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Horticultural sector to boost revenue in next five years

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By Alex Bitekeye

The horticultural sector has set an ambitious target to raise revenue of \$1bn over the next five years to compete favourably with the regional leader, Kenya.

The Permanent Secretary in the ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Cooperatives Mr Mohamed Muya said yesterday that the sector's phenomenal growth over the last few years is set to grow even further. He told a press conference at the ministry headquarters in Dar es Salaam that the country was gearing up for competition, with the target of raising a minimum of Sh1.4 trillion by 2015 from the current Sh150 billion annually. Kenya currently collects Sh3 trillion from its flower farms despite the fact that Tanzania has more fertile land than the rest of the EAC member countries.

"The horticultural products' market is growing very fast with commodity prices shooting up every day," said Muya. He called the press conference to announce the hosting in Arusha, next week, of the third national horticultural meeting.

Prime Minister Mizengo Pinda is expected to officiate at the opening of the meeting starting on Monday. It will attract an estimated 250 stakeholders.

Among other things, the meetings will have a duty to discuss the challenges facing their field and what could be done to overcome them.

The PS said the industry plays a big role in generating employment opportunities through cultivation, Processing and Transportation of the products.

On his side, the chairman of the Horticulture Development Council of Tanzania (HODECT) Mr Felix Mosha said the forum was important to seek ways to help in the country's 'Kilimo Kwanza' policy. "In this meeting, stakeholders will also have a chance to discuss the horticultural Sector Development Strategy, which aims at increasing the country's income from the sector," said Mr Mosha.

The ministry's director of Crops Developments, Mr Geoffrey Kirenga said that the ministry has established a programme whereby some research centres had been formed to help farmers by providing advice and supplying them with transplanting seedlings.

"For example, our centre at Mpiji near Kibaha district, produce 10,000 mango seedlings per year to cater for the Coastal zone farmers, and we are planning to produce 300,000 of the same from next year," said Kirenga. He also added that they had gone out and met with seedling businessmen and trained them on how to identify and handle the best seedlings before they are sold to their customers.

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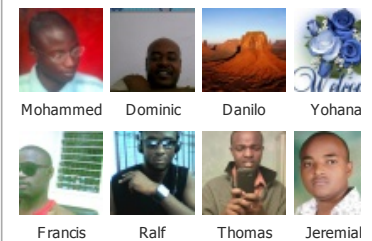
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