



1st Governor's Day with Farmers, Kakamega County

DECLARATION

On the 22nd of February 2022, thirty farmer representatives from all 12 sub-counties of Kakamega County, Kakamega County Farmer Association (KACOFA), and Shibuye Community Health Workers met H.E. Hon. Dr. FCPA Wycliffe A. Oparanya, EGH, CGJ, H.E. Hon. Prof. Phillip Kutima, and other dignitaries of Kakamega County Government at Bukura Agricultural Training Centre, Kakamega. The meeting served as a platform for Kakamega farmers to bring forward key challenges they face, as well as proposed solutions, to the county's top decision makers. The discussions built on consultations held in all 12 sub-counties of Kakamega County between September and December 2021. This process was supported by TMG Research, Germany and other development partners.

We, the signatories of the Declaration of the 1st Governor's Day with Farmers in Kakamega County:

Welcome the Governor's Day with Farmers as an annual platform through which farmers can directly interact with the county's top policymakers, contribute to the design of county agricultural programmes and projects, and provide feedback on the performance of the sector in relation to farmer support, especially for the most vulnerable.

Express concern about farmers' vulnerability to climate change. Unreliable, erratic and heavy rainfall, prolonged droughts, and storms, along with an increased prevalence of pests and diseases, severely affect crop yields and harvests in Kakamega County. Farmers need access to locally-relevant support, including: real-time weather information; sustainable water systems, especially water harvesting and storage technologies; climate-resilient seeds; advice on integrated pest and disease control practices, such as plant doctor sessions as already initiated in some communities; and affordable crop and livestock insurance schemes. Furthermore, on-farm research on smallholders' vulnerability to climate change is required.

Note the challenges of declining soil fertility, soil contamination and erosion as a major impediment to agricultural productivity and food security. Causes include intensive cropping, the overuse of agro-chemicals, and heavy rainfalls. There is an urgent need to enable farmers to access affordable soil testing services, as well as knowledge about sustainable soil management and agroecological practices. Inputs that restore and enhance soil health such as green manure, cover crops, tools for minimum tillage, as well as agricultural lime to address the problem of soil acidity, are further needed. We welcome the County Government's initiative to adopt and implement a Soil Management Strategy, and to fast-track the Sustainable Land Management Policy, as important contributions to Kakamega's dying soils.

Underscore the positive link between farm productivity and land tenure security, while noting with concern that women, youth, and people living with disabilities are particularly disadvantaged in their access to land. There is a strong need to implement Kenya's progressive land policies and promote access to land by all people, especially vulnerable groups. The county-wide adoption of gender-sensitive initiatives, such as the community-led land lease guidelines, is a welcome response.



Recognise the instrumental role that women play in agricultural production and rural development. In this regard, there is an urgent need to support women's farmer groups to maximise their effectiveness and impact. More attention needs to be put on enhancing women's access to education, promoting women as role models in agriculture, and recruiting female extension officers to address gender-related barriers to farming.

Emphasise the central role of effective and efficient agricultural extension services in equipping farmers with the necessary knowledge and tools to address the challenges they face. There is a need for the increased presence of agricultural extension officers at farm level, as well as ensuring that these services are affordable and inclusive. This can be realised through, among other actions, creating farmer platforms for peer learning, improved access to digital tools, and linking farmers to incubation centres. It is also essential to avoid conflicting messages by private and public extension officers by adopting a soil management curriculum and similar harmonised approaches.

Express our concern about smallholders' limited access to markets due to, among other constraints, fluctuating market prices, exploitation by brokers, and poor roads and storage facilities. We call upon public institutions and private companies to procure at least 30% of their needs for food and biomaterials from local farmers, especially from vulnerable groups. While there is a need to establish county-based aggregation centres for farm products, we also encourage farmers to form farmer cooperatives and make use of online marketing platforms.

Recognise farmers' limited access to finance for land leasing or acquisition, purchasing farm inputs, harvesting, post-harvest handling, marketing, and accessing private extension services. There is a need to expand access to inclusive financial services, such as the Uwezo Funds, for disadvantaged groups who do not meet conventional banking criteria. We also urge more efforts to strengthen farmers' self reliance, for example in seed multiplication.

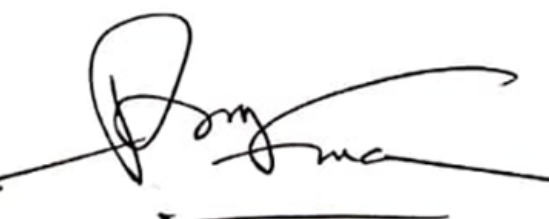
Stress the urgency of coordinating donor-financed agricultural and rural development programmes in Kakamega county through the Agricultural Sector Policy and other relevant strategies. A platform for information sharing about project activities between partners and the County Government can support transparency and accountability. We call upon development partners to involve community-based and farmer organisations from the outset of designing and planning of interventions. To ensure lasting beneficial impacts on the lives of people, donor-driven programmes must also include robust exist strategies.

Finally, we call upon all development actors to implement the proposed actions, and we encourage the integration of the proposed actions into the County's Integrated Development Plans.

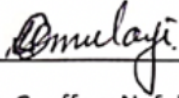
Signed on 22 February 2022



H.E. Hon. Dr. FLOA Wycliffe A. Oparanya, EGH, CGJ
Governor of Kakamega County



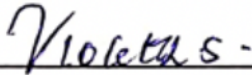
H.E. Hon. Prof. Philip M. Kutima, ECJ
Deputy Governor of Kakamega County



Mr. Geoffrey Nafukho Omulayi
CECM of Agriculture, Irrigation, Cooperative,
Livestock, Veterinary Services and Fisheries
Kakamega County



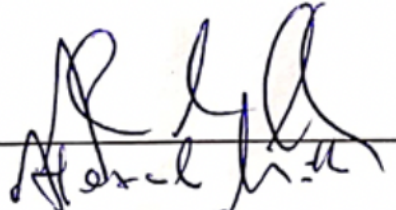
Hon. Geoffrey Ommatera, MCA
Chairperson of Agriculture Committee



Ms. Violet Shivutse
Director, Shibuye Community Health Workers



Mr. Habakkuk Khamaala
Chairperson, Kakamega County Farmer
Association (KACOFA)


Name: Axel
Position: THB
Organisation: THB

Name:
Position:
Organisation: