

THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA

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PRESIDENT'S OFFICE

REGIONAL ADMINISTRATION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

MBEYA REGION

A BRIEF ABOUT MBEYA REGION AND ROUND POTATO SUBSECTOR GIVEN TO  
THE NETHERLANDS POTATO TRADE MISSION ON 17TH JUNE 2016

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## **1.0 CLIMATE, POPULATION, AREA AND ADMINISTRATION**

### **1.1 Geographical Location**

Mbeya region is situated in the Southern Highlands of Tanzania. The Region borders the Republics of Malawi to the South, Songwe Region to the West, Singida and Tabora Regions to the North and Iringa and Njombe Regions to the East. It lies at an altitude of 375 above sea level with high peaks of 2,981 metres above sea level at Rungwe higher altitudes.

### **1.2 Land Area and Administrative Units**

Mbeya region has a total surface area of 34,606 sq. kms out of which 461.7 sq.kms is covered by water bodies of Lakes Nyasa and several rivers while the remaining 34,144.3 sq.km is land area. Administratively, the Region is divided into 5 districts with 7 Local Government Authorities, 15 divisions, 178 wards, 533 villages and 181 Mitaa.

### **1.3 Population Size and Growth**

According to the 2012 census the undivided Mbeya region had a population of 2,707,410 people out of whom 1,297,738 are male and 1,409,672 are female. The new Mbeya Region population projection of 2015 was 1,989,404.

### **1.4 Climate**

Mbeya climate is generally tropical with marked seasonal variations of dry and rainy seasons. The rainy season starts from October to May and the dry season starts from June to September. The rainfall ranges from 650 mm per annum in the low lands to 2,600 mm in the highlands. The temperatures range from about 16°C in the highlands to 30°C in the lowland areas.

### **1.5 Soil**

There is diversity in the geology, soils type and vegetation of the region whereby a large area is covered with thick layers of volcanic and alkali basalt soils; and limestone

in low lying areas. The arable areas are mostly of moderate fertility, varying from sandy loam, alluvial soils to cracking clays.

### **1.6 Drainage System**

There are two basic drainage systems in the region. The Ruaha and Rufiji basin extending from the southern highlands of Tanzania form a watershed area of the main rivers draining the region towards the Indian Ocean.

## **2.0 OVERALL REGIONAL ECONOMY**

### **2.1 Mbeya Regional GDP and its contribution to the National GDP**

On the basis of current prices, Mbeya Region GDP has increased from Tshs. 1.04 trillion in 2005 to Tshs. 5.911 trillion in 2014. The Region contributed 7.44% into the national income (GDP) holding a third position national-wide after Dar-es-Salaam and Mwanza (NBS, 2012).

### **2.2 Main Economic Activities**

The economy of Mbeya is based on agriculture, livestock, bee keeping, fishing, mining, commerce and manufacturing. Other economic enterprises include minor agro- processing and tourism. However, most of its potential has not been effectively exploited to the maximum a situation that triggers the region to continue partnering with other stakeholders to invest in various sectors.

## **3.0 AGRICULTURAL SECTOR**

Agriculture dominates the livelihood and economy of the Region. The sector contributes about 40% of the regional economy and employs about 80% of the working population. Agriculture is carried out mainly using peasantry farming methods.

Mbeya is one of the regions earmarked nationally to produce surplus food for internal consumption and for export. The food crops grown include maize, paddy,

**Table 1: Production Trend of Round Potato in Mbeya Region**

Council	2013/2014		2014/2015		2015/2016 (Projections)	
	Area (Ha)	Production (Tons)	Area (Ha)	Production (Tons)	Area (Ha)	Production (Tons)
Mbeya	15,248.0	194,224.0	15,725.0	204,418.0	15,555.0	205,702.0
Mbeya City	1,353.0	33,825.0	1,355.0	33,875.0	1,550.0	33,900.0
Busokelo	4,997.0	50,672.0	5,679.0	130,617.0	5,650.0	130,700.0
Rungwe	24,570.0	633,906.0	24,570.0	489,496.0	24,570.0	491,139.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>46,168.0</b>	<b>912,627.0</b>	<b>47,329.0</b>	<b>858,406.0</b>	<b>47,325.0</b>	<b>861,441.6</b>

*Source: District Councils, 2016*

## 4.2 Marketing and Market Channels

Potato trade in the region is not organized through official market Channels. About 82% of Round potato farmers sell the produce to the traders direct from the field. Only a few transport to different market places such as Tunduma, Dar es Salaam. Some of the potato from Mbeya is transported to nearby Countries such as Malawi, Zambia and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

In the region there are only local traditional facilities used to store Round potato. Most farmers harvest their produce when a buyer is available.

## 4.3 Opportunities

In Mbeya region there is a great chance for the crop to develop to its potential. A number of opportunities for the development of the crop have been described as follows:-

- i. Presence of sufficient rainfall for production in season and water bodies for irrigation,
- ii. Presence of largely unexploited market.
- iii. The existence of suitable conditions for production in both highland and lowland zones in the region.
- iv. Presence of improved potato varieties that have been bred in national Agriculture Research Institutes including Tengeru, Asante and Sherekea which are available at ARI Uyole and some few farmers.

#### 4.4 Challenges

- i. The prevalence of diseases such as Bacterial wilt, <sup>Late Blight</sup> and Nematodes.
- ii. Higher costs of inputs especially fertilizers and potato seeds.
- iii. Reliance on rain fed production.
- iv. Lack of storage facilities.
- v. Absence of farmers associations.
- vi. The dominance of middlemen in the market.

#### 5.0 CONCLUSION

It has been explained that Potato has an important role in food security as well as generating income of the households. Stakeholders are urged to help establish institutions to develop, certify and supply improved and clean seed tubers; spearheading the process of organizing farmers into associations to reduce the dominance of middlemen by among others supporting efforts to upscale post harvest handling technologies with an intention of improving nutrition, adding value to the crop and increasing farmers income.

The regional Office has been playing an important role in promoting investment opportunities and providing backstopping to various development programs in the region. We are therefore welcome all the companies from Netherland to invest in the Region in Round Potato subsector.

Thanks.