

P R E S S R E L E A S E

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LOWER GWERU SMALLHOLDER FARMERS BENEFIT FROM JAPANESE ASSISTANCE

The Ambassador of Japan to Zimbabwe, H.E. Mr. Yonezo Fukuda, today officially commissioned a project funded by the Japanese Government implemented by HELP from Germany in Lower Gweru.

In March last year, the Embassy of Japan extended a grant of USD 112,688 (one hundred and twelve thousand, six hundred and eighty-eight dollars) to HELP from Germany in support of its project, “The Project for Improvement of Farming Skills in Gweru District”.

Implemented in Lower Gweru, some 32 kilometres from Gweru Town, the project had as its main objective the introduction of drought friendly crops such as virus free all year round sweet potato as well as the introduction of micro-irrigation technologies. Each beneficiary received sweet potato cuttings for planting as well as training for harvesting, storage and processing of the crop. The 2,000 beneficiary small-scale farmers also received an irrigation package, comprising mainly irrigation pipes. Treadle pumps, complete with sets of spares and spares were distributed to each of the 200 Model Communal Gardens. Beneficiary farmers received intensive training on modern horticultural practices, particularly in conservation farming, which has been scientifically proven to dramatically increase yields. AGRITEX officials were heavily involved in the training of beneficiary farmers to ensure sustainability of the project.

It is hoped that this project will lead to improved agricultural production resulting in improved nutritional status in the area and promote food and household income security. HELP from Germany have a wealth of experience in agricultural projects of this nature.

Speaking at the occasion H.E. Mr. Fukuda noted that the implementation of the project “dovetails perfectly with the Government of Zimbabwe’s recently introduced *Food and Nutrition Policy* which focuses on national food security and the need for nutritional diversity and improved diet”.