprises 10 potato cooperative societies across the devolved unit, Mr. Bor observed that mechanisation of potato farming improves harvesting of the crop, lowering costs, and reducing post-harvest losses by 20 per cent with fewer damaged potatoes compared to manual harvest.

He added that Kenyan farmers are still shying away from modernization due to lack of capital.

According to the World Bank report on Agribusiness Indicators, the degree of mechanisation in Kenya is about three tractors per 1,000 hectares, or 26.9 tractors per 100 square kilometres.

The report indicates that despite the potential that mechanisation has for transforming agriculture by helping farmers intensify their businesses, mechanisation levels remain very low in Kenya and across the continent.

In 2019, Africa Renewal reported that Africa had an average of about one to two tractors per square kilometre compared to developed countries, where India had 128 tractors while Brazil registered 116 tractors both per square kilometre.

The World Bank attributed the low level to the fact that mechanisation is capital intensive, requiring special financial products such as long-term capital, credits, or leasing arrangements, which are beyond smallholder farmers and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).

“Nevertheless, where smallholder farmers access mechanisation, they are required to go an extra mile to maximise the potential of the agricultural machines, which, if not maximised, compromises repayment plans and becomes a threat to the profitability of the machines,” the report said.

Mr. Bor noted that the continent’s population is expected to double by 2050, meaning it will require enormous effort to feed the people.

He pointed out that it’s time the continent ditched the hoe in favour of modern technology, which will complete the same tasks far more efficiently, adding that youthful entrepreneurs can enter Kenya’s agricultural mechanisation sector and make a great business of it.

“In Kenya, there are only 2 tractors for every 2,500 acres. Kenyan youth need to keep their eyes and innovative prowess in the agriculture sector.

At the moment, mechanisation levels on farms across Africa are very low, with the number of tractors in Sub-Saharan Africa ranging from 1.3 per square kilometre in Rwanda to 43 per square kilometre in South Africa, compared with 128 per square kilometre in India and 116 per square kilometre in Brazil,” explained the CECM.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), a UN specialised agency that champions efforts to defeat hunger, Africa overall has less than two tractors per 1,000

hectares of cropland. There are 10 tractors per 1,000 hectares in South Asia and Latin America.

The CECM stated that without mechanised agriculture, productivity suffers drastically, lowering farmers’ earnings.

“The need to boost crop yields to feed Kenyans is becoming a priority. All manufacturers need to contribute towards the realisation of the government’s Big 4 Agenda. Technological advancements and innovations have helped small-scale farmers improve productivity, thus making agriculture more profitable.

“The county is implementing ways of improving food nutrition and security, which include mechanised farming, irrigation, and the use of quality seeds and appropriate fertilisers,” he said.

Mr. Bor noted that mechanised farming contributed to the timely preparation of land, efficient land use, and increased production. It also reduced the cost of production and created more employment opportunities, particularly among the youth.

The CECM revealed that his department was in talks with various lenders with a view to coming up with affordable financing opportunities for small-scale farmers wishing to acquire machinery.

He said smallholder farmers will also be equipped with technical know-how to operate and maintain the machinery through field days, workshops, farm visits, and seminars to enable them to become commercially successful.

The CECM noted that soil erosion and poor seed beds are common challenges witnessed in the county due to lack of skills in machine operation.

Mr. Bor further observed that small-scale dairy farmers should embrace mechanised technology in making their own animal feeds, translating to quality fodder which will not only increase milk production but also beef, mutton, and the quality of hides and skins.

According to Egerton University’s Tegemeo Institute of Policy and Research Analysis, the cost of producing a litre of milk in the country is between Sh19 to Sh25. But industry players want the cost reduced to Sh14 to be able to remain competitive within the East Africa region.

Mr. Bor noted that dairy feeds accounted for an average of 70 per cent of the cost of production and that if farmers employed mechanised technology to mix their own feeds at home, it would directly reduce the cost of producing milk.

He said that as long as farmers use the right ingredients when making their own feeds, the quality will be good.

“What is produced by some feed manufacturers is not necessarily of high quality. Various samples of animal feed have been analysed and found to be of poor quality. It is better for small-scale dairy farmers to mix their own feeds where they are guaranteed the quality and quantity of ingredients,” stated the CECM.

The county, he said, is working on a mechanisation policy that will guide the training of farm equipment operators by various stakeholders in partnership with manufacturers and their appointed dealers.

Italy-Senegal relations going strong in the fruit and vegetable sector



The technical-managerial training program promoted by Agenzia ICE ‘Lab Innova for Africa – Senegal’, part of the ‘Lab Innova for Africa’ project, aimed at providing integrated assistance and coaching to support the development and internationalization of African companies in the agribusiness sector, concluded in Dakar on 27 June 2024. The training course was inaugurated by Ousmane Mbaye, Secretary General of the Ministry of Agriculture; Federico Bernardi, Chargé d’Affaires of the Italian Embassy in Dakar; representatives of the initiative’s partner organizations ADEPME, COSEC, CFAHS; and the Director of the ICE office in Dakar, Alessandro Gerbino.

“Many operators from different companies,” says Enrico Turoni, present at ICE in Dakar, “are mango exporters to Europe and are GAP certified.”

The ‘Lab Innova for Africa’ training project is being implemented for the second

time in Senegal; launched in 2019, it has already achieved positive results in Ethiopia, Mozambique, Uganda, Angola, Rwanda, Ghana, Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Senegal, Tunisia, Cameroon and Sahel, involving a total of 340 African companies. The initiative aims to improve the knowledge and skills of African and Italian companies to operate effectively in each other’s economic systems, contributing to the development of business, investment and partnership opportunities between Italy and Africa.

“In Senegal,” says ICE, “the agribusiness sector has great potential thanks to the favorable climate, the size of the country and the richness of its soil. The growth of the agricultural and agri-industrial sector is one of the priorities of the recently established government, which is determined to pursue the country’s food sovereignty and to enhance the value of local products, also through increased international cooperation.

The technical and managerial support offered to Senegalese companies by the LabInnova project, combined with the opportunity to meet with Italian companies in the sector, responds to the needs expressed by local operators in the most representative crops with strong export potential, such as mangoes, cashew nuts and vegetables.”

The 35 selected Senegalese companies had the opportunity to develop their skills in international trade through a practical approach based on simulations and case studies during the training phase of the Senegal project, which took place between 24 and 27 June.

In addition, the participants had the opportunity to meet with the AICS Italian Agency for Development Cooperation which has a strong presence in Senegal in the agricultural sector, and to listen to the testimonies of Italian companies operating in the field of technologies focused on this sector, from mechanization to the cold chain and irrigation.

“At the end of the training activity, the

participants were asked to prepare a project work on an internationalization strategy towards the European market. The training program includes the following topics: marketing, technological and digital innovation, export techniques (logistics, contracting, etc.) and sustainability, and is supervised by ICE Faculty experts selected for their experience in the sector/market.”

“Nine Senegalese companies specifically organized for export have already participated in the study tour phase in Italy from 6 to 10 May 2024,” Turoni points out.

The companies attended the first day of the CIBUS exhibition in Parma and the Macfrut 2024 exhibition, a reference event for fruit and vegetable professionals in Italy and abroad. The study tour included B2B meetings with exhibitors, high-level meetings and conferences, and guided tours of the pavilions and demonstration areas at the fairs. On 8 May, the LAB INNOVA FOR AFRICA event focused on the mango supply chain took place at the fairgrounds, with the participation on the Italian side of ICE, Africa Affari/Infoafrica, Confindustria Assafrica e Mediterraneo, AICS, CDP.





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TRANSFORMING AGRICULTURE IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: a New Dawn for Millet Production

As the world grapples with climate change, resilient crops such as millets play an increasingly important role. Their ability to thrive in low soil fertility and limited moisture levels makes them ideal for Africa's changing climate. However, despite their potential, it remains largely untapped.

In an initiative to address the untapped potential and the growing challenges associated with the cultivation of pearl and finger millets in Africa, a high-profile discussion convened experts from various fields. This session, part of a workshop titled "Bottlenecks to Expansion of Pearl and Finger Millets in Africa," organized by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in collaboration with the Senegalese Institute of Agricultural Research (ISRA) and CIMMYT, aimed to identify and prioritize key bottlenecks in crop improvement.

Significance of the International Year of Millets

The United Nations General Assembly declared 2023 the International Year of Millets to raise awareness of and direct policy attention to the nutritional and health benefits of millets and their suitability for cultivation under adverse and changing climatic conditions. The program highlighted the critical need to promote sustainable agriculture and enhance food security by adopting climate-resilient crops like millets, which play an important role in mitigating the effect of climate change, due to their adaptability to adverse and changing

climatic conditions.

"We have been actively engaged in gathering input and support from all over the world, not just from Africa and Asia but also from regions like Latin America and Eastern Europe," said Makiko Taguchi of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). "This year has seen a surge in interest and collaboration in the millet community and we are excited about the possibilities that lie ahead," she added.

National strategies to enhance millet production

In an effort to ensure food security and achieve production goals over the next five years in Senegal, a strategic plan encompassing various key initiatives will be implemented to meet the demands of millets.

Hamidou Diallo, from the Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Equipment, and Food Sovereignty of Senegal (MAERSA), summarized the strategy. First, is a focus on enhancing production and productivity. Second, the plan calls for the use of high-quality seeds and collaboration with ISRA to provide foundational seeds. Third, aiming to equip producers with the necessary tools and equipment. Last, the plan seeks to increase the overall cultivated area of millets.

"We align ourselves with the needs of the local community. By doing this, it ensures that the initiatives undertaken are not only impactful but also resonate

with the agricultural landscape and the needs of the communities served," said Diallo.

Innovative initiatives for the Dryland Crops Program

Kevin Pixley, director of the Dryland Crops Program (DCP) and Wheat Program director a.i. at CIMMYT, highlighted four initiatives in which the program is involved. One is the establishment of the Africa Dryland Crops Improvement Network, comprising national program scientists and led by the steering committee from Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA) and Western and Central Africa (WCA). Their mandate is examining investments in capacity development and infrastructure and shape breeding programs. Second, a legumes mining project at Colorado State University, focusing on genetic diversity and using big data tools to identify resilient traits. Third, working on gene editing projects such as reducing rancidity in pearl millets in countries that are open to these technologies. Last, the Vision for Adapted Crops and Soils (VACS) project, that will include millets as a prioritized crop. These initiatives are crucial for creating pathways to improve farmers' livelihoods and popularize millets.

"Creating an effective pathway is critical to these approaches. We need to find innovative ways to reach more farmers with options to improve their livelihood and popularize millets across different market segments," said Pixley.

CIMMYT's program on Dryland Crops is at the forefront to improving breeding and seed systems, with the aim to improve the livelihoods of small-scale producers and consumers of these crops in sub-Saharan Africa.

Aware of the changing needs of the global community, CIMMYT has begun on a journey to advance research and broaden its impact by implementing the Dryland Crops Program. This approach is based CIMMYT's 2030 Strategy, which has the potential to shape the future of agriculture as a catalyst of climate resilience, sustainable and inclusive agricultural development, and food and nutrition security.

The program is critical in promoting climate resilience, sustainable agricultural practices, and food and nutrition security in sub-Saharan Africa. CIMMYT is working on dryland crops like millets and legumes, which have untapped potential for contributing to food security, particularly in climate-vulnerable regions.

Research and innovative labs

Geoff Morris from Colorado State University shared insights on the recently concluded United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Innovation Lab on Sorghum and Millets. This activity spanned the entire value chain from trait discovery to breeding program support to the development of value-added products. The most successful projects, in his opinion, were those led by African-based scientists.

"It is essential for Africa scientists to be in the driver seat to ensure that research agenda aligns with their needs," he said. "There is a gap in knowledge not about what we know here but about what U.S. researchers know about supporting African breeders. It's crucial for researchers to define the needs to guide effective collaborations," said Morris.

Pioneering role in millet sector growth

The International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) has contributed significantly to driving growth in the millet sector, including innovation generation and knowledge sharing. Damaris Odeny, ICRISAT India, highlighted the organization's contributions particularly in the agri-business incubation platform. The platform serves as a bridge, identifying suitable technologies to specific regions and supporting local entrepreneurs in deploying these technologies to reach smallholder farmers. While the model has been successful in India, its adoption in Africa has been slower, owing to regional differences and varying levels of investments.

The Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Crop Improvement, managed by USAID and Cornell University efforts in fostering regional collaborations funds a center for innovations across regions, fostering regional collaborations that are critical for sharing knowledge and resources, benefiting not only regions within Africa but also further afield.

"Moving forward, we should align these initiatives and identify synergies to maximize their impact. This approach will encourage greater engagement and the adoption of innovative solutions at the local level," said Odeny.

The path forward for millets in Africa and beyond is not only promising but essential for addressing issues of food security, climate resilience, and sustainable development. This can be accomplished by aligning these initiatives with global sustainability goals and focusing on innovative, collaborative efforts.

Changing the narrative through communication

Turning to the power of communication, Douglas Gayeton, co-founder of The Lexicon emphasized the role of effective messaging in changing people's perceptions of millets.

"When consumers understand what they are purchasing and how it aligns with their values, they can make informed decisions that benefit the entire food system," said Gayeton.

He also underscored the importance of changing the narrative around millets. He emphasized the importance of shifting away from terms like 'neglected' and 'orphaned' crops to more positive empowering language that resonates with consumers and policy makers.

"In order to change the food system, we must provide consumers with information at the point of purchase that applies to their values. By linking that benefit to consumer values, this approach has the potential to significantly expand millet markets," said Gayeton.

The discussions highlighted the valuable lessons to be learned from the efforts to enhance millet utilization in Africa and other regions. The collaboration across various sectors, from government to research institutions and the private sector, highlights the multifaceted approach in addressing the challenges facing millet cultivation and utilization. Recognizing the significance of local engagement and the empowerment of local scientists underscores a crucial lesson: solutions need to be tailored to the specific context, utilize local knowledge, and address local needs to ensure sustainability. In addition, the significant impact of communication in reshaping perceptions about millets demonstrates the importance of storytelling in shaping consumer behavior and policy.





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CONTACTS - CAPE TOWN

CELL NO: OFFICE

Jacques Laubscher +27 81 011 5350
Radyn van Dewenter +27 72 596 2305
Solly Solomon +27 83 597 8726

CONTACT NUMBERS

Tel: +27 21 948 7065/6
Fax: +27 21 948 7067

Address: Unit 22, Rivers Edge Business Park, Winelands Close, Stikland, 7530.

CONTACTS - JOHANNESBURG

CELL NO:

Derrick Mitchell +27 81 489 7034
Gerhard Roets +27 81 526 9378
Nicolene de Klerk +27 65 852 3538

OFFICE CONTACT NUMBERS

Tel: +27 10 880 4774
+27 11 823 1969 / 823 2364
Fax: +27 86 411 1847

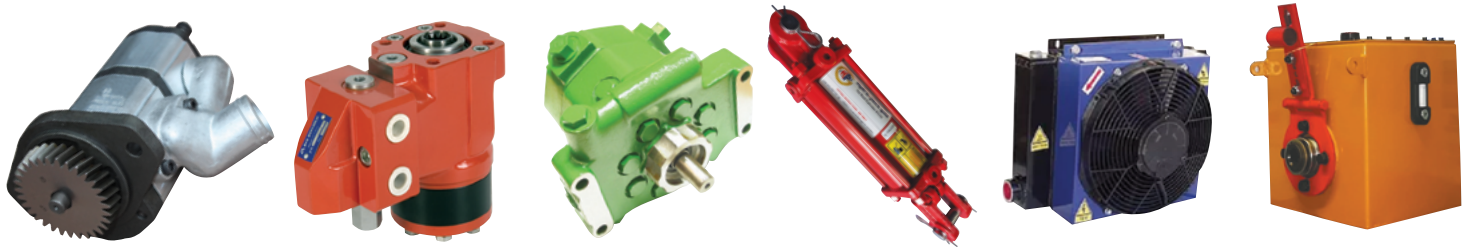
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Solly Solomon +27 83 597 8726	

Address: Unit 22, Rivers Edge Business Park, Winelands Close, Stikland, 7530.

CONTACTS - JOHANNESBURG

CELL NO:	OFFICE CONTACT NUMBERS
Derrick Mitchell +27 81 489 7034	Tel: +27 10 880 4774
Gerhard Roets +27 81 526 9378	+27 11 823 1969 / 823 2364
Nicolene de Klerk +27 65 852 3538	Fax: +27 86 411 1847

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New US\$53 million agricultural development programme launched in Malawi to combat food insecurity

Malawi, a country highly vulnerable to climate shocks and widespread hunger, is taking a crucial step to improve food security for its citizens. The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and Government of Malawi launched a US\$53 million agricultural development programme today that seeks to commercialise agriculture production and enhance the resilience of small-scale farming systems for improved income, food and nutrition security in the country.

The seven-year Sustainable Agriculture Production Programme phase II (SAPP II) will equip farmers with the skills and resources to address food insecurity, increase income generation and improve the livelihoods of rural communities in Dowa, Balaka, Lilongwe rural and Mzimba. The project is particularly important for women, as they account for more than half the country's population and provide bulk of the work force in the sector, and hence they make up 50 per cent of the project participants.

"SAPP II represents a critical investment in the future of Malawian agriculture," said Bernadette Mukonyora, IFAD Country Director, Malawi. "The launch is a significant step towards a food-secure future. By empowering small-scale farmers, particularly women, and promoting sustainable farming practices, the programme has the potential to transform the agricultural sector, improve livelihoods, and contribute to a more prosperous

nation."

Agriculture is the backbone of Malawi's economy, accounting for 22.1 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), 80 per cent of foreign earnings, and employing over three quarters of the workforce. Despite this, half of all farmers cultivate on less than one hectare and rely on rainfall, making it hard for them to both meet their own food requirements and generate surplus for the market. This challenge is compounded by climate change, land degradation, limited resources, weak extension systems, high post-harvest losses, and unstructured markets.

SAPP II aims to tackle these challenges head-on. The program will promote soil, land, and water management practices to enhance soil fertility, restore degraded land, and lessen the pressure on natural resources already strained by climate shocks.

"With less than six years to go to 2030, the launch of SAPP II is timely," said Samuel Kawale, Minister of Agriculture. "It offers the country an opportunity to unlock the sector's potential, increase productivity, create wealth and improve food and nutrition security. These are key indicators to Sustainable Development goals and aligned with Malawi Agenda 2063."

To make small-scale farming systems more commercially viable, SAPP II will support value chains based on market demand, production potential, job

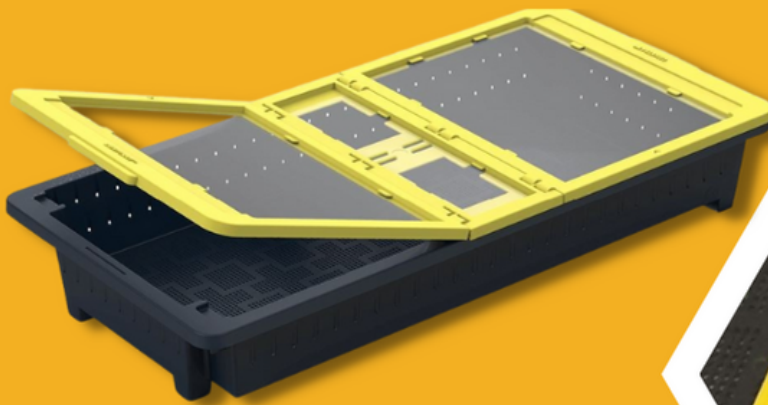
creation, and the ability to improve food security and nutrition. Legumes, fruits and vegetables are potential commodities with the dual benefit of increasing incomes and diversifying household diets.

The programme will also facilitate farmers' access to finance through the Farmers Challenge Fund (FCF), offering matching grant support to purchase productive farm inputs, agro-processing equipment and post-harvest technologies.

Recognising Malawi's vulnerability to continuous climatic shocks, SAPP II is designed with flexibility. Funds can be re-allocated to address immediate needs such as providing immediate access to farm inputs and repairs to infrastructure damaged by climate shocks that have a bearing on food security.

To fund the programme, IFAD is providing US\$18.08 million, the Government of Malawi US\$8 million, domestic financing US\$3 million from a pass-on revolving scheme, and the European Union US\$2.6million. A financing envelope of US\$15.6 million is still open to interested financiers.

Since 1981, IFAD has invested more than US\$426 million in 15 rural development programmes and projects in Malawi worth a total of almost US\$638 million. These interventions have directly benefited more than 2 million rural families.



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This knowledge and expertise were initially limited to ingredients for the pet food industry. Over the years, the business has also expanded its scope to the compound feed, aquafeed, fertilizer and bioenergy industries. On the supply side, Cagemax is able to purchase large volumes. On the demand side, customers can count on an attentive service and high-quality raw materials. The company can cope with the dynamics of

the market and has thus managed to bind customers worldwide. Because of the understanding that if you want to be irreplaceable, you must continue to distinguish yourself.

Cagemax understands like no other that quality is the key to success and the continuity of the business. That's why the company is GMP+ certified and operates in full compliance with the HACCP principles and practices. Every market has its own quality requirements. For the supply of raw materials for the bioenergy industry, Cagemax has been certified to meet the strict IS-CC-EU standards with a SKAL-certificate that guarantees that the delivered biological or bio-organic products are produced under the European and production directives. We stand for constant product quality. That's why every incoming load is carefully analyzed in an accredited laboratory. With an eye for quality, delivery, reliability, flexibility and the will to think along with relations, Cagemax has grown out to be the biggest supplier of high-quality animal protein and fats in Europe.



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Agriculture and livestock production is devolved but we should collaborate with the national government on policy formulation.

According to data collected through the Kenya Integrated Agricultural Management Information System (KIAMIS), there are 6.4 million farmers in Kenya.

Data collection and verification are ongoing, and hopefully, the number will increase. The two levels of government should collaborate to support farmers with a view to improving yield and farmers' earnings.

This is particularly in soil fertility to enhance crop production and livestock breed improvement in dairy farming. Regarding soil fertility, it is crucial for the county and national governments to intensify soil testing. This will help determine fertility and the right type of fertiliser for different regions.

While the national government's initiative to issue subsidised fertiliser is commendable, a challenge arises as the same fertiliser is distributed uniformly across the country, disregarding soil variations.

Using the right fertiliser will increase yield across all crops, from food crops such as maize to cash crops such as tea and coffee. Farmers will have enough for domestic use and sell the surplus. This will help stabilise staple food prices and increase farmers' earnings improving their livelihoods.

Some counties have already started sampling soils, with a view to providing farmers with information about the right fertiliser to use depending on the soils in their area.

In Nyamira County, we are initiating soil testing programmes across all sub-counties. The results from the testing will be shared with the national government through KIAMIS. We hope this information will be used to determine the type of fertiliser to be distributed to farmers in our county. On breed improvement, we should embrace and expand Artificial Insemination (AI) to enhance the productivity of indigenous breeds, which often yield minimal milk quantities due to inbreeding.

Over the years, the quality of dairy cows, especially in rural households, has decreased due to inbreeding. The national government should support and collaborate with counties on livestock breed improvement.

In Nyamira, for example, we have a cattle population of 123,951, of which 30 per cent (36,018) are exotic dairy cattle breeds, and 70 per cent (87,933) are indigenous breeds.

The indigenous cows produce 2–3 litres a day, which is 22,431,107 million litres yearly. This is way below the potential milk production estimated at 240,000,000 million litres.

This is why we have deployed deliberate efforts to boost AI services and encourage castration of inferior bulls. We aim to improve the quality of livestock in the next three years and this is backed by county laws. We have the Nyamira County Livestock Act 2023 and Livestock Breeding Regulations (2024) to guide the improvement of dairy cow productivity. The two legislations are intended to have all breeding bulls registered.

Similar initiatives are underway in other counties, and national government intervention can accelerate progress. This collaborative effort not only promises to enhance farmers' earnings but also plays a pivotal role in bolstering food security through increased food and milk production.

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Fresh bid to turn cattle rustling corridors into trade routes



For decades, the porous border between Kenya and Uganda has been characterised by armed conflicts, livestock raids and arms smuggling between herders as they compete for pasture and water. It becomes worse in times of drought.

Mr Joseph Moit, a one-time participant in such raids remembers how one attack forced the other side to arm themselves, fearing that far-away authorities would take their sweet time to respond.

“I have lived with the gun for more than 15 years because of the protracted conflict between Turkana and Pokot ethnic communities as well as Dodoth, Jie and Karamajong communities from neighbouring Uganda.³

“During that period, I was losing livestock and restocking them through deadly raids in the company of my friends. Five of them were shot dead between 2005 and 2013,” Mr Moit, now reformed and helping his community change their ways, says.

According to him, the fear of exposure, as well as the ease of moving small arms across the borders has contributed to the regular attacks.

Authorities on both sides have been trying to end the menace. Over the last decade,

for example, there has been sustained coordinated security operations between police officers from Kenya and Uganda, to mop up illegal firearms following killings of innocent motorists, children, women and traders. This was his turning point.

Last year in April, Ugandan authorities conducted a Cordon-and-Search operation and arrested 32 Turkana pastoralists. They also seized 27 AK 47 rifles, one self-loading rifle, 751 rounds of ammunition, 32 magazines, three sets of Uganda People’s Defence Force (UPDF) uniform, 19 bows and arrows.

Mr Moit says the seriousness with which Ugandan authorities responded to a previous raid was his eye opener on dealing in illegal arms.

After the 32 were arrested and incarcerated, their kin in Kenya piled pressure on the Kenyan government to help free them up. They would later be jailed for 20 years each in Uganda for illegal possession of firearms and ammunition. They were freed earlier this year, after nearly a year in jail, thanks to intense lobbying by Kenyan officials.

That bad experience has now informed Mr Moit and his cohort to turn to something else: trade.

“I felt how traders from Lokirama were exposed to attacks by highway bandits while crossing over to Moroto to get goods,” he says.

He remembers an incident in which a bodaboda operator was shot dead in March this year and his motorcycle and all the goods stolen.

He says that insecurity has often led to food scarcity, given that those who grow better produce across the border can't supply and continual enmity had prevented his own villagers from searching for food across the border, without being suspected of planning something sinister.

For the last four months, several reformed warriors have emerged from villages initially thought to be battlegrounds. The reformists say they have turned to business for survival. They are Oropoi, Nawountos, Lokirama, and Urum communities in Kenya, as well as Kobebe, Losogol, Lopei, Naput, Chokchok, Nakabaat, Losilan, Nadunget in Uganda.

“I am advocating for a border free from illegal firearms by talking to the bandits from my community on the importance of peaceful coexistence,” says Mr Erot Eusugu, one of 32 Turkana herders released by Uganda's Military Court.

Urum Location Chief Stephen Lorot said that peace-building activities advocated by locals are more practical and fruitful.

“Locals would opt not to share information about banditry carried out by relatives- a situation that has always jeopardised peace-building efforts. Talking to them to reform and focus on sustainable pastoralism will open up the village to development,” Mr Lorot says.

With increased trading activities, the Turkana County Government has completed routine maintenance on the 69-kilometre Lokirama-Lokipoto Road to facilitate trade between Kenya and Uganda.

The move according to authorities is expected to significantly benefit traders who depend on the road for cross-border movement of goods and services.

A Ugandan security expert David Porkul said both countries have to maintain law and order, so that cattle rustling corridors expansively become corridors of peace, development and trade.

Dr Porkul says that commitment to adhere to peace agreements between the communities should pay off by eliminating illegal firearms.

Turkana County Director of Trade James Lokwale says that pastoralists who include reformed warriors should establish market days at various centres to buy or sell livestock as opposed to theft. He says many Ugandan traders have established shops in Turkana where they sell shoes and clothes.



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KEY CONTACT



LUNGA MANI

Practice Leader,
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E: lunga.mani@fragomen.com



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SENEGAL: African Development Bank and Islamic Development Bank fund livestock project to improve animal product quality

Partners in the first phase of Senegal's five-year National Integrated Livestock Development Program (French acronym PNDIES-P1) met on 28 May. Workshop participants included Senegal's Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Livestock, the African Development Bank (AfDB), the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

The project three project components -- animal productivity, products and product processing, animal product marketing and skill enhancement, and project coordination and management -- will help make the country's livestock sector more competitive and sustainably increase employment opportunities for young people and women in livestock value chains. It will do so by sustainably increasing livestock productivity and production, improving the processing and marketing of animal products, and raising skills levels industry wide.

Phase 1 of the project represents an investment of 78.60 million euros, of which the AfDB provides 39.30 million, the IDB 39 provides million euros and 300,000 euros come from the Global Climate Centre (GCA).

It will be implemented in the regions of Dakar, Diourbel, Fatick, Louga, Kaffrine, Kaolack, Kolda, Sédhiou, Thiès and Ziguinchor and directly benefit at least 32,000 people working in livestock value chains, including 16,000 women and young people. A further 950,000 people (51% of whom are women) will receive indirect benefits.

More generally, the project will help improve food security, nutrition and public health among Senegal's rural and urban populations by establishing a control system for food products of animal origin to ensure product safety. Veterinary services will be redeployed across the country and regional laboratories will be built or renovated to will help eliminate unofficial slaughtering and improve the hygiene and safety of animal products.

During the project's two-year participatory, holistic and inclusive design phase, the technical departments of the relevant ministries were involved along with organisations involving farmers and processors, women and youth groups, other civil society actors, the private sector and technical and financial partners.

Opening the workshop, Ousmane Mbaye, Secretary General of the

Senegalese Ministry of Agriculture, stressed the importance of the program for achieving food sovereignty and self-sufficiency in animal products. He acknowledged the support of the African Development Bank and thanked it on behalf of the Senegalese government for "its constant support to the livestock sector."

Hatem Fellah, representing Mohamed Cherif, head of the AfDB country office in Senegal, praised the energetic cooperation among the three financing parties -- AfDB, IDB and GCA -- and the Senegalese government. He emphasised the importance that the African Development Bank attaches to the program's efficient implementation and ultimate success, adding that the Bank will do all it can to support the work of the Ministry's teams during program implementation.

As of 25 April 2024, the active portfolio of AfDB Group in Senegal comprised 39 operations with financing of around 2.5 billion euros. The agricultural sector accounts for 21% of the total amount, behind transport (30%), finance (15%), governance (10%), energy (8%), water and sanitation (7%), industry (4%), social (3%) and communication (2%).



Botswana Beef Set for EU Market Dominance

The Botswana beef is poised for dominance in the lucrative European Union (EU) market bolstered by the availability of sophisticated equipment used for testing chemical residuals in meat donated to the National Agricultural Research and Development Institute (NARDI) courtesy of the SADC-EU support. The equipment has been handed to Botswana through the EU-SADC Economic Partnership Agreement Support Programme (Residues Project) which commenced three years back at the tune of P88 million value.

Speaking during the handover ceremony in Gaborone on Thursday at the NARDI-Botswana National Veterinary Laboratory

(BNVL), Head of Cooperation – European Union Delegation to Botswana and SADC Clement Boutillier said the equipment will position Botswana as beef exporting hub to the EU market.

He said EU in particular offers huge market potential for Botswana beef and there is indeed room for increasing the volumes of export, adding that they have noted with excitement the efforts made by the Botswana government to improve the beef value chain through importation of quality breeding stocks.

“We believe that with enhanced capacity for testing and quality assurance, Botswana will be better positioned to expand its exports, create the jobs, and drive economic growth.

These ideals define our cooperation that has stood firm for more than 40 years,” said Boutillier confident on Botswana growth.

He also said the support EPA Implementation Support Programme worth P88 million is to promote export-led economic diversification and growth in Botswana with improved employment in targeted value chains. Boutillier noted that positioned to expand its exports, create the jobs, and drive economic growth.

These ideals define our cooperation that has stood firm for more than 40 years,” said Boutillier confident on Botswana growth.

He also said the support EPA Implementation Support Programme worth P88 million is to promote export-led economic diversification and growth in Botswana with improved employment in targeted value chains. Boutillier noted that national capacity in the testing, analysis and inspection of food of animal origin to EU and other international food safety standards to meet EU regulatory import requirements for food of animal origin and thus facilitate exports," he added. Boutillier indicated that machines that were supplied by EU are of a combined value of P7.2 million.

MoA

Meanwhile, the Minister of Agriculture (MoA) Fidelis Molao said the EU-SADC EPA initiative

is envisaged to have a positive impact on the economy of Botswana by bolstering beef trade through the enhanced market access.

Molao said the beef sector has traditionally played an important role in the lives and economy of Botswana, adding that Botswana has gone to great lengths to control diseases of cattle and ensure the safety and quality of the meat products for trade.

"NARDI is tasked with the testing of residues samples which is conducted at BNVL. Due to lack of capacity at BNVL, residues testing has been subcontracted in the United Kingdom since 2008," said Molao.

Molao also said the lack of adequate specialized

equipment, delayed maintenance of equipment and the attainment of necessary skills were the main challenges towards developing the testing capacity.

For his part, NARDI CEO Professor Julius Atlhopheng stressed that the equipment will give NARDI the capacity to conduct more tests on daily basis and that would boost the capacity to export beef to EU.

Atlhopheng emphasized the importance of Botswana's beef meeting the export standards of the EU market, adding that NARDI is much focused on value chain development and therefore EU support will enable them to unlock fully the beef value chain potential and enhancing quality monitoring of food etc.

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Gabriela Cardoso, Ph.D., NOVUS poultry solutions manager for the Americas, will share how common feedstuffs like soybean meal and others can negatively impact poultry performance during X Seminario Internacional de Nutrición Avícola (X International Poultry Nutrition Seminar 2024), July 24-25 in Bogotá, Colombia. Hosted by the Colombian Association of Veterinary and Zootechnical Physicians (AMEVEA), the event includes the latest poultry research and trends.

“Like the rest of the world, Colombia uses a lot of soybean meal in its chicken feed. It’s important for producers and nutritionists to understand how,

without proper intervention or quality assurance, this common protein source can impact performance and, ultimately, the return on investment,” Cardoso says.

In her presentation titled Immunogens vs. Antinutritional Factors in Poultry Feed Cardoso will provide an overview of how immunogens cause inflammatory responses as well as information on the range of ingredients and circumstances that qualify as antinutritional factors (ANFs).

“ANFs cover a broad spectrum of things. Mycotoxins are considered antinutritional, so are oxidized fats or oils, some fibers and soybean meal also have ANFs,” she said. “The type of immunogens or ANFs you encounter change the nutritional intervention you use to combat them.”

Along with enzymes, which are known for “unlocking” nutrients from feed, Cardoso will share options to help ensure birds capture as much nutritional benefit from feed as possible while limiting the negative impact raw feed ingredients can have.

To register for the event in Columbia, visit <https://amevea.org/2024/04/11/x-seminario-internacional-de-nutricion-avicola-2024/>

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Minister urges Ghanaians to venture into poultry business

Mr Mohammed Hardi Tufeiru, Deputy Minister of Agriculture in Charge of Livestock, says Ghanaians must venture into the poultry business to reduce the imports of poultry.

“We need to produce as much chicken as possible so that in the next five years, we don’t have to import chicken into the country,” he said.

Mr Tufeiru said this at the 2024 Ghana Poultry Day organised by the Agrihouse Foundation with support from the Ghana Tourism Authority and the World Initiative for Soy in Human Health (WISHH) on Monday, July 1 in Accra.

The Day aims to drive the advocacy for July 1st to be recognised and celebrated as Ghana Poultry Day, while promoting the consumption and patronage of local poultry in the country.

The Deputy Minister, also the Member of Parliament (MP) for Nanton in the Northern Region, said the poultry business was lucrative and could promote the consumption of local poultry and help feed the citizenry.

He said the Government started the implementation of the Planting

for Food and Jobs policy to achieve inclusivity and for people to see that agriculture was a good business venture.

Mr Tufeiru explained that there had been an assessment review that called for some further work to be done to address the initial challenges of the policy.

The Deputy Minister said there was a new phase of the Planting for Food and Jobs where poultry rearing was included.

Hence, he called on big players in the poultry industry, unemployed graduates as well as those interested in partnering with the Government to improve the poultry industry to get on board.

Mr Tufeiru said starter packs, including a minimum of 120 live birds, battery cages, medication and feed for a period of seven to eight weeks would be provided for those who would apply.

“People have done that and further expanded with the initial support we have given them,” he stated.

Madam Zanetor Agyemang-Rawlings, Member of Parliament of the Korle Klottey Constituency, said it was important for an enabling environment to be created for

poultry rearing in the country.

She said the cost of poultry production in the country was expensive and not cost effective.

Madam Agyemang-Rawlings advised that agribusiness must have the required support systems and be made attractive and fun to encourage the youth to be involved.

Ms Alberta Nana Akyaa Akosa, Executive Director of Agrihouse Foundation, said so far, the event was successful for four consecutive times.

“... The fact that key government officials like the Ministers and others have been able to dedicate their time here, you see a whole balance of beautiful political divide unifying to come together to promote the Ghana Poultry Day. For us, it is a testament of growth and strengthening,” she added.

She urged the Government to recognise and declare July 1 as a day to celebrate the Ghana Poultry Day to educate people especially children on the opportunity that existed within the sector.

Students from some Senior High Schools, groups and individuals participated in a cooking competition as part of activities to mark the Day.



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Rainbow Chicken targets low-cost future after listing

South African poultry producer Rainbow Chicken is focused on keeping its costs low as it begins life as a stand-alone company, Reuters reported, citing CEO Marthinus Stander on Monday.

Rainbow, one of South Africa's leading poultry firms, was spun off by parent company RCL Foods and listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange last Wednesday.

Its shares were trading at 4.50 rand by 1413 GMT on Monday, up from last week's IPO price of 2.85 rand.

"We're bringing volumes back and we have invested in feed milling, all in an effort to keep costs as low as possible," Stander told Reuters in an interview.

South Africa's poultry industry has over the past few years battled erratic electricity supplies, blamed on frequent breakdowns at the country's ageing coal-fired power plants, which disrupt operations and drive costs up. The industry was also hit by the country's worst ever bird flu outbreak last year.

"You've got to find ways to survive, no matter what the environment throws at you, ours is to produce chicken and stay relevant to the consumer by keeping our prices low," Stander added.

He said Rainbow had obtained approval to use vaccines against avian flu, "but the rules and protocols to be able to vaccinate are not affordable or practical".

The company is working with the South African Poultry Association and the country's authorities to address biosecurity standards and monitoring protocols, which the industry considers to be stringent and costly.

Sam Mkorosi, head of origination deals at the Johannesburg Stock Exchange, said spinning off Rainbow would allow the company to focus on its niche and to be "more nimble" to respond to market turns and opportunities.

"The market has been facing some challenges but the fundamental underpinning to the industry is that chicken is still the cheapest form of protein in a growing population," Mkorosi said.



STATE TO INCREASE AREA UNDER IRRIGATION FOR RICE, MAIZE AND HORTICULTURE CROPS

The National Irrigation Authority is planning to increase the overall area under irrigation within the next five years.

Irrigation PS Ephantus Kimotho said there are plans to increase the area under irrigation from the current 711,993 acres to 1.2 million acres by 2027.

This will be used to increase production of different crops including rice, maize, horticulture and fodder.

“For us to be able to increase the area under irrigation, we also require to increase our storage. So we also have a plan to increase the water storage from the current 55 million cubic metres to 340 million cubic litres by 2027. We will do this through some of the dams that we are constructing,” he said.

He spoke during the launch of the NIA Strategic Plan for 2023-2027.

Currently, only the Thiba Dam is being used for irrigation, despite the sector’s high water consumption.

To address this, the State Department of Irrigation has identified some key dams, including Galana Dam in Tana River/Kilifi counties, High Grand Falls in Tharaka Nithi/Kitui, Boston Dam in Bomet, Isiolo Dam, Radat Dam near Pekera in Baringo and Lowaat Dam in Turkana, among others.

The PS said construction of the Galana Dam is underway, with groundbreaking scheduled for October.

The dam will provide over 300 million cubic metres and help irrigate up to 200,000 acres.

“This will go a long way towards addressing the issue of food security. It will also help towards addressing the issue of job creation, because on average, one acre creates around five jobs, so we’re talking about creating over a million jobs,” Kimotho said.

This will also be helpful in manufacture, especially towards creating the raw materials for industrialisation.

NIA Chief Executive Officer Charles Muasya outlined the plan to increase the capacity of water harvesting stored for irrigation.

“At the moment, the only dam being used for irrigation is the Thiba Dam. So during this ambitious process, we are planning to onboard the Galana Dam and also start implementing the High Grand Falls Dam. The third major target is to optimise utilisation of all existing schemes,” he said.

Muasya said they wanted to boost production to ensure optimal use of the installed infrastructure.

“Another target is to increase irrigated rice and maize production from 192,299 tonnes of rice and 195,521 kilograms (90 kgs) of maize

in 2023-2024 to 700,000 metric tonnes of rice and 300 million bags of maize,” he said.

The national rice deficit is 700,000 tonnes, which they aim to close within the next five years.

To achieve these goals, Muasya said there is a need to strengthen engagement to optimise the adoption of operational research, irrigation technologies and production.

This includes enhancing governance and institutional capacity building at NIA, developing and adopting appropriate policy, legal and regulatory frameworks.

The government is also focused on ensuring state agencies can sustain their operations.

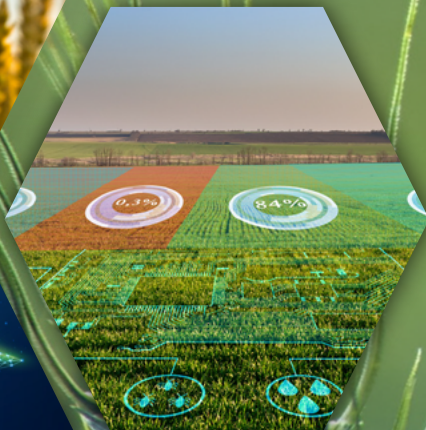
“This means that NIA is under pressure to generate sufficient funds in its schemes and projects for the realisation of this aspiration. We are in the middle of a budget cut which was targeted for infrastructure development during this financial year and we need to find innovative ways on how we can be able to bridge this gap,” he said.

He called for support towards implementing a robust resource mobilisation strategy to ensure sustained irrigation development and realise the strategic plan.

“There is a need to address potential financial resource challenges and explore funding options by developing contiguous plans for unexpected economic downturns and budget constraints,” he said.



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Kwara State Government Launches Distribution Of Farm Inputs For Farmers



The Kwara State Governor, North Central Nigeria, AbdulRahman AbdulRazaq says at least 10,000 farmers across the 16 local governments of the state will receive improved seeds, chemicals, and fertilizers this farming season.

According to him, this is part of the present administration's efforts in the state to encourage bumper harvest and promote food security.

Speaking in Ilorin at the launch of the distribution of farm inputs (3rd batch) to local farmers, the Governor said farmers are the backbone of food security and sustainable economic growth.

Gov reiterates commitment to food security

"This administration is committed to addressing the challenges in the agricultural sector. Farmers are recognised as the backbone of food security and economic growth. Hence, a rigorous farmer registration process has been set up, ensuring that only genuine farmers benefit," he said.

"The first batch of the Special Rice

Intervention Programme assisted 3400 real farmers with quality seeds, fertilizers, and agrochemicals, resulting in significant increases in rice production," the governor added.

According to him with the second phase (FADAMA NG CARES), 600,000 beneficiaries are receiving support, including boats, seeds, agrochemicals, power tillers, and grinding machines stressing that this initiative is aimed to make agricultural productivity more robust and widespread.

AbdulRazaq added that the government is also committed to boosting livestock productivity and market access through its Livestock Productivity and Enhancement Scheme (LPRES) campaigns in the state.

"By supporting farmers, food security is ensured, jobs created, and economic growth is sustained," he added.

The Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, Toyosi Thomas-Adebayo, for her part, said there are a lot of programmes the

government has embarked upon to support farmers and improve farm yields in the state, commending AbdulRazaq for his purposeful leadership.

Permanent Secretary of the Ministry, Sokoya Funke said the distribution of farm inputs for farmers means a lot in the agricultural sector, urging the beneficiaries to use the items for the purpose that serves public interest.

The Executive Director, Centre for Community Employment, and Poverty Eradication Abdur-rahman Akindele Ayuba, who spoke on behalf of other CSOs, hailed the government for engaging them in all stages of the exercise.

He urged the government officials to ensure proper monitoring of the recipients so that the inputs and other supports are used appropriately.

It would be recalled that the state government had recently targeted 600,000 households, including smallholding farmers, in recent distribution of farm implements and other supports.

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'PRECISION FARMING' DRONES TAKE OFF IN SOUTH AFRICA

Farmers and operations in South Africa's agricultural sector are increasingly turning to drones to assist with "precision farming"—a technique involving the analysis and consideration of several factors to determine the correct inputs for maximum outcome.

According to Kopano Tholo, a drone expert at ITOO Special Risks, farmers around the world are under pressure to boost the efficiency of resource management in the face of tough economic conditions.

At the same time, the "farm-to-plate" phenomenon has seen a greater push for better traceability of food products as consumers are concerned about the sources of the foods and how they were produced.

Tholo noted that drones are now

taking over from more costly processes, being used to help farmers streamline important information on their crops through data and topography analytics.

"Agriculture in the modern era is all about speed and precision, and over the past few years, precision farming has seen significant growth across the globe. Today, a considerable portion of new farm equipment contains some form of precision farming elements," said Tholo.

"Essentially, precision farming comes down to doing the right thing in the right place at the right time with the right amount. This results in higher profitability, better sustainability and greater productivity while saving time."

He said drones are used to fulfil a variety of tasks in precision

farming, ranging from soil sampling and crop field analysis to planting and pesticide application.

Drones in agriculture can be combined with various imaging technologies that provide farmers with temporal and site-specific information about crop health, fungal infections or growth bottlenecks.

The use of drones in agricultural practices in South Africa, specifically for functions such as spraying pesticides, has gained significant attention in recent years. Traditionally, crops would typically be sprayed from fixed-wing planes, microlights or helicopters.

However, drone technology has proven to be more efficient for this task, as they can get much closer to crops than other aircraft.



“This obviously enables more precise pesticide application and allows for close to 100% of field areas to be sprayed, whereas challenging terrain often prevents other types of aircraft from being as efficient,” said Tholo.

Rise of drone use

The drone market in South Africa has grown substantially in recent years, and the country is currently the biggest user of drone technology on the continent.

Research firm Industry ARC recently revealed that the local market for small drones is growing fast and is set to reach R2.5 billion by 2025, with an annual growth rate of 22.35% between 2020 and 2025.

Currently, the biggest user of drone technology in South Africa is the mining sector, where drones are used for applications such as safety, inventory monitoring, and 3D modelling.

This is followed by the film and entertainment industry and the agricultural sector, where drones are increasingly used for precision farming.

Aside from the commercial benefits of using drones in farming, the tech also carries heft in pushing for more ‘green’ and sustainable methods.

Major South African retailer Woolworths recently highlighted that its suppliers are increasingly using drones in a push for regenerative agriculture and water conservation.

Specifically, the group’s suppliers are using drone technology to identify plants under stress, allowing farmers to make data-driven decisions and conserve water resources, it said.

This also forms part of precision farming.

Farmers can monitor the health of crops and detect signs of strain by utilising drones with

advanced sensors, allowing for targeted irrigation and resource management.

“Some of our farmers use drones to check for trees that are compromised,” said Latiefa Behardien, Chief Food Technology and Sustainability Officer at Woolworths’ Farming for the Future.

“Instead of watering all the trees all the time, the farmer can water only those who are thirsty and manage this precious resource better. This is just one example of how technology is transforming agriculture and paving the way for a more sustainable future.”

Through drone technology, farmers can optimise water usage, reduce waste and mitigate the impacts of climate change on agriculture practices.

Data-driven insights also allow farmers to enhance crop resilience and improve yield, the group said.





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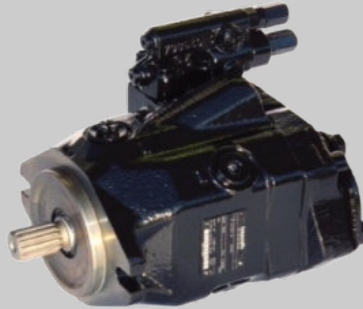
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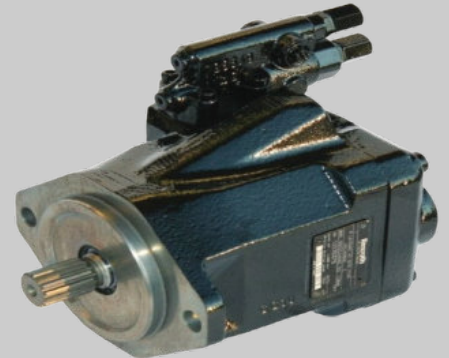
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