

# 500 youths gain from entrepreneurial and agricultural training

By Getrude Mbago

NEARLY 500 youths from across the country have benefited from agricultural and entrepreneurship training provided to them by Sokoine University Graduate Entrepreneurs Cooperative (SUGECO) and the Rufiji Basin Development Authority (RUBADA).

Funded by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the training brought young people who camped for three months at Mkongo agricultural camp in Mkongo, Rufiji District in Coast Region.

Speaking during the closure of the training on Wednesday, principal agricultural officer at the Ministry of Agriculture Dr Evarist Makene commended SUGECO and Rubada for the job well done, saying that the training will help the young people be able to embark on smart agriculture activities.

He urged the youth to work hard and diligently and become good ambassadors in their respective home villages.

"The training that you have received should be well utilised, when you go back in your home villages, you should be good catalysts for change and agricultural transformation," Dr Makene told the youth.

He also advised youth to focus more on self employment; something he said would help in encouraging others to cultivate

interest in the agricultural sector saying that the government is eager to assist them.

"Do not think of seeking employment after here we want you to go back and be good ambassadors of your villages, the skills you have got should make you exemplary in the sector, you only need to work hard and adhere to what you had been taught here," he said.

For his part, executive director of (SUGECO) based in Morogoro at Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA), Revocatus Kimario also emphasised on the youth to work hard and use skills acquired to generate wealth and transform their lives. He said that the country needs to undergo youth mindset transformation to change their negative perceptions towards agriculture in a bid to attract more youths in agribusiness undertakings, a move that will curb the current unemployment challenge.

According to him, this can be done through provision of education to youth on entrepreneurship initiatives through training, practical field work and making an easy access to capital through provision of loans with lower interest rates and grants to attract their effective involvement in the agribusiness. "SUGECO is doing its best to change youth mindset on agriculture, we have trained a number of young people in the country whom managed to transform their

lives through embarking on modern agriculture, so I hope if these efforts will be accelerated, the country could witness rapid change of the sector," he said.

He said that the trained youths comes from Morogoro, Kilimanjaro, Mbeya, Songwe, Iringa, Njombe, Singida, Dodoma, Coast, Dar es salaam, Tanga, Kigoma and Zanzibar.

SUA Director of Planning and Development, Prof Damian Gabagambi urged the government to allow SUA take control of the Mkongo Camp so that more young graduates and youth are trained more on better ways of modern agriculture for the country's development.

He also called upon graduates in the country to stop waiting for employment while seated at home but should wake up and start engaging in agriculture as it pays. "Graduates should now forget about employment, what is good for them now is engaging on high valued crops like vegetables, mushrooms and fish keeping and poultry as they are areas where they can experience good profit thus transform their lives," he said.

Launched in 2013 by the then president Jakaya Kiwete, the Mkongo Camp is responsible at offering trainings on modern agricultural practices, mechanised methods, environmental protection, value addition, project write ups and formation of community and saving groups among others.