

African Water Facility Study to upscale smallholder irrigation in Zambia

Abidjan, Ivory Coast, 29 June 2016 – A new set of studies, financed by a grant of EUR 1.4 million from the African Water Facility (AWF) will help develop smallholder irrigation in Zambia, through the Upscaling of Smallholder Irrigation Project. This will lead to improved livelihood conditions and climate change resilience of smallholder farmers in the country.

Vulnerable population. The Zambian smallholder farming community is highly vulnerable to the impacts of global warming and climate change. This situation poses significant challenges towards attaining water security, sustaining crop productivity, maintaining economic growth and improving livelihoods. Rain fed subsistence agriculture, widely practiced in Zambia, is increasingly under pressure from erratic rainfall patterns, and has failed to significantly raise crop productivity, or to smoothen out seasonal cycles of hunger and food insecurity.

Importance of smallholder farming. Agricultural production in Zambia is dominated by small-scale farmers, even though the country has a relatively strong commercial sector in comparison to other countries in the region. An estimated 600,000 smallholder farmers produce most of the country's cassava, cotton, millet and sorghum, as well as over 90% of its maize. Yet, current production systems in the majority of cases are highly vulnerable to fluctuations in rainfall.

Underdeveloped irrigation. While Zambia has abundant arable land, only 14% of land suitable for agricultural production is being cultivated. At the same time, less than 30% of the land suitable for irrigation has been developed. Importantly, most of the irrigated area in Zambia services large-scale commercial farming enterprises, while small-holder farmers are yet to benefit from significant investments in the sector. And while large-scale farms have a significant role in terms of overall production and job creation, their direct contribution to poverty alleviation has proven insignificant.

Timely project. “Despite its great potential for irrigation, Zambia has not identified and appraised sufficient available sites, to boost irrigation coverage in the country,” says Mohamed El Azizi, AWF Director. “There is currently insufficient feasibility studies (including technical, market, economic, financial analysis) available to the government to make informed investment decisions. AWF project offers an opportunity to identify and prepare potential irrigation investments in 25 sites leading to the opening of an additional 9,560 ha of irrigated land for 4,800 smallholder households,” he adds.

Project details. The total project cost is € 1,600,000, out of AWF' contribution is € 1.4 million (87.5%) while the government of Zambia will contribute the remaining € 200,000 (12.5%). The project will be implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture over 24 months.

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About the African Water Facility (AWF): The AWF is an initiative of the African Ministers' Council on Water (AMCOW) hosted by the African Development Bank (AfDB), established in 2004 as a Special Water Fund to help African countries achieve the objectives of the Africa Water Vision 2025. The AWF offers grants from €50,000 to €5 million to support projects aligned with its mission and strategy to a wide range of institutions and organizations operating in Africa. Its three strategic priority activities are 1) **preparing investment projects** to mobilize investment funds for projects supported by AWF; 2) **enhancing water governance** to create an environment conducive for effective and sustainable investments; 3) **promoting water knowledge** for the preparation of viable projects and informed governance leading to effective and sustainable investments. Since 2006, AWF has funded 98 national and regional projects in 52 countries, including in Africa's most vulnerable states. It has mobilized more than €1.4 billion as a result of its project preparation activities, which constitute 70 percent of its portfolio. On average, **each €1 contributed by the AWF has attracted €35 in additional follow-up investments**. The AWF is entirely funded by Algeria, Australia, Austria, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Burkina Faso, Canada, Denmark, the European Commission, France, the Nordic Development Fund, Norway, Senegal, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the African Development Bank. The AWF is governed by a Governing Council representing its 16 donors, UN-Water Africa, the AU via NEPAD, AMCOW and the AfDB.