

Farming families in Angola to benefit from UN scheme

Some 126,000 farming families in Angola, one of the world's poorest countries, will benefit from \$49.5 million United Nations-backed agreement to improve agricultural productivity and revitalise markets.

After almost three decades of war, peace in the southern African country has opened the way for reconstruction, but 68% of Angolans live below the poverty line and 15% of households live in extreme poverty.

“Angola could be a rich agricultural country, but the war and lack of investment have severely held back the sector,” said Carla Ferreira, country programme manager for the UN International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), which fights rural poverty.

“However, we see a significant potential to increase agricultural production by expanding the average area that each farmer cultivates, increasing labour productivity and making markets more efficient.

“That is what this project is going to tackle,” she added.

Under the agreement signed at IFAD's Rome headquarters by Angolan Ambassador to Italy Manuel Pedro Pacavira and IFAD President Lennart Bage, the market-oriented Smallholder Agriculture Project will be partly financed by an \$8.2 million loan from the Fund.

The World Bank will contribute \$30.1 million and Japan another \$4 million. Angola will provide \$4.1 million and other project participants the equivalent of \$3 million.

A large proportion of beneficiaries consist of recently returned persons who have taken up farming.

The project activities will begin in the province of Bie, and will later be expanded to Malanje and Huambo.

The project will help communities to identify needs for small-scale agricultural investments, which will be funded through matching grants.

It will build the capacity of private-sector service providers and improve links with other development organisations.

The project has a gender-sensitive design, and includes budgeting for childcare to enable women to attend training courses.

To improve farmers' skills and knowledge, the project will set up farmer field schools, hold workshops, exchange visits and study tours at both the municipal and provincial levels to share lessons in project implementation in the different target areas.

With this project, IFAD has provided a total of \$44.3 million for five projects in Angola, directly benefiting 311,800 households.

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