

SPEECH TO BE DELIVERED BY H.E. MR YONEZO FUKUDA, AMBASSADOR OF JAPAN TO ZIMBABWE, ON THE OCCASION OF THE HAND-OVER CEREMONY “THE PROJECT FOR IMPROVEMENT OF FARMING SKILLS IN GWERU DISTRICT ” IMPLEMENTED BY HELP FROM GERMANY

MARCH 19, 2014

COUNTRY DIRECTOR OF HELP, MR LAURENS,

It is with great pleasure that I officiate at this Hand-Over Ceremony of this project which was implemented by our cooperating partner NGO, HELP from Germany in the amount of USD 112,688. It is just over a year since the Embassy extended this financial assistance and we commend you for completing it on schedule.

The adoption of modern farming techniques in Zimbabwe today is of the utmost importance given ever decreasing yields and changing weather patterns. This project has seen the introduction of high yielding all year sweet potato varieties especially suited to climatic conditions in Lower Gweru area. Beneficiary farmers were given intensive training in the cultivation of *bambaira* with close assistance of AGRITEX officials. An important component of this project has been the introduction of conservation agriculture and its emphasis on sustainable farming methods with minimal damage to the environment and minimal use of scarce water resources.

This will result in increased production, improvement of nutritional status and lead to increased food security at household level. This project dovetails perfectly with the Government of Zimbabwe’s recently introduced “Food and Nutritional Policy”, which is currently being implemented countrywide. This policy focuses on the need for national food security, nutritional diversity and improved diet for all Zimbabweans.

Over recent years, Zimbabwe has had to rely on food assistance due to a variety of factors, chief amongst them, poor rainfall. The Lower Gweru area has not been spared and smallholder farmers have experienced these adverse conditions. Please put into practice what you have learnt over the recent months.

I would like to encourage beneficiary households to not only make maximum use of the land you are working but to also impart your acquired skills to other members of the community and extended family members.

Finally, a very big MAKOROKOTO to HELP from Germany for your very positive efforts to uplift the living standards of marginalized rural communities.

THANK YOU