

Speech to be presented by H.E. Mr. Yonezo Fukuda, Ambassador of Japan to Zimbabwe, at the Signing Ceremony with HELP for ‘The Project for the Improvement of Farming Skills in Gweru District’

March 4, 2013

Country Director of HELP, Mr. Laufens,

It is with great pleasure that I am able to have another opportunity to collaborate with HELP. Following the last year’s grant to the ongoing project in Beitbridge, this is to support small-scale farmers in Lower Gweru.

The improvement of agricultural skills in Zimbabwe today is of the utmost importance given ever decreasing yields and changing weather patterns. Introduction of virus-free sweet potato and related training for the community members will promote food security in the drought-prone areas.

During the famines and the postwar Japan, when food was in short supply, sweet potato was an essential nutrient for us. It is nutritious and can grow up with various types of soil. The harvest will be high by assisting micro-irrigation system, including treadle pumps, through the project.

The beneficiaries, some 2,000 small scale farmers, will receive training in harvesting, storage and processing of the crops. Among these, to familiarise the different ways of processing of crops is important, I believe. Food processing will help preserve food longer and to add value as products sold for markets. We may be able to share our experience since Japanese developed a variety of use of sweet potato.

I sincerely hope that the activities will be sustainable, and produce positive outcomes through the strong local initiative. We look forward to visiting you in the field.

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