

Tanzania ventures into new farming technology to boost rice production

Tanzania has approved the use of urea deep placement (UDP,) an innovative technology which increases rice production by more than 20% per acre.



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Allan Mariki, a senior official of Tanzania Fertilizer Regulatory Authority (TFRA) said the technology involves the placement of urea supergranules or briquettes into the soil shortly after the paddy is transplanted. According to Mariki, UDP increases nitrogen use efficiency because most of the nutrients stay in the soil, close to the plant roots where it is absorbed more effectively.

“The new system allows farmers to use less fertilizer, cuts nitrogen losses by as much as 40% and increases farmers’ yields by more than 20%,” he said. “As authorities regulating this sector, we’re very optimistic that UDP will ease burden to Tanzanian farmers.”

Farming is Tanzania’s economy lifeblood, contributing nearly 30% to its GDP and 67% to total employment during 2014. “We are encouraging farmers to venture into the system, which increases rice production per acreage; hence boost income and step-up from poverty,” he said, adding that the adoption of the new technology will make Tanzania a leading exporter of rice in Africa.

Tanzanian approval came after a two-year study by the International Fertilizer Development Center (IFDC) in collaboration with the country's Cholimbo AGRO Scientific Research Center and Kilombero Agricultural Training and Research Institute. The project has been tested in different countries in Africa such as Kenya, Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda.

UDP was introduced in Africa in 2009 after its effectiveness had been proven in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Vietnam and other Asian countries. It is a more efficient and environmentally responsible method of fertilization than the traditional practice of broadcasting urea.

Currently, the IFDC is also promoting UDP adoption in Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo to increase rice production and nutrient efficiency.

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