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Southern Africa: Cofamosa Pushing Ahead With Irrigation Project

28 May 2012

Maputo — The Committee for the Facilitation of Agriculture between Mozambique and South Africa (COFAMOSA) is seeking 861 million meticaïs (about 31 million US dollars) to implement the project to irrigate 10,000 hectares of agricultural land in the district of Moamba, in the southern Mozambican province of Maputo.

The water would be piped from the Corumana Dam, on the Sabie River (which is a tributary of the Incomati River).

According to the president of COFAMOSA, Enoque Ngomane, this initiative includes government support for communities to participate in sugar cane production over an area of five thousand hectares.

The project is part of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which is a programme of the African Union to support pan-African development.

According to Ngomane, the African Development Bank has already given 1.2 million euros to carry out studies on environmental impact, resettlement and engineering.

Ngomane stated that "the project covers a total area of 29,000 hectares, and this year we are working on an area of 10,000 hectares along the river, producing sugar cane, potatoes, tomatoes, onions and vegetables. In 2012 our plan is to increase the area under sugar cane cultivation along the river".

The project will also produce maize and cattle for beef, and will later this year begin producing cane sugar seeds.

The project proposes the building of various infrastructures including homes for technicians and other workers and the construction of a sugar processing factory (which would also produce ethanol).

"In the first phase, it is not possible to process the sugar locally, so it will be processed at the Xinavane sugar mill, which is a major partner in this project", explained Ngomane.

The project currently has 250 partners, of which 150 are Mozambicans.

It is to be developed in two phases of 10,000 hectares and a third of 9,000 hectares. It intends to create 18,000 new jobs and establish 58 farms on fifty hectare plots.

The second and third phase will require the repair of the Corumana Dam, which is currently underway.

The sugar cane will be managed through a private/public partnership between the Mozambican government, participating farmers, sugar companies and the Mozambican state fuel company Petromoc.

According to the African Development Bank, it is estimated that 400,000 tonnes of sugar will be produced.

About 100,000 tonnes will be sold in the lucrative South African market under the terms of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) sugar agreement.

A further 300,000 tonnes is expected to be sold through preferential export markets: the United States through its tariff rate quota and the European Union market through the Everything But Arms (EBA) initiative.

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