



[GLOBAL HOME](#) | [PUBLICATIONS](#) | [RESOURCES](#) | [WORKSHOP 2008](#) | [EVENTS](#) | [CONTACT](#)

Main Menu

- [About](#)
- [Events](#)
- [Standards Info](#)
- [Fresh Insights](#)
- [Fresh Perspectives](#)
- [Workshop 2008](#)
- [July Newsletter](#)

Quick Links

- [Agrifood Standards](#)
- [Homepage](#)
- [Polls](#)

[Global News](#) 

[Global Articles](#) 

[What is RSS?](#)

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Events

KENYA: New marketing networks planned to plug missing markets for smallholders

December 14, 2007 |

Source: [The Nation](#) (Nairobi) by Joseph Bonyo

Kenya has received Sh286 million to help improve marketing networks for agricultural products in rural areas.

The money is part of Sh845 million from the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (Agra) awarded to Kenya and Tanzania to establish nationwide networks of rural agro-dealers.

The Kenya Agro-dealer Strengthening Program (KASP) will scale-up an existing networks of 243 agro-dealers in Kenya, to include 1,800 rural farm supply businesses in 32 districts across the country. "All three countries will achieve a 30 per cent growth in rural smallholder incomes, a reduction in the distance farmers need to travel to get supplies, and a 15 per cent decrease in the price of inputs within three years," said Agra president, Naftali Wamweru.

The programme will cooperate with "Millennium Villages", part of the Millennium Villages Projects of the Center for International Forestry Research and Columbia University, to increase the economic sustainability of farm inputs.

The agro-dealers will operate small businesses that reach poor farmers in remote areas. In addition to providing supplies in the quantities needed by small-scale farmers, they will be trained in the safe handling, and environmentally sound use of farm inputs. The networks will give farmers access to basic farm supplies beyond their reach.

This has in the past made it impossible for a number of small-scale farmers to increase their yield or income, and has contributed to widespread poverty in the region.

The Malawi initiative, with a grant of Sh279.5 million, is spearheaded by Rural Market Development Trust.

It is focused on developing a network of over 600 rural agro-dealers, up from the existing 160. In Tanzania, the programme will be used to transform a fragmented farm supply distribution system.

The programme will also emphasize equal gender participation, giving women full access to training and services.

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« October 2008						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	