

SUA PROJECT BOOSTS FARMERS' INCOMES

BY FINNIGAN WA SIMBEYE

The over Sh6.1bn Norwegian funded agricultural project has ended successfully, increasing thousands of farmers' household incomes, according to Sokoine University of Agriculture official.

The initiative, Tanzania Agricultural Research Project phase (TARP)-II, has improved food security and livelihoods among 3,100 smallholder farmers in the eastern and southern highland Regions in the country.

Project coordinator, Prof. Ludovick Kinabo, from the Sokoine University of Agriculture (Sua) said in a draft executive summary report to mark the end of the project last June that the five years project, which started in 2000, has recorded substantial achievements.

For instance, under the research component, 34 projects were implemented and 3,100 farmers of which 66 per cent were women, were undertaken successfully.

According to him, 73 per cent of the farmers surveyed said their food security has been improved, while 67 per cent said their nutritional status is much better now. In addition, about 71 per cent were of the view that their children's health registered significant improvement.

"In addition, 67 per cent of farmers inter-

viewed indicated an increased household income of about Sh143,000 or an equivalent of \$129 a year. The income was invested in areas that had direct impact on their lives such as in housing, education, livestock, farm land, farm inputs, transport and in savings," the Sua expert said. Under TARP II, the focus was on boosting food security and household income by targeting women and incorporating the country's flagship institution of higher learning for agriculture experts into the National Agricultural Research System (NARS).

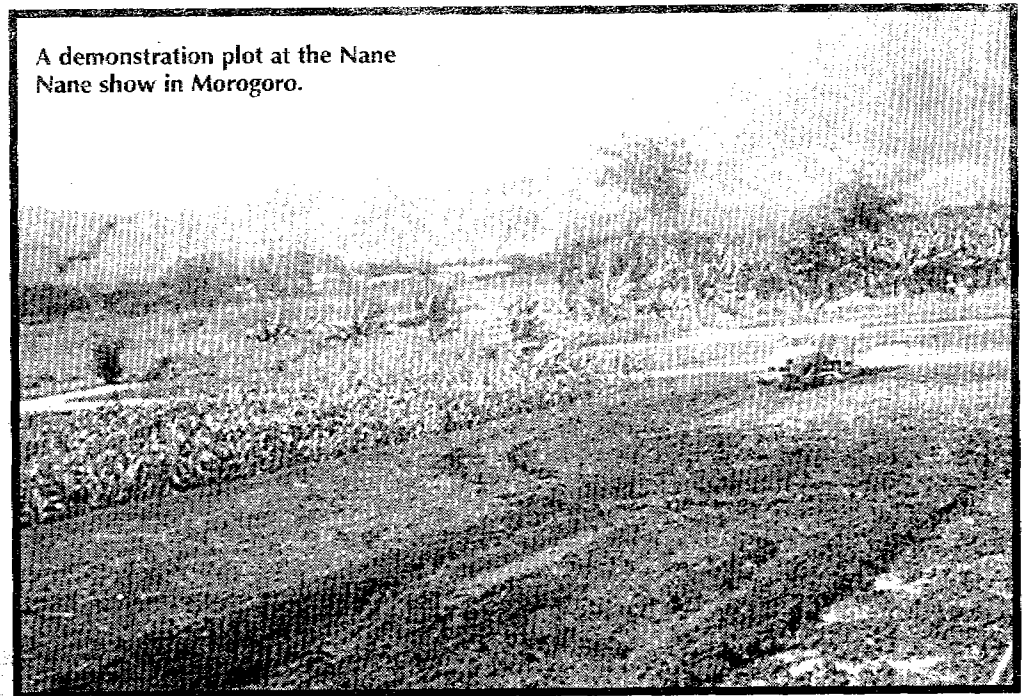
Apart from improving smallholder farmers' livelihoods, the project also trained over 200 staff members from the ministry of Agriculture and Food Security and Sua at levels starting from short-term research skills programmes to doctorate-levels.

"A proposal for sustainable research funding mechanism for agriculture research, Tanzania Agricultural Research Endowment Fund was developed and submitted to the government," the draft executive summary said.

The project involved the Norwegian University of Life Sciences (UBS formerly Agricultural University of Norway).

The researchers are now seeking over Sh17bn from the Norwegian and Tanzania governments to undertake an ambitious five-year project titled, Programme for Agricultural and

A demonstration plot at the Nane Nane show in Morogoro.



Natural Resources Transformation for Improved Livelihoods (Pantii) expected to start this year and end in 2009.

At the 13th National Agriculture Show or Nane Nane for the eastern zone, grouping Dar es Salaam, Morogoro, Tanga and Coast Regions held at the Mwalimu Nyerere Show Grounds, Sua's TARP II pavilion showcased various equipment, crops and animal husbandry practices which were involved.

"This is a simple and cheap technology for harvesting rain water that an average small-

holder farmer can use. To construct this 1,200 litres concrete water tank costs less than Sh60,000 compared to a similar manufactured plastic tank whose price is about Sh120,000," Filbert Kapinga, from Mbeya based Agricultural Research Institute (Ari) at Uyole said.

Mr Kapinga said harvesting of rain water is an important aspect of modern farming that ensures that smallholder farmers can engage in year round irrigation farming of various crops which need regular watering. Ari-Uyole was also involved in the Sua TARP II project.