

UK supports small scale farmers

THE United Kingdom has pledged to support small-scale farmers in the country to boost yields and help them find lucrative markets for their produce.

Speaking at the Agro-Initiative Zimbabwe (AIZ) awards last week, UK's Department for International Development (DFID) programme manager for governance, wealth creation and vulnerability team, Indranil Chakrabarti said the support was meant to create jobs as well as raise income for the poor in Zimbabwe.

The programme, which is being implemented through TechnoServe Zimbabwe, offers support for the revitalisation of the micro-finance sector and provides revolving loans to small-to-medium sized rural agri-businesses.

"A growing private sector will not only provide the poor with the capacity to find jobs and improve their incomes, it will ultimately enable governments in developing countries to generate the tax revenues needed to support their people," said Chakrabarti.

Zimbabwe and Britain have not been on best terms following the invasions of white-owned commercial farms by war veterans.

TechnoServe recently launched a business plan competition termed AIZ, targeted at existing medium-sized businesses with creative and sustainable ideas in agriculture.

Winners in the AIZ 2012 awards include The Veg Enterprises, Progene Seeds (Pvt) Ltd and Staywell Trading, among others.

Each of the winners will receive seed capital of US\$50 000 and a package of technical assistance tailored to their business needs.

In his mid-term fiscal policy review, Finance minister Tendai Biti said the agricultural sector played a pivotal role in Zimbabwe's economy as it could significantly reduce poverty, entrench economic stability and growth.

The sector provides income for 70% of the country's population, 60% of raw materials for industrial requirements and 40% of total export earnings. — BY OUR STAFF

Reference

<http://www.thestandard.co.zw/2012/08/26/uk-supports-small-scale-farmers/>