

Zambia allocates 20,000 hectares of farmland to Kenya maize growers to boost local supplies

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ZAMBIA – Bilateral talk between Kenya and Zambia has become a boon to maize growers from Kenya as the government of Zambia, represented by Agriculture Minister Reuben Phir agreed to put to pen a memorandum of understanding for agriculture collaboration.

As part of the agreement, the southern African country will provide permits to

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Kenyan producers to grow mainly maize on the 20,000-hectare plots allocated to them and to export their crops to their country of origin.

“We have a favorable climate and land in Zambia for agriculture, which will benefit Kenyans,” Mr. Phiri said.

Zambia’s government also accepted to supply Kenya with its surplus maize as a short-term measure to boost local supplies and stabilize prices.

According to Kenya’s Agriculture Cabinet Secretary (CS) Mithika Linturi, the move would lead to the reduction of the cost of maize and its products in the country and collectively lead to the realization of food and nutrition security.

“I am happy the Zambian government has agreed to offer Kenyan farmers land for large-scale farming in Zambia. Kenyan farmers will, in turn, be required to export their yields back to Kenya to boost our food supply and security,” he stated.

Kenya has been battling with an acute shortage of maize, partly caused by the

ongoing worst drought ever experienced in 40 years, which has pushed maize prices to record highs.

A 90Kg bag which used to retail at around KES2700 in 2020 now sells for KES5,600 while a 2Kg maize meal that previously sold for KES 90 has **doubled** in price and currently retails at between KES190 and KES230.

The government has made various attempts, including removing the ban on GM food and ordering duty-free maize to shore up supply and reduce the price, but none of these efforts has borne fruit.

Still, the government is unrelenting in its efforts to bring down maize prices. It has re-introduced subsidies for maize fertilizer and is working to ensure the much-awaited 10 million bags of duty-free maize arrive in Kenya.

The government of Kenya has also launched a new roadmap titled National Irrigation Services Strategy that will cost it Sh389 billion (US\$3.1 billion) to boost and strengthen irrigation infrastructure and

support the realization of food security in the country.

The strategy strengthens the efforts of the country, which also includes the opening up of 5,000 acres of the Galana-Kulalu Irrigation Scheme to private companies next month under the private-public partnership (PPP).

Twiga Foods, a leading agr-tech firm, has already been allocated some 20,000 acres in the expansive scheme for maize production.

According to the PS for Agriculture, Twiga Foods and other private investors seeking to farm in Galana-Kulalu will be first required to plant maize in the first season before exploring any other crops of their wishes.

“National Irrigation Authority will now play a supervisory role by ensuring that everything is moving on as planned,” the PS said. “The development of the scheme, which they have been doing before, will now be left to private investors.”