

OPPORTUNITIES IN POTATO INDUSTRY IN TANZANIA

Participants were informed that potatoes are mainly grown in the Southern Highlands of Tanzania in the regions of Mbeya, Iringa, Njombe followed by Arusha region which is in the Northern part of Tanzania. However, despite the cultivation being famous in those areas, farmers still do not seem to benefit from their farming as expected.

The major challenges facing Tanzania's potato farmers include unstable prices and markets, where involvement of middlemen play a major role from harvesting to marketing. Lack of post-harvest knowledge and skills, storage and grading facilities, insufficient of good seeds, outbreak of diseases and pests are among the challenges facing the potato farmers.

Other issues discussed include change of weather conditions eg. drought (prolonged drought) or too much rainfall during planting season which in the end causes the crops to be affected, frost which affects potato production, lack of agribusiness skills such as the best and modern techniques in the preparation of farms, planting, harvesting and value addition, high prices of farm inputs e.g. fertilizers and agrochemicals, lack of awareness in forming farmers' cooperative unions as a result uneasy access to credit.

Despite these challenges, it was stated that the fertile soil and good climate in the Southern Highlands are satisfactory enough to produce up to 40 tons per hectare. Furthermore, opportunities in potatoes production will increase in trade opportunities and investments for companies involved in potato value chain activities, continued promotion of trade relations and investment between Tanzania and the Netherlands are among the prospects and opportunities available in the potato crop in Tanzania.

Participants who most of them were owners of companies which are involved in agriculture and potato trade, expressed their desire to invest and establish business cooperation in the potato industry in Tanzania.

The SAGCOT Center of Tanzania which is the main stakeholder of this sector assured full cooperation to the investors/traders. Potato production in Tanzania does not only cater as a major food for many communities but also benefits farmers commercially both domestically and internationally.