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PRESS RELEASE

Zambian Government launches Cassava Mechanisation and Agro Processing Initiative to improve business and boost food security

The initiative will boost production and keep the country in the league of major producers of the root while increasing profit margins for farmers and businesses to reverse

Lusaka, Tuesday, 19 April 2016: The Zambian Government in partnership with the African Agricultural Technology Foundation, AATF has launched a Cassava Mechanisation and Agro Processing Project, CAMAP, that will boost production and keep the country in the league of major producers of the root crop. The launch which took place at the Zambia Agricultural Research Institute, ZARI, Mansa, on 19 April 2016 was graced by the Honorable Minister of Agriculture and Livestock, Hon. Given Lubinda, MP.

'The goal of the Cassava Mechanisation and Agro-processing Project, or CAMAP, is to enhance the contribution of cassava production and processing technologies to sustainable improvements in food security, incomes and livelihoods of farmers, processors, and marketers in the cassava sector. This will be achieved through upgrading and expanding traditional planting, harvesting and processing techniques that will contribute to development of competitive cassava commodity value chains for a reliable supply of processed products for food and non-food industrial use,' said Hon. Given Lubinda.

The Minister said cassava is the second most important food crop for over 30 percent of the Zambian population 'but the challenge remains the drudgery involved in its production'.

Mechanisation of labour-intensive cassava production activities is one of the major interventions that can rapidly be applied to enhance field operations and improve production systems. It is along these lines that AATF and ZARI have been working with smallholder farmers in Zambia under CAMAP since 2013 to offer productivity solutions to cassava farming.

The project is currently working with over 350 small holder farmers in Mansa, Samfya and Kaoma where an increase in yields of over 33 tonnes per hectare, up from about 5 to 11 tonnes per hectare was realised. In addition, several farmers realised higher profit margins with incomes rising to over US\$2,750 per hectare compared to previous earnings of below US\$500 per hectare.

Over the last decade, cassava has evolved in Zambia from a mere food security crop to a cash and industrial crop. It is grown as a major crop in six out of the 10 provinces in Zambia and provides a regular source of income for farmers and processors. CAMAP will compliment previous and on-going efforts of the government to improve cassava production in Zambia.

The Executive Director of AATF, Dr Denis Kyetere, said the project has acquired cassava planters, cultivators, boom sprayers and root diggers or harvesters from Planti Center in Brazil.

‘The project is exploring an integrated approach to address low cassava productivity in Sub-Saharan Africa by combining mechanisation with best agronomic practices such as the use of improved and better yielding cassava varieties, use of fertiliser, regular weeding and timely planting and harvesting,’ said Dr Kyetere, adding that this has helped in enhancing smallholder capacity in mechanisation and enterprise development to create wealth, generate employment and boost rural economy.

CAMAP activities are funded with UK aid from the UK Government. The project began pilot activities in 2013 and aims to achieve its goals within five years.

Expected benefits

The project is targeting 3.5 million farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa with deliberate efforts to include women and youths. It aims to double production per hectare from the current 7 to 10 tons to over 25tons per hectare; increase incomes for farmers from the current average of below US\$500 per hectare to over US\$2,750 per hectare; and strengthen capacity of local entrepreneurs in the mechanisation service provision including maintenance and repairs of farm and processing equipment.

The project will ensure that at least 50,000 farmers are trained on best practices in managing agriculture as a business. Over 500 from the private sector – which includes bakeries, stock feed companies, starch mills and food houses – will also be trained in the use of the machines, quality standards and market linkages to ensure sustainability of project goals.

A key aspect of the project is its goal of ensuring that at least 30% of its beneficiaries are women and youth.

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About CAMAP (<http://camap.aatf-africa.org/>)

CAMAP is a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) coordinated by AATF and bringing together cassava processors, farm machinery manufacturers and fabricators, national governments, cooperatives and investors. CAMAP links farmers with mechanisation service providers and processors and helps to build their capacity to do farming as a business for improved livelihoods. This project is currently being implemented in Nigeria, Zambia and Uganda. It aims to reach 3.5 million people – farmers, fabricators, agro processors, service providers, extension agents, youth – in the first five years

About ZARI

The Zambia Agriculture Research Institute (ZARI) is the largest Agricultural research entity in the country. It has 10 research stations with Mt. Makulu Central Research Station being the institute's headquarters. The institute's overall objective is to develop and adapt crop, soil and plant protection technologies and to provide a high quality, appropriate and cost-effective service to farmers. The activities are carried out in all the three agro-ecological regions which are Region I which receives up to 800mm of rainfall, Region II which receives between 800-1,000mm of rainfall, and Region III which receives more than 1,000 mm of rainfall.

About AATF (<http://www.aatf-africa.org/>)

The African Agriculture Technology Foundation (AATF) is a not-for-profit organisation that accesses, develops, adapts and delivers appropriate agricultural technologies for sustainable use by smallholder farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa through innovative partnerships and effective stewardship along the entire value chain. AATF provides expertise and know-how that facilitates the identification, access, development, delivery and utilisation of appropriate agricultural technologies. AATF works towards food security and poverty reduction in Sub-Saharan Africa, and its structure and operations draw upon the best practices and resources of both the public and private sectors. AATF is a registered charity under the laws of England and Wales and has been given a tax-exempt status in the USA. It is incorporated in Kenya and in the UK and has been granted host country status by the Government of Kenya where it is headquartered and is registered as a charity in Nigeria.