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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release,

Presentation of three EU funded SAGCOT rice projects

Wednesday 14 February 2018, Dar es Salaam: Today, the Head of Delegation of the European Union to Tanzania and the East African Community, H.E. Roeland van de Geer together with representatives from FAO Tanzania, HELVETAS Swiss Interco-operation and the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) presented three projects supporting the rice sector. These projects are financed by the EU through the Agricultural Component of the EU support to the Southern Agriculture Growth Corridor Initiative of Tanzania (SAGCOT) for a total of 4.5 Million Euros (Approx. 12.5 billion Tanzanian Shillings).

The SAGCOT initiative is a public-private partnership dedicated to ensure food security, reduce poverty, and spur economic development in Tanzania's Southern Corridor. Projects presented today specifically aim at increasing competitiveness and improving the post-harvest value chain of small holder rice farmers in the Morogoro and Iringa regions.

One of the projects will be implemented in Iringa District, by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations, in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and the Rural Urban Development Initiatives (RUDI) and is titled '**Improve Competitiveness and Increase Postharvest Management Capacity of Smallholder Farmers in the Rice Value Chain**'.

The second one '**Rice Postharvest Management (RIPOMA)**' is implemented by HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation in the Morogoro region, Kilosa and Mvomero districts and aims at empowering smallholder women and youth farmers on Rice Postharvest Management and Marketing through capacity building in Good Agricultural Practises, Market systems, Financial services and investment in postharvest Infrastructures.

The third project '**Enhancing Competitiveness of Smallholder Rice Farmers in Morogoro**' is jointly implemented by AKF and Rice Council of Tanzania (RCT) and will reach up to 5,000 smallholder farmers particularly women and youth in Kilombero, Malinyi and Ulanga districts.

Speaking during the launch Ambassador Roeland van de Geer said that "*The three rice projects funded by the EU will address some of the challenges faced by the rice sector in particular those associated with post-harvest losses and value chain weaknesses. Today post-harvest losses can amount to a staggering 40% of the harvest.*"

During her speech, the Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Hon. Dr. Mary Machuche Mwanjelwa appreciated the fact that the European Union (EU) has selected agriculture as one of the focal sectors to support under the National Indicative Programme (NIP 2014-2020). She said that, the initiative will also complement the efforts in the Agriculture sector and that the support provided is in-line with the Agriculture Sector Development Programme (ASDP) II.



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Hon. Dr. Mwanjelwa applauded the EU's effort to competitively award grant contracts to project beneficiaries such as the Aga Khan Foundation and Helvetas in Morogoro and FAO in Iringa. She assured the public that the project beneficiaries, GoT and other stakeholders will work endlessly to ensure that intended objectives will be met and ultimately attract more support to other underdeveloped areas.

She expressed the Government's commitment to strengthen the unprecedented historical cooperation with EU. *"Thanks to the EU for sustaining the support to the Government's development initiatives particularly in the Agriculture Sector, but also other sectors such as Energy and Good Governance"* added Hon. Dr. Mwanjelwa.

These EU funded projects will address among other issues, challenges associated with post-harvest losses and value chain weaknesses, and will exploit the many opportunities to create a major change in the rice economy of the Iringa and Morogoro regions.

Background:

Rice, the second most important crop in the United Republic of Tanzania, is mostly grown by farmers as a cash crop for local and regional markets. Farmers are at the core of the value chain as they play a significant role on the source of the produced goods, post-harvest losses account for about 40% for cereals including the rice sub-sector, therefore addressing the challenge at the farm gate is crucial since chances for losses beyond the farmers level are relatively minimum. With improved competitiveness and post-harvest losses management, paddy and other cereals can definitely make the country food self-sufficient, resulting in poverty reduction, increased incomes while ensuring a sustainable supply of food and a reliable market for farmers.

For more information please contact:

Susanne Mbise – EU Press & Information Officer

Susanne.MBISE@eeas.europa.eu /+255 753 045 795

Emmanuel Kihaule – FAO Tanzania National Communications Officer

Emmanuel.Kihaule@fao.org /+255 767 180 937

Godfrey Kahabuka – AKF Project Manager

Godfrey.Kahabuka@akfea.org /+255 765 739 961

Daniel Kalimbiya - HELVETAS Swiss Interco-operation, Deputy Country Director

Daniel.Kalimbiya@helvetas.org /+255 756 725 390