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POLITICS AND POLICY

KVDA to set up Sh8bn cane farm in Rift

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The Turkwel dam that will be used for irrigation in the proposed sugarcane plantation in West Pokot and Turkana. FILE

By BARNABAS BII
Posted Monday, April 29 2013 at 20:34

IN SUMMARY

- KVDA will own 5,000 hectares of the plantation, to be used as nucleus to educate local communities to diversify from pastoralism to crop production.

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A regional authority is seeking to partner with Indian investors to put up a multi-billion-shilling sugarcane farm in West Pokot and Turkana counties.

The Kerio Valley Development Authority (KVDA) says the partnership, which is under negotiation, will yield investment of between Sh8 billion and Sh10 billion and will be located in the lower Turkwel Gorge hydro scheme.

"More than 25,000 hectares of land will be planted with sugarcane under drip irrigation as part of downstream development plans of the Turkwel hydropower project," said David Kimosop, KVDA managing director.

He said the authority will own 5,000

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hectares of the plantation, to be used as nucleus to educate local communities to diversify from pastoralism to crop production.

He said a team of experts from the Indian investors', whom he declined to name citing confidentiality clauses, is expected to tour the region to fast-track implementation of the project that will help contain rampant cattle rustling.

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Mr Kimosop said water from Turkwel dam — with a capacity of 1.6 million cubic meters — will be used in the project.

“The crop is expected within nine months unlike in other sugarcane production regions where it takes longer,” he said.

Rift Valley province has recorded increased sugarcane production as more farmers invest in the sector due to attractive producer prices and construction of more factories.

Production of factory cane in the province has increased from 1,041,780 tonnes to 1,644,395 tonnes last season.

The construction of Butali Sugar Factory and the rehabilitation of Muhoroni and Chemelil factories has motivated farmers in Kericho, Trans-Mara, Nandi and Uasin Gishu counties to venture into cane production.

“There is huge potential for sugarcane production in the province especially in Trans-Mara, Nandi South, Tindiret, Belgut and Kericho districts,” says a crop production report.

“Cane production has increased to between 60-100 tonnes per acre as farmers adapt modern farming techniques,” said George Otieno, an agricultural expert.

Most factories pay Sh4,200 per tonne to sugarcane which the farmers consider to be more lucrative than maize or wheat.

bbi@ke.nationmedia.com