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Agra gives US\$ 4.3 m for Malawi's agro dealers

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Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (Agra), a Kenya-based international NGO, has awarded US\$4.3 million (approximately K602 million) grant for the benefit of the country's agro-dealers, an Agra statement says.

The money, according to the statement issued on Wednesday, will be used for establishment of nationwide networks of rural agro dealers in the country.

The programme will also be implemented in Tanzania and Kenya where Agra will disburse US\$ 3.4 million and US\$ 4.4 million, respectively.

"All three country programmes aim to achieve a 30 percent growth in rural smallholder incomes; a 40 to 50 percent reduction in the average distance farmers need to travel to purchase farm supplies; and an up to 15 percent decrease in the price of inputs within three years," Agra president Namanga Ngongi said on commenting on the grants.

In Malawi, Rural Market Development Trust (Rumark) will spearhead the initiative with a focus on developing a network of over 600 rural agro-dealers, up from the existing core of 160, the statement says.

Rumark director Richard Chapweteka was quoted as hailing Malawi's two-year farm input subsidy programme, saying the programme had shown that with modest levels of support, grassroots agricultural entrepreneurship can thrive in rural areas.

Malawi reaped 1.4 million tones maize surplus last growing season, sold off US\$160 million (K22.4 billion) worth of maize and donated 10,000 metric tonnes of food aid to hungry neighbours, Lesotho and Swaziland.

Agra, whose board chairperson is former Secretary General of UN Kofi Annan, is a partnership working across Africa to help millions of small scale farmers and their families lift themselves out of poverty and hunger.