

Agricultural cooperation project's phase one ends

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THE first phase of a two-year cooperation project between the agriculture ministry, the Chinese government and the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation will end in April this year.

The first phase of the project which was worth N\$23,2 million in 2015, saw 15 Chinese specialists deployed in Namibia to provide technical assistance in irrigation projects, at the central veterinary laboratory and at research stations at Etunda, Omahenene, Rundu, Omashare and Kalimbeza.

It is not clear when the second phase will start, but the partners are discussing the modalities. Agriculture minister John Mutorwa said at a media briefing yesterday that the tripartite agreement on South-South cooperation had been successfully implemented.

He said 15 rice varieties were introduced, and they are currently trying three other varieties best-suited for the local climate. Training on rice production was also conducted for farmers and agriculture ministry officials.

The foxtail millet which was introduced during the period was successfully grown at the Omahenene research station. This variety of millet yields 2,5 tonnes per hectare on average.

"The seed cooperative received a seed sorting machine, which will now facilitate and accelerate the sorting and packaging of millet seed. The mechanical transplantation of rice seedlings was also introduced. This will accelerate the transplantation process," Mutorwa noted.

The minister said the cooperation also saw small-scale farmers and the ministry's officials at the Mashare, Ruuga and Etunda irrigation schemes and the Salem project receiving training in horticultural production.

Li Nan, the Chinese deputy ambassador to Namibia, said they had introduced more than 30 varieties of rice, foxtail millet, maize and vegetables to the country. He said they had also brought in and demonstrated the use of 30 types of farm machines, instruments and equipment, and organised various workshops for 455 trainees.

Li further stated that the new technologies and farming skills have helped the Namibian people to acquire, acknowledge and apply the scientific way to cultivate and use standardised practices for animal disease control and detection. Food and Agriculture Organisation representative Babagana Ahmadu said in Namibia, South-South cooperation had achieved significant success in terms of complementing government's efforts to increase agricultural production.

"Through this cooperation, rice yields at Kalimbeza have increased by more than 10%, and 15 new Chinese rice varieties and one foxtail millet variety are under trial to determine their adaptability in Namibia," he stated.

Ahmadu welcomed the training of more than 400 Namibian farmers and government officials in rice, foxtail millet and horticultural production.

“Various demonstrations on pest management, correct fertiliser application methods and compost-making were conducted for farmers and government officials during the first phase of the period. I am also informed that Chinese standard operational procedures for the analysis of mectins, benzimidazoles and steroids were acquired by the central veterinary laboratory, and the validation of these methods will be done in the near future,” said Ahmadu.
