



SPEECH BY THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE HON. KIPRUTO ARAP KIRWA, EGH, M.P, DURING THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF TEGEMEO CONFERENCE ON 18TH MAY 2006 AT THE SAFARI PARK HOTEL, NAIROBI.

**The Vice-Chancellor Egerton University,
USAID Country Director,
Chief, Business and Environment Office,
Deputy Vice-Chancellors,
Director of Tegemeo,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am pleased to join you today for this very important conference. Improving access to agricultural inputs has been identified as one pillar for increasing agricultural productivity in Kenya. The conference theme is "***Agricultural Inputs and Services: Impacts on Agricultural Productivity, Competitiveness and Food Security***". I am happy to state that this conference is appropriate, relevant, timely, and in line with the aspirations of the Strategy for Revitalization Agriculture (SRA), as it addresses issues of raising agricultural productivity and rural incomes, thereby alleviating poverty in the country.

Kenya's agricultural exports, like others in many developing countries, are faced with stiff competition from the global and regional markets. Raising agricultural productivity is therefore a key strategy in order to ensure we maintain a competitive edge for domestic and export agricultural production.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The SRA which the Government has been implementing since 2005 is comprehensive and focused towards guiding investment efforts to address major agricultural development challenges. It identifies challenge areas that must

receive attention if sustainable revitalization of agriculture is to be realized. Key among these is the delivery of efficient agricultural inputs and services to our producers.

I am informed that this conference will discuss challenges, opportunities and policy interventions that could complement Government efforts to enhance the efficient delivery of agricultural inputs and services that could raise productivity and enhance competitiveness, food security and improved household income.

The Institute in collaboration with KARI is developing the baseline data for the Kenya Agricultural Productivity Program. This is commendable as the achievement of program objectives will depend on the informed analysis of the implementation process.

The Kenya Agricultural Productivity Program, whose objective is to improve agricultural productivity through support to generation, dissemination and adoption of agricultural technologies new demand for empirical research and analysis, is needed to monitor and inform the implementation process. It is gratifying to note that Tegemeo Institute has taken up this challenge to contribute to this development process which will no doubt be beneficial to the achievements of the national economic prosperity.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As access to inputs is adversely affected by access to financial resources, another key element of the SRA is to access rural financial systems. This is particularly important considering that many of our mainstream financial intermediaries have withdrawn from lending to rural agricultural enterprise. The government through the Agricultural Finance Corporation (AFC) has therefore stepped up the provision of credit to farmers. We are also supporting development of synergies between AFC and other existing financial service providers such as the micro

finance institutions (MFIs) and savings and credit cooperative societies (SACCOs). This initiative is an effort to encourage development of agriculture friendly financial services.

The Government recognizes the important role played by the extension service in increasing access to technical and market information to the farming community. In this regard, my Ministry is reforming the extension service to allow and facilitate other extension service providers like the private sector and producer organizations. The ministry is in the process of finalizing the development of an implementation framework for the National Agricultural Sector Extension Policy (NASEP) and a framework for financing agricultural extension. The policy document will encourage more participation in the provision of extension service to the farming community in the country.

The Government is keen on making farm inputs available and affordable to the farming community in the country. In this respect, my Ministry is currently formulating a National Farm Inputs Development Strategy that will facilitate access to improved agricultural inputs. The strategy will address the issue of improving access of high quality inputs to all farmers including the poor and most vulnerable through, among other interventions, developing smaller and more affordable packages.

I hope that the recommendations from this workshop will contribute to, and inform the development of this strategy. The challenge then will be for the implementation to achieve sustainable improvements in the delivery of agricultural inputs and services to our farming community.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In conclusion, I would like on behalf of my Ministry and the Government, to thank the people and Government of the United States of America, for their

continued support to agricultural policy analysis in the country. This support has contributed to strengthening the policy reform development as well as providing the necessary empirical research for guiding strategy and policy formulation in the country.

With these remarks, it is now my pleasure to declare this conference officially open and to wish you lively and fruitful deliberations.

Thank you.