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 Tanzania to establish nationwide networks of rural agro-dealers.

The Kenya Agro-dealer Strengthening Program (KASP) will scale-up an existing network of 243 agro-dealers 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 access supplies, and a 15 per cent decrease in the price of inputs within three years," said Agra president, Nceku.

The programme will cooperate with "Millennium Villages", part of the Millennium Villages Projects of the University of Columbia, 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 supplying inputs 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 alleviate 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 Sh95 million Malawi initiative, supported by the World Bank, 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 training materials.

Smallholders in developing countries have no future in supplying European supermarkets:

- Agree
- Disagree

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