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By Staff Writer

Farm Market Programme to Benefit 21 Wards in Arumeru

A total of 21 wards in the Arumeru district are set to benefit from the market linkage training being executed through the Agricultural Marketing Systems Development Programme (AMSDP), which runs under the Prime Minister's office.

The business awareness training sessions will be carried out by the AMSDP partner agency known as Traditional Irrigation and Environmental Development Organization (TIP) effective this fiscal year and will benefit a population of approximately 332,812 residents. The main objective of the training, according to the AMSDP field Officer, Asha Muya, is to change the mind-set of small-scale farmers from perceiving agricultural as subsistence activity to start viewing it as a profitable commercial enterprise.

" So far we have already formed a Farmers' research committee within the Arumeru district which is going to be empowered on how to carry out market study for their produce." Muya stated, adding that the importance of establishing such a committee was to empower the groups to carry out participatory market research by them selves. "This will help them to cope with the regularly changing market conditions at specific times and thus being in a position to create sustainable market linkages," she said.

The committee members are to oversee the farmers participatory market research in their respective wards and villages. The field officer further planned that in the process to empower local peasants. Through discovering and security reliable markets for their produce the program will also introduce the farmers to the new concept of contract farming.

Another officer behind the project Joseph Mkwama said farmers participatory market research was process through which farmers and rural communities in partnership with TIP will collect and analyze market information as an input for taking decision before choosing appropriate income generating activity at the farm and community levels.

The long-term goal of the Agricultural Marketing Systems Development Programme (AMSDP) is planned to increase incomes and food security of the poverty stricken rural households in both the Northern and Southern Zones of Tanzania. The intermediate goal on the other hand is to improve the structure conduct and performance of agricultural marketing systems in the country, so as to provide financial incentives to small-scale farmers and medium scale traders or processors.

TIP which is the project-executing agent for the Northern Zone is a Non Governmental Organization (NGO) registered in Tanzania since 1999. Currently TIP operates in four districts of Lushoto, Same, Mwanaga and Arumeru, but also carries out contracts and special assignments in Moshi Rural, Hai and Rombo districts.

In the AMSDP program TIP is specifically facilitating the implementation of the Producer empowerment and Market linkages component in Arumeru district. This aims at increasing the benefits: that smallholder producers can obtain from interacting with the market in an organized and sustainable manner.

The object is achieved through strengthening the social and organizational structure of small-scale producers. Thus enabling them to participate in the market effectively. Empowering the

groups through improved market information and extension services to enhance their leverage and bargaining power via more organized producers and Agro-processors.

It is aimed also at establishing vertical and horizontal linkage with formal market actors to minimize the risks associated with the lack of assured rural opportunities and therefore fluctuation of prices for both inputs and outputs.