

Turkana, West Pokot to gain from agency's sugarcane farming

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Kerio Valley Development Authority, managing director, David Kimosop accompanied by the deputy Francis Kipkech during a press conference in Eldoret town on November 28, 2013. Kimosop said they will initiate projects on the Pokot-Turkana border to empower locals which will help end conflict over resources. Photo/JARED NYATAYA

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The Kerio Valley Development Authority (KVDA) and an Indian investor are working on a plan to set up a multi-billion sugarcane plantation in West Pokot and Turkana counties.

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The State agency said that the project would help to contain conflict among the neighbouring pastoral communities.

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Managing director David Kimosop said that West Pokot and Turkana counties would benefit from the project estimated to cost between Sh8 billion and Sh10 billion at the lower Turkwel Gorge hydro scheme.

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A feasibility study is ongoing and a team of experts from the Indian firm Wapros India is expected to tour the region, the KVDA managing director said during the unveiling of the project's master plan in Eldoret last week.

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"More than 25,000 hectares of land will be planted with sugar cane under drip irrigation as part of downstream development plans of the Turkwel hydropower project," he said.

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Mr Kimosop said the agency would own 5,000 hectares of the plantation as nucleus to educate local communities in the region on the need to diversify from pastoralism to crop production as alternative source of income.



"The two counties will be involved establishment of the project that will also boost their income generation and help contain the rampant cattle rustling activities," said Mr Kimosop.

The involvement of the communities in the project sends an important message to the investors, going by the furore associated with developments or massive projects in certain regions.

Recently, Tullow Oil Company was forced to temporarily halt operations in Turkana when the residents demanded jobs and other income-generating activities. The firm has acknowledged that the exploration firm could have "messed" by not engaging the right publics, including the area chiefs.

The authority is also expected to partner with Indian and Italian development agencies to set up multi-million shilling marble plant for processing of marble found at Koitilial village in Elgeyo-Marakwet County and gypsum at Napeded in Turkana County.

"The protracted armed conflict caused by cattle raids and banditry is scaring potential investors from participating in development of the region," said Mr Kimosop while appealing for peaceful co-existence among the pastoralists.

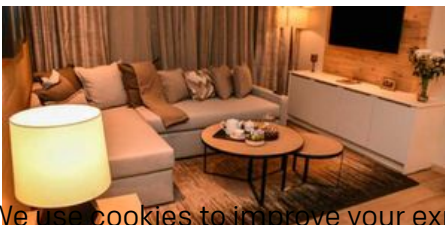
He said that water from Turkwel dam with capacity of 1.6 million cubic metres would be used to promote irrigated agriculture to boost crop production and attain food security.

The Kerio Valley belt is attracting massive attention after the striking of commercial oil deposits in Turkana County.

Geothermal potential in Lake Baringo and solar power in Lake Turkana offers Kerio valley basin potential to emerge as economic giant in line with Vision 2030.

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(/Bd/Corporate)

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Industry (/Bd/Corporate/Industry)

MarketPlace (/Bd/Corporate/Marketplace)

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(/Bd/Lifestyle)

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
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