

EU approves supports to sugarcane growers in Swaziland.

Today, the European Commission granted EUR 12 057 000 to improve the productivity, efficiency and competitiveness of smallholder cane growers following the reforms of the EU sugar market.

Ambassador Hans Duynhouwer stated that *"The European Union is keeping its promise. Our support to the sugar industry will reduce the transport costs for smallholders and will increase their profitability and incomes. Not only will this help to lift farmers and their families out of poverty, but it will also benefit the Hhohho region, as well as Swaziland as a country"*.

The programme aims at restoring the profitability of sugarcane growers by reducing the cost of hauling sugar cane from the field to the Sugar Mill in the Hhohho District. It builds on the ongoing EC support to smallholder sugarcane growers to enhance the viability of the beneficiary farmers and contribute to keeping smallholder sugar production alive.

The programme will upgrade 14 kms of road between Mananga and Sihhoye in northern Swaziland which links 945 smallholder farmers growing an estimated 1,195 hectares of cane to the sugar processing mill. This route passes directly through an area of smallholder sugarcane production financed under the Komati Downstream Development Project (KDDP).

Rural areas in Swaziland have the highest poverty levels. Due to its potential profitability smallholder sugar production can offer farmers a path out of poverty. Sugar is one of the most important sectors in Swaziland; it employs 14,200 people and produces more than 620,000 MT of sugar each year, 150,000 MT of which is exported to the EU. Swaziland is the second-largest African sugar exporter to the EU.

To date the EU has allocated € 66 million to the sugar sector in Swaziland under the EU Sugar Accompanying Measures. Other EU supported activities include; helping new smallholder farmers grow irrigated sugarcane, improving the efficiency of existing smallholder farmers, improving business and farm management practices and improving the infrastructure network serving smallholders.

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