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Olam Zambia spells out it's expansion programme

Olam Zambia Managing Director Paul Babbington has said the Northern Province based coffee growing company has created 4,000 direct jobs since it began operations in 2012 and engages an additional 2,500 persons from surrounding communities during harvest time.

Said Mr. Babbington, "due to the investment climate, the positive prospects for coffee on the world market, and warm relations with all government departments in the province – OLAM plans to increase the hectareage under cultivation to over 2,700 in the medium term and reach harvest time employment levels of between 10,000 and 11,000."

OLAM is a multinational coffee company currently running the operations of Kateshi, Ngoli and other coffee plantations in Northern Province. Olam started operations in Kasama in 2012 with an initial investment of US\$ 50 million.

The current hectareage under cultivation is 1,553 but the company plans to expand to 2,700 hectares by 2017. This capacity will include outpost hectareage in places like Mbala. For future expansion programs, prospects in Isoka are being contemplated.

To maximize coffee harvest, Olam is working with communities in surrounding areas in an out-grower scheme set up. The communities are being assisted with technical know-how on coffee plant management and on effective administration of furrow irrigation on each of their two hectare coffee gardens. The viability of the out-grower scheme is based on the age old coffee growing expertise in areas like Chitanga.

Speaking during the tour of the estates in Kasama, Finance Minister Alexander Chikwanda applauded Olam for reviving the largest coffee plantation and for restoring hope among small scale farmers who, for ages, have depended on successful harvest for their livelihoods.

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The Minister urged Olam, in the event of need, to explore the possibility of seeking financing from the African Development Bank or the World Bank for expansion and out grower schemes.

Mr. Chikwanda said facilitating and improving private capacity in non-traditional exports is a credible affirmation of the country's commitment to economic diversification.

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