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SUPPLEMENT: AGCOT BOARD IHEMI VISIT

From the Highlands to the World

Farmers, investors, children and a board with a mandate: four days across the Ihemi Cluster that revealed the full scale of what Tanzania's agricultural corridor model has built.

FROM THE FIELD • BY KILIMOKWANZA.ORG | SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT • MARCH 2026

This special supplement documents what happened when the AGCOT Centre board walked four days of farms in Tanzania’s Ihemi Cluster — and then carried the evidence directly to a Cabinet Minister in Dodoma. It is a story about what agricultural transformation looks like when you build it from the ground up, one cooperative, one avocado orchard, one children’s farm at a time.

Thirty-two features. Thirty-two stories. Avocados that were not in this region a generation ago — once fed to pigs, now containerised for European supermarkets. A TZS 1 billion cooperative loan with zero defaults. A minister who arrived not as a bureaucrat, but as a farmer who knew exactly what the team had seen in those fields.

Kilimokwanza.org publishes this supplement in full as a record of what Tanzania’s agricultural corridor model has built — and as a reference for what the country must now do to protect and scale it.

Kilimokwanza.org Editorial Team

IHEMI CLUSTER SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT • MARCH 2026 • KILIMOKWANZA.ORG

FROM THE FIELD • IHEMI CLUSTER IN PICTURES • MARCH 2026



Tullah Mloge (left), Head of Partnerships, AGCOT Centre, Board Chairman Dr. Ally Hussein Laay (centre), and Beno Mgaya (right), avocado farmer, Lusitu Village — Ihemi Cluster field visit, Njombe Region, 10 March 2026.



The AGCOT board delegation and partner teams at the Njombe Regional Secretariat courtesy call with RC Hon. Anthony John Mtaka’s team.



Delegation members shelter from the rain during the Ihemi Cluster field visit, Njombe Region.



Members of the AGCOT and partners delegation in the potato fields of the Farm for the Future, Ihemi Cluster.

The rain came in gently across Lusitu Village on the afternoon of Sunday, 9 March 2026. The Agricultural Growth Corridors of Tanzania (AGCOT) board of directors stood in a half-acre potato field, boots muddy, listening to a woman explain

how she harvests 200 bags per acre from a plot that was producing five tonnes per hectare less than a decade ago. Around them, the Southern Highlands stretched away in every direction, cool, green, and quietly extraordinary.

Four days followed. Across Njombe and Iringa regions, the delegation walked through avocado orchards now earning individual farmers TZS 450 million per season. They stood inside a certified export packhouse sending Tanzanian Hass avocado to supermarkets in Amsterdam, London and Chennai. They visited a children's farm where forty schools send their pupils to learn that farming is not punishment: it is a career. They tasted apple cider, cold-pressed juice and organic vinegar made entirely from highland fruit. They heard from CEO Geoffrey Kirenga, in a candid camera interview, why a USD 90 billion mango opportunity is sitting unclaimed. And they sat in a board meeting on Day 3 that produced a field-verified Ministerial brief and a unanimous mandate to take the evidence of transformation to the highest levels of Tanzania's government.

This edition carries twenty-two feature stories from those four days. They are organised in three sections: the farmer transformation stories that are the human foundation of the AGCOT model; the private sector and agribusiness stories that show the commercial architecture being built around those farmers; and the policy and analytical stories that translate field evidence into the national case for sustained investment. The evidence is in every field, every packhouse and every classroom. So is the path forward.

BY THE NUMBERS

Field Evidence at a Glance

4x

Potato yield increase at ISOWELU AMCOS and Lusitu Agribusiness group — from 5 to 20 MT/acre, through certified seed and good agricultural practice.

600+

New avocado acres planted in Ruvuma and Ludewa through the Mkulima kwa Mkulima initiative.

TZS 450M

Annual income from a single avocado farm in Lusitu Village — built from a burial group into a business-oriented association.

49%

Women members in ISOWELU AMCOS — 630 members in total, up from 208 founding members in 2017.

TZS 1B

Bank loan secured by ISOWELU AMCOS in 2023 — fully deployed, with zero defaults.

CONTEXT & CORRIDORS

The Record Behind the Visit

SAGCOT TRACK RECORD

USD 6.34B

cumulative investment — 111% of target, five years ahead of schedule

1M+

smallholder farmers empowered

253,000+

jobs created

60%

of Tanzania's national food needs from the corridor

THE FOUR CORRIDORS

SAGCOT — Southern Highlands

fourteen years, proven; Flagship No. 7

Mtwara Corridor

Lindi, Mtwara, Ruvuma

Central Corridor

Morogoro, Dodoma, Singida, Tabora, Kigoma and Lake-zone regions

Northern Corridor

Tanga, Kilimanjaro, Arusha, Manyara

ABOUT AGCOT

Flagship No. 7

of the Tanzania Agriculture Master Plan (AMP) 2050

Four corridors

anchoring a target USD 100 billion agricultural economy

agcot.co.tz

Agricultural Growth Corridors of Tanzania

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A

FARMER TRANSFORMATION STORIES

Human interest and data-driven stories centred on individual farmers and cooperatives whose lives have measurably changed through AGCOT partnerships. These are the foundation of AGCOT's public narrative: the proof that the corridor model works at the level of a single family, a single farm, and a single season.



AGCOT CEO Geoffrey Kirenga (left) and Board Chairman Dr. Ally Hussein Laay (right) examine potato flowering in the field.

01

FARMER TRANSFORMATION

From a Burial Group to a TZS 100 Million Business

How a community solidarity society formed to help members bury their dead became Tanzania's most celebrated model of smallholder transformation, and is now replicating itself across six regions.

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Beno Mgaya addresses the AGCOT delegation in his avocado orchard, Lusitu Village, Njombe — 9 March 2026.

When SAGCOT, now AGCOT, first arrived in Lusitu Village in the highlands of Njombe around 2015 and 2016, they found a community doing what communities have always done in hard times. About forty farmers had pooled their resources into a chama ya kufa na kuzikana: a solidarity group whose purpose was to ensure that when any member died, the others could afford to bury them.

THE TRANSFORMATION

TZS 200K

Seasonal income at the start

TZS 100M+

Annual income for leading farmers today

“When they found us there, they told us: you cannot write a project proposal asking for coffins and burial boxes. You need to redirect this solidarity into something that builds you up,” recalled Beno Mgya, the man who would become the group’s chairperson and, in time, one of the most influential smallholder farmer advocates in Tanzania.

That conversation set off a chain of events that over the following decade would lift dozens of families from TASAF’s register of the poorest Tanzanians to annual incomes exceeding TZS 15 million, and in some cases TZS 100 million. It would send ripples of transformation across Ruvuma, Kigoma, Morogoro, Dodoma, Rukwa and Ludewa, and produce a replicable model that AGCOT’s leadership now calls the most powerful proof-of-concept the organisation has generated.

A GROUP BUILT FOR DEATH, REDIRECTED TOWARD LIFE

SAGCOT’s intervention was not primarily financial. It was organisational and educational. The Kilimo Trust CHIPS project constructed a pack house above the village and established demonstration plots. What the farmers learned next would change everything: their soil was sick.

“We did not know that soil could be tested like a patient,” Mgya told the AGCOT board delegation during their visit to Lusitu in March 2026. “We knew that a sick person goes to hospital to be examined. But we learned that soil also falls ill, and when it does, your seeds cannot eat properly, the roots cannot find what they need. Once we understood that, we understood everything.”

The farmers transitioned from local seed varieties yielding four to five tonnes per acre to certified improved varieties with soil health protocols. Within the first cycle, yields climbed to fifteen to twenty tonnes per acre.

LUPOMA: CUTTING OUT THE MIDDLEMAN

The group established LuPoMa, Lusitu Potato Marketing, a packing and grading facility that cleaned, sorted and packaged potatoes to urban market standards. For the first time, Lusitu farmers could supply directly to Dar es Salaam, Zanzibar and regional export markets at transparent, premium prices.

“Before LuPoMa, the traders would come with their own scales, their own bags, their own system,” Mgya explained. “Now we pack here. We decide the grade. We set the price. The buyer comes to us.”

Farmers who had been earning TZS 200,000 per season were soon crossing TZS 15 million, then TZS 20 million. A smaller number, those who had also planted avocado, began reporting annual incomes above TZS 100 million.

WHAT COMES NEXT

Through the Mkulima kwa Mkulima initiative, experienced Lusitu farmers travel to new regions, training peers in good agricultural practices, cooperative marketing, access to finance, and the discipline of farming as a business. At the time of the board visit, over 600 acres of new avocado had been planted in Songea District in Ruvuma alone under the Lusitu guidance framework. Similar programmes were advancing in Kigoma, Morogoro, Dodoma, Rukwa and Ludewa.

“This is mkulima kwa mkulima,” Mgya said simply. “A farmer who has understood shows another farmer. And that one shows another. You do not need government extension for that. The knowledge travels by itself.”

2,000

Farmers now in the Lusitu network

“Wakati walifika, tulizungumza: hamuwezi kuandika proposal ya kuomba masanduku ya mazishi. Mtumie umoja huu kwa kilimo.”

– “When they arrived, they told us: you cannot write a proposal asking for coffin boxes. Use this solidarity for farming.”

BENO MGAYA, CHAIRPERSON, LUSITU AGRIBUSINESS GROUP

WHAT AGCOT BROUGHT

- ◆ Kilimo Trust CHIPS pack house
- ◆ Certified seed potato varieties
- ◆ Soil health testing protocols
- ◆ LuPoMa cooperative marketing
- ◆ Export linkage to Tanzania
- ◆ Mkulima kwa Mkulima training

REGIONAL REACH

- ◆ Ruvuma: 800+ avocado acres
- ◆ Kigoma: 200 active farmers
- ◆ Morogoro Ghairo: 80 farmers
- ◆ Sumbawanga Rukwa: active
- ◆ Ludewa: expanding
- ◆ Dodoma: active

200 Bags Per Acre: The Potato Revolution in Tanzania's Southern Highlands

In less than a decade, certified seed and soil health protocols have multiplied potato yields fourfold. Two ISOWELU farmers tell the story in numbers, and in the language of changed lives.

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Raymond Nyagawa (centre), ISOWELU AMCOS member farmer, with Khalid Mgaramo (left), AGCOT Ithemi Cluster Manager, and ISOWELU AMCOS Manager Abdallah Kajogoo (right) — Mtwango Village, Njombe, 10 March 2026.

Phokasi Ndikwege planted his potatoes on the fifteenth of January. By the time the AGCOT board delegation arrived at his field in Mtwango Village in March 2026, the plants were nearly two months old, growing in neat ridges at thirty-centimetre intervals as he had been trained to do.

Half an acre. Sagitta variety certified seed. Ten bags of fifty kilograms each, purchased at TZS 57,000 per bag through the ISOWELU AMCOS cooperative. His projected harvest: between fifty and sixty sacks. His expected return in a good season: up to TZS 90,000 per sack.

“Before I started farming potatoes, I was working very hard and getting very little,” said Raymond Nyagawa, another ISOWELU member. “Now, maybe I earn thirty percent more. But the important thing is not just the number. It is that now I have certainty.”

What he did with last year's earnings: he bought a hectare of land for TZS 900,000. He is planting it with maize this season. Next year, he said, he will decide between avocados and potatoes.

THE FOURFOLD YIELD

Potato yields in the cluster rose from 7 metric tonnes per hectare in 2016 to 28 metric tonnes per hectare in 2025: a nearly fourfold increase achieved in under ten years. The three drivers are specific and reproducible: certified seed potato varieties including the fast-maturing Sagitta; collective input procurement through the cooperative; and systematic soil testing before each planting season.

ISOWELU's agronomists, Thomas Daslo and Leonard Kadari, both employed directly by the cooperative, visit member fields daily during the growing season.

THE CREDIT ARCHITECTURE

In the 2025–2026 season, ISOWELU AMCOS took a combined loan of TZS 1 billion from CRDB Bank at nine percent per annum. Security is provided by the cooperative itself, individual farmers do not pledge personal assets. When they harvest, each member deposits sales income into an individual CRDB account;

ISOWELU SNAPSHOT

7 MT/ha

Yield in 2016

28 MT/ha

Yield in 2025

629

Active cooperative members

49%

Female membership

“Sasa najua ninachouza. Najua uzito. Najua bei kwa kilo.”

– “Now I know what I am selling. I know the weight. I know the price per kilogram.”

RAYMOND NYAGAWA, ISOWELU MEMBER FARMER, MTWANGO VILLAGE

2025/26 LOAN FACTS

- ◆ Loan: TZS 1 billion (CRDB Bank)
- ◆ Interest rate: 9% per annum
- ◆ Security: AMCOS collective (no personal pledges)
- ◆ Repayment: automatic post-harvest deduction
- ◆ NPL rate: under 3% in normal years

loan repayment is deducted automatically. The non-performing loan rate in normal years: under three percent.

THE MARKET REFORM

ISOWELU's partnership with East Africa Foods introduced kilogram-based pricing: the same standard used in regional and export markets. This single change permanently improved member income without any increase in production costs. "Now I know what I am selling, I know the weight, I know the price per kilo," Raymond Nyagawa said.

Both Kajogoo and the farmers he introduced to the delegation pointed to the same unfulfilled opportunity: irrigation. Currently, Mtwango farms one potato season per year. A solar-powered irrigation system could support two or three productive cycles annually, tripling effective income without adding any land.

INPUT PACKAGE

- ◆ DAP fertiliser: 9 bags × 50kg per acre
- ◆ Sagitta certified seed: 10 bags × 50kg per acre
- ◆ Fungicide + insecticide + booster
- ◆ Soil testing before every season

03

FARMER TRANSFORMATION

Before the First Tree Is Planted, the Market Is Already Secured

Lusitu's closed-loop avocado model eliminates the most paralyzing risk in smallholder agriculture: uncertainty of return. It may be the most elegant agricultural finance model operating in East Africa today.

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AGCOT Chairperson receives avocado from Hance Byanda at Tanzanice Avocado Packhouse, Njombe Town — 10 March 2026. Tanzanice's GLOBALG.A.P., GRASP and SMETA-certified cold chain infrastructure has opened export markets across five continents for Southern Highlands smallholder avocado farmers.

In most agricultural development programmes, the sequence is familiar and flawed. Farmers are encouraged to plant a new crop. Extension workers arrive to advise on cultivation. The harvest comes. Then the scramble for buyers begins, and the farmer, with perishable product and no leverage, takes whatever price is offered.

Lusitu Agribusiness Group does not work this way.

"Before a single tree goes into the ground, we already have a buyer with a price," explained AGCOT CEO Geoffrey Kirenga. "The farmer does not plant to hope. The farmer plants to a contract. That changes everything about the risk calculation."

THE CLOSED-LOOP MODEL

- ◆ Step 1: Offtake secured (Tanzanice + GBRI)
- ◆ Step 2: Soil testing on proposed plots
- ◆ Step 3: Certified seedlings sourced
- ◆ Step 4: Farmer co-investment TZS 150,000
- ◆ Step 5: Planting with guaranteed market

The model operates on a principle that is disarmingly simple: guaranteed offtake agreements are secured before soil testing begins, before seedlings are sourced, and before any farmer commits a single shilling.

HOW THE MODEL WORKS

The sequence begins with market intelligence. AGCOT identifies buyers, Tanzanice Agrofoods and GBRI Business Solutions, who confirm their demand and price before any farming begins. Once offtake is confirmed, soil testing is conducted on proposed planting areas. Certified seedlings are sourced. Each farmer contributes TZS 150,000, covering seedlings, soil testing, training and land preparation. Then, and only then, planting begins.

The result is a supply chain in which no farmer carries the market risk that would ordinarily deter investment in a long-cycle tree crop like avocado, which takes three to five years to reach full production.

THE NUMBERS THAT MAKE IT REAL

Beno Mgaya's farm is the clearest illustration. Ten acres planted with Hass avocado beginning in 2016. By the 2025 season, 600 trees producing an average of 300 kilograms each.

The arithmetic: 600 trees × 300 kilograms × TZS 2,500 = TZS 450 million gross revenue from a single harvest season.

THE RUVUMA TEST

The most important proof of the model's portability is Ruvuma Region, where avocado had never been commercially produced. AGCOT brought Mgaya and Tanzanice's investor to Ruvuma, confirmed soil and climate suitability, and brought Ruvuma farmers to Lusitu to see the results for themselves.

The model was applied: offtake secured first, then seedlings, then training, then planting. Farmers invested TZS 150,000 each. The first Ruvuma harvest earned those farmers TZS 24 million collectively. The following season: TZS 44 million.

“Before a single tree goes into the ground, we already have a buyer with a price. The farmer does not plant to hope. The farmer plants to a contract.”

– Geoffrey Kirenga, CEO, AGCOT

TZS 450M

Mgaya gross revenue from one season

TZS 24M

Ruvuma first-harvest collective earnings

TZS 44M

Ruvuma second-harvest earnings

“Kabla ya mti mmoja kupandwa, tayari tuna mnunuzi na bei.”

– “Before a single tree is planted, we already have a buyer and a price.”

BENO MGAYA, CHAIRPERSON, LUSITU

OFFTAKE PARTNERS

- ◆ Tanzanice Agrofoods (EU, India, South Africa)
- ◆ GBRI Business Solutions / EatFresh
- ◆ Price 2025: TZS 2,500/kg export grade
- ◆ Previous local trader price: TZS 400/kg

04

FARMER TRANSFORMATION

Tajirika na Lusitu: How Farmers Are Teaching Farmers Across Six Regions

Tanzania's most powerful agricultural extension system costs almost nothing to run and requires no government infrastructure. It runs on experienced farmers teaching their peers.

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The name translates simply: “Prosper with Lusitu.” It is the brand of a peer-learning programme that has become arguably AGCOT's most cost-effective tool for scaling agricultural transformation across Tanzania's Southern Highlands and beyond.

Mkulima kwa Mkulima, Farmer to Farmer, grew organically from a simple observation made by Beno Mgaya and the Lusitu Agribusiness Group: the farmers who had transformed their own lives under AGCOT's guidance were the most credible teachers for farmers who had not yet transformed theirs.

FROM FORTY FARMERS TO SIX REGIONS

The expansion beyond Njombe began when regional commissioners in other parts of the country began noticing what was happening in the Southern Highlands. The Ruvuma story: in which a Regional Commissioner challenged AGCOT at the Mbeya Farmers Week to bring avocado to his people, is the most dramatic example.

REACH (March 2026)

- ◆ Home: Lusitu Village, Njombe TC
- ◆ Njombe cluster: ~2,000 farmers, 27 sub-groups
- ◆ Songea, Ruvuma: 300 farmers, 800+ avocado acres
- ◆ Kigoma: 200 farmers
- ◆ Ghairo, Morogoro: 80 farmers
- ◆ Sumbawanga, Rukwa: active
- ◆ Ludewa: expanding

In each new region, the approach was identical. Lusitu farmers, not government agronomists, not NGO staff, travelled to the new region, introduced themselves as peers, and shared what they had learned: soil health management, certified seed use, cooperative marketing, farm record-keeping, and access to formal finance.

“The key is that when a farmer in Kigoma hears these things from another farmer, from someone who grew up like them, who had nothing like them, they believe it,” Mgya explained. “If I send a government officer, maybe they listen politely. But if I send another mkulima who used to earn two hundred thousand shillings and now earns twenty million, that mkulima speaks a language they understand completely.”

THE RUVUMA CHAPTER

Over 800 acres of new Hass avocado had been planted in Songea District alone by the time of the March 2026 board visit. The first harvest earned Ruvuma farmers TZS 24 million collectively. The second season brought TZS 44 million. Those farmers had invested TZS 150,000 each at the beginning, selling chickens, goats, stored grain, to access the model.

BEYOND FARMING

One dimension that surprised even experienced practitioners: the reach into non-farming institutions. Mgya’s team has conducted training at schools, church missions and correctional facilities, anywhere future farmers might be inspired.

“A child in school who learns how soil works, how a cooperative works, how a contract with a buyer works: that child will be a better farmer in ten years than their parents were. That is how you change a generation.”

“Mkulima aliyelewa anaonyesha mkulima mwingine. Huna haja ya ugani wa serikali. Maarifa yanasafiri yenyewe.”

– “A farmer who understands shows another farmer. You do not need government extension. The knowledge travels by itself.”

BENO MGAYA, LUSITU AGRIBUSINESS GROUP

COST STRUCTURE

- ◆ Farmer-teaches-farmer model
- ◆ Minimal external facilitation required
- ◆ Travel costs + initial relationship-building only
- ◆ Curriculum developed once: in Lusitu
- ◆ Marginal cost per new region: very low

ISOWELU: The Cooperative That Borrowed TZS 1 Billion and Paid It Back

Founded by 208 farmers in 2017, ISOWELU AMCOS has become a textbook case of what happens when smallholder organisation meets formal finance and certified inputs.

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Mrs Phokasi Ndikwege, ISOWELU AMCOS member farmer, with her child at their half-acre Sagitta potato plot — Mtwango Village, Njombe, 10 March 2026.

When ISOWELU AMCOS was founded on 14 November 2017, its name told the story of who they were. ISOWELU is an acronym drawn from the initial letters of the villages they came from: Itunduma, Sovi, Welela and Lunguye. They were not a grand institution. They were neighbours who recognised that farming alone, each in their own isolated plot, was producing poverty.

Nine years later, the cooperative has 629 active members, 307 of them women, representing 49 percent of the total, operates twenty-seven sub-groups, employs seven professional staff including two dedicated agronomists, and commands formal credit relationships worth over a billion shillings.

THE YIELD STORY

Potato yields rose from 7 metric tonnes per hectare in 2016 to 28 metric tonnes per hectare in 2025: a fourfold increase in under ten years. Three specific practices: certified Sagitta seed varieties, collective input procurement achieving bulk discounts, and mandatory soil testing before each planting season.

THE MONEY ARCHITECTURE

When ISOWELU approaches CRDB Bank for a seasonal crop loan, it does so as a collective entity with a credit history, a professional management team, and a collateral structure that requires no individual farmer to pledge personal property. In the 2025–2026 season, TZS 1 billion at nine percent annual interest: a rate that former CRDB board chairman, present in the delegation, noted with visible satisfaction.

THE MARKET REFORM

ISOWELU KEY INDICATORS

629

Active members

49%

Female membership

TZS 1B

CRDB loan, 2025/26

<3%

NPL rate in normal years

“Tukishavuna tu, wanakata. Kila mtu ana akaunti yake CRDB. Wanakata mkopo wao, halafu inayobaki ni yako.”

– “When we harvest, they deduct. Everyone has their own CRDB account. They take the loan, then what remains is yours.”

PHOKASI NDIKWEGE, ISOWELU MEMBER FARMER

AGRONOMIST TEAM

◆ Thomas Daslo, field agronomist

◆ Leonard Kadari, agronomist & mechanisation manager

ISOWELU’s partnership with East Africa Foods established kilogram-based pricing, replacing the lumbesa system where buyers determined weight and price on their own terms. “It sounds simple,” said Kajogoo. “But this one change permanently increased what our members receive for the same product. Sometimes the market reform is more valuable than the yield.”

- ◆ Both employed and paid by ISOWELU
- ◆ Daily field visits during growing season
- ◆ Cooperative also owns 2 tractors

ISOWELU now functions as a regional training hub under the Tajirika na ISOWELU initiative. Cooperatives from Mbarali Cluster in Mbeya visit Mtwango to observe how the model operates in practice.

“Sometimes the market reform is more valuable than the yield. The farmer sells the same crop, from the same field, and receives more. That is the power of a cooperative with leverage.”

– Abdallah Kajogoo, Manager, ISOWELU AMCOS

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FARMER TRANSFORMATION, FLAGSHIP PROFILE

TZS 450 Million From 10 Acres: The Beno Mgaya Story in Full

He started as a member of a burial society and was listed on Tanzania’s register of the extreme poor. Today he earns more than TZS 450 million per season, trains a thousand farmers across six regions, and holds a TOSCI nursery certification. Two voices, his own and the CEO who built a national strategy around him, tell the complete story.

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Yassin Mkwizu (left), Programme Officer, Royal Norwegian Embassy, Dar es Salaam, and Anna Mtaita (right), Head of Finance and Administration, AGCOT Centre, walk through Beno Mgaya’s avocado orchard during the Ihemi Cluster board field visit — Lusitu Village, Njombe, 9 March 2026.

There is a house in Lusitu Village that Beno Mgaya would rather not have you photograph: not because he is ashamed of it, but because it no longer represents him. The walls lean. A log props up one corner. It is the house where his family lived when SAGCOT first arrived around 2015. It is also the house that earned him a place on the TASAF register: Tanzania’s government programme for the poorest of the poor.

BENO MGAYA, FULL PROFILE

TZS 450M

Avocado gross revenue, 2025 season

200 bags

Per acre on wife’s potato plot

“That was my first house,” he acknowledged to the AGCOT board delegation. “TASAF found me there. They knew my situation. I think even they did not believe I could become something different.”

He has a different house now.

THE BEGINNING: A BURIAL SOCIETY AND A CHALLENGE

Mgaya’s transformation began with an organisational intervention, not a financial one. He was a member, and eventually chairperson, of a chama ya kufa na kuzikana: a community solidarity group whose purpose was to pool resources so members could bury their dead. Approximately forty farmers in Lusitu Village were part of it.

When SAGCOT arrived, the message was direct: a group organised around death could not write a proposal for development. The solidarity was valuable; the direction needed to change.

TEN ACRES OF AVOCADO AND WHAT IT PRODUCED

His ten acres were planted beginning in 2016, under the Lusitu model with secured offtake. “Before the first tree went into the ground, we had a buyer and a price. That is what made it possible. Without that certainty, I could not have planted. I could not have waited five years.”

By the 2025 season, 600 trees were mature and producing at full capacity. Average yield: 300 kilograms per tree. Price: TZS 2,500 per kilogram.

The arithmetic: $600 \times 300 \times \text{TZS } 2,500 = \text{TZS } 450$ million gross revenue from a single avocado season. And that is before accounting for his wife’s potato operation.

MAMA MGAYA’S POTATOES

His wife manages approximately six acres of potatoes. Per acre, she harvests 200 bags of fifty kilograms each: a yield that, at current market prices, generates between TZS 7 million and TZS 18 million per acre in a strong year. She is described by ISOWELU management as “the best farmer here.”

THE CEO WHO BUILT A STRATEGY AROUND ONE FARMER

“Beno Mgaya tells us what is possible when you give a smallholder organised access to certified inputs, guaranteed markets, structured finance, and knowledge he can trust,” Kirenga said in a camera interview during the field visit. “The question for AGCOT is not whether this is real: we can see it is real. The question is: how many Beno Mgayas can Tanzania produce? And how quickly?”

“I used to be afraid of things I could not control,” Mgaya said, looking at his avocado trees. “The rain, the price, the buyers, the soil. Now I understand the soil. I have contracts with the buyers. I know the price before I plant. The rain: the rain is still the rain. But I have dealt with everything else.”

1,000

Farmers trained in 2 years

12

Young trainers on his team

“Nilikuwa na hofu ya mambo ambayo sikuweza kuyadhibiti. Sasa ninaelewa udongo. Nina mikataba na wanunuzi. Najua bei kabla ya kupanda.”

– “I used to be afraid of things I could not control. Now I understand the soil. I have contracts. I know the price before I plant.”

BENO MGAYA, LUSITU VILLAGE, MARCH 2026

PROFILE SUMMARY

- ◆ Started: TASAF extreme poverty register
- ◆ Avocado: 10 acres, 600 trees (planted 2016)
- ◆ Markets: Tanzanice + GBRI/EatFresh
- ◆ Potato: ~6 acres, wife’s enterprise
- ◆ TOSCI-certified nursery operator
- ◆ Vehicles: 2 (personal + farm transport)
- ◆ Children: all in school
- ◆ Mkulima kwa Mkulima: 6 regions

FROM THE CEO

- ◆ “What Ithemi has proven, every other corridor must learn, not invent. Come here, see what Beno built, understand the model, replicate it.”, Geoffrey Kirenga

FROM THE FIELD

What the Board Heard

Voices from the Ithemi Cluster

“Wakati sajgot ikifikia, tulizungumza: hamuwezi kuandika proposal ya masanduku ya mazishi. Tumia umoja huu kwa kilimo.”

BENO MGAYA, LUSITU, “WHEN THEY ARRIVED, THEY TOLD US: YOU CANNOT WRITE A PROPOSAL FOR COFFIN BOXES. USE THIS SOLIDARITY FOR FARMING.”

“There are a lot of broken agricultural things in Africa. We decided: let’s find a broken thing for ourselves, instead of working for others. Tanzania was the last country standing.”

PETER SCHUURS, MANAGING DIRECTOR, TAMU TAMU TANZANIA

“Sasa najua nilichouza. Najua uzito. Najua bei kwa kilo. Kabla sijajua chochote kama hivyo.”

“The lesson we take from the Ithemi Cluster is that you do not build other corridors by inventing new models. You take what already works here, codify it, and transfer it. That is AGCOT’s national mandate.”

DR ALI HUSSEIN LAAY, CHAIRMAN, AGCOT BOARD OF DIRECTORS

RAYMOND NYAGAWA, ISOWELU, NOW I KNOW WHAT I SOLD. I KNOW THE WEIGHT. I KNOW THE PRICE PER KILO. BEFORE, I KNEW NONE OF THAT.”

“We are not asking for fresh. They want dried. They want frozen. They want paste. They want fruit bars. The direction the world wants from Africa is processed, and we are still sending fresh fruit.”

DR JACQUELINE MKINDI, CEO, TAHA, ON EUROPEAN BUYER INTELLIGENCE, KIBITI 2026

“A lot of the children here view farming as punishment. You did something wrong, so you go out and weed. We are trying to make them see that agriculture is a viable career path, one you can make money from.”

SIGRID SYDAETHER, NOREC EXCHANGE VOLUNTEER, ACE CHILDREN'S FARM, FARM FOR THE FUTURE, ILULA

BY THE NUMBERS

The Ithemi Cluster: Key Numbers

Four days of field visits, March 2026. Sources: farmer interviews, CEO camera interview, board proceedings, partner briefings.

TZS 450M

Beno Mgaya's avocado gross revenue from 10 acres in 2025

28 MT/ha

ISOWELU potato yield 2025, up from 7 MT/ha in 2016

143,000 MT

Projected Tanzania avocado production by 2030

2,000+

Lusitu-network farmers across 7 regions

400,000 L

ASAS Dairy processing capacity per day (Iringa)

40 schools

Children's Farm programme schools (Farm for the Future)

USD 50M+

Tanzania's annual apple import bill, all avoidable

USD 90B

Global mango market, Tanzania currently captures near zero

B PRIVATE SECTOR & AGRIBUSINESS

Profiles of the companies, entrepreneurs and investors whose partnership with AGCOT has created new industries, market linkages and commercial infrastructure across the Southern Highlands, and whose success is the commercial architecture that smallholder transformation depends on.



AGCOT CEO Geoffrey Kirenga (left), AGCOT Chairman Dr. Ally Hussein Laay (centre) and Hance Byanda (right), Tanzanice Agro-Industries — Tanzanice Avocado Packhouse, Njombe Town, 10 March 2026.

Tanzania's Avocado on European Shelves, How It Got There

A Finnish entrepreneur in a seed potato project noticed unloved avocados rotting in the Southern Highlands, and cold-called Dutch buyers until one agreed to a test container. Today Tanzanice ships certified fruit to Europe, India and South Africa, and faces thirty-plus competitors buying in the same valleys it pioneered.

KILIMOKWANZA.ORG • TANZANICE PACKHOUSE, NJOMBE REGION • MARCH 2026

The avocados arrive in the early morning. Trucks from the Southern Highlands, loaded overnight from farms in Njombe, Wangingombe and, increasingly, Ruvuma, pull into the Tanzanice Agrofoods packhouse compound before most people have eaten breakfast. Inside, a workflow begins that ends, roughly three weeks later, on the shelves of supermarkets in Amsterdam, London, Paris, Chennai and Johannesburg.

None of this was inevitable. When Eero Pissilä, a Finnish entrepreneur, first came to Tanzania in the mid-2010s as part of a seed potato value chain initiative under the then-SAGCOT programme, avocados were not on his agenda. The Southern Highlands produced Hass avocados in abundance, the variety that European supermarkets prefer, and most of that production was either wasted, sold locally at negligible prices, or left on the tree.

Pissilä noticed. He pivoted.

KNOCKING ON DUTCH DOORS

Tanzanice sent company representatives to the Netherlands, Europe's primary horticultural trading hub, carrying samples of Tanzanian avocados to show buyers who had never considered Tanzania as a source country. Initial responses ranged from polite disinterest to outright rejection. Tanzanice persisted. Representatives returned to the same buyers repeatedly, leaving sample boxes, asking only for a pilot container. Eventually, one buyer agreed to test.

The supermarket trials worked. Tanzanian Hass avocados, grown at altitude in rich volcanic soil with long ripening periods, proved to be premium quality. Word spread within the Dutch trading networks. A second buyer followed. Then more.

"That breakthrough effectively placed Tanzania on the global avocado map," CEO Kirenga told the delegation. "It paved the way for every other Tanzanian exporter to enter the market. Tanzanice opened the door."

BUILDING THE INFRASTRUCTURE OF QUALITY

Tanzanice invested in the physical and procedural infrastructure that export supply chains require. The packhouse is certified to GLOBALG.A.P., GRASP and SMETA standards. Fifteen weight and quality categories are applied to every consignment.

Hance Byanda confirmed that in the current season, Tanzanice had already received approximately twenty tonnes from Ruvuma farmers. The price paid: TZS 2,200 per kilogram, compared to TZS 400 per kilogram that the same farmers had received the previous year from informal local traders.

THE COMPETITIVE LANDSCAPE

When Tanzanice pioneered the Southern Highlands avocado export trade, it operated largely alone. By March 2026, more than thirty companies were buying avocados in Njombe at peak harvest season. "In Njombe now it is very competitive," Byanda said. "That is why AGCOT opened Ruvuma for us: to give us space."

CEO Kirenga framed the competitive dynamic as a structural success. "When we started, nobody wanted Tanzanian avocado. Now thirty companies are fighting for it. That is what transformation looks like from the outside."

TANZANICE FACTS

30+

Companies now buying Njombe avocado at peak season

300-400

GlobalGAP-certified outgrowers

TZS 2,200/kg

Ruvuma price paid vs TZS 400/kg from traders

"Hiyo ilifungua mlango. Kila msafirishaji mwingine wa Tanzania aliweza kuingia sokoni. Tanzanice ilifungua mlango."

— "That breakthrough placed Tanzania on the global avocado map. Every other exporter could then follow. Tanzanice opened the door."

GEOFFREY KIRENGA, CEO, AGCOT

CERTIFICATIONS

- ◆ GLOBALG.A.P.
- ◆ GRASP
- ◆ SMETA
- ◆ 15 quality/weight categories per consignment

EXPORT MARKETS

- ◆ Netherlands (primary)
- ◆ United Kingdom
- ◆ France and Spain
- ◆ India (new, Middle East diversion)
- ◆ South Africa

Apples at the Equator: Tamu Tamu's Bet on Tanzania's Highlands

Tanzania spends USD 50 million per year importing apples from South Africa. A company founded on the belief that this was unnecessary is now producing cider, juice, vinegar and preserves from locally grown fruit, and exporting grafted seedlings to five African countries.

KILIMOKWANZA.ORG • TAMU TAMU TANZANIA LTD, IFUNDA, IRINGA REGION • MARCH 2026



Apple seedlings at Tamu Tamu's nursery, Ifunda, Iringa Region — March 2026.

Peter Schuurs, Managing Director of Tamu Tamu Tanzania, has a cold. He apologises for it as the AGCOT board delegation assembles in Tamu Tamu's meeting room on the morning of Day 2. His business partner and Commercial Director, David Alexander Runge, is away from the farm today. Peter is hosting. He does not slow down.

"My late wife and I came here in early 2022 and bought the business," he tells the group. "It didn't go so well for the first period of time. We saw an opportunity. That's really all there is to it."

The business was a struggling apple farm at Ifunda in Iringa Region, sitting at 1,800 metres above sea level, with fifty varieties of grafted apple trees on the property, forty of which had already been identified as unsuitable for the local climate.

THE MARKET THAT NOBODY WAS SERVING

When CEO Kirenga arrived at Tamu Tamu with the board, he offered a figure he had originally estimated at USD 3.5 million. Schuurs corrected him.

"Apple and apple products, Tanzania imports around maybe more than fifty million US dollars a year," Runge said. "No one knows exactly because a lot comes through the border at Tunduma with no records kept."

THE VARIETY PROBLEM, SOLVED

TAMU TAMU FACTS

2,500+

Outgrower farmers

10

Commercial varieties (from 50 at acquisition)

1,800m

Farm altitude above sea level

5

African countries receiving Tamu Tamu seedlings

"Kama Tanzania ingelikuwa na mashamba mengi ya tofaa yenye usimamizi mzuri, bado hatungeweza kutosheleza mahitaji yote ya Tanzania. Soko ni kubwa hivyo."

– "Even with many well-managed apple farms in Tanzania, we still couldn't supply all of Tanzania. The market is that large."

DAVID RUNGE, DIRECTOR, TAMU TAMU TANZANIA

Schuurs arrived to fifty apple varieties and cut all but ten. The remaining commercial varieties have demonstrated they can produce quality fruit under highland Tanzanian conditions. Three stand out for adaptability across Tanzania’s climatic zones: Shell of Alabama, Dorsett Golden and Anna. These three can produce commercially viable yields from 1,500-metre altitudes to low-altitude areas including Dodoma, Moshi and parts of the coast.

A tree under good management begins bearing commercial quantities in years three to four. By year ten and beyond, yields of 600 to 700 kilograms per tree are achievable. Apple trees live fifty to one hundred-plus years. Rootstock Runge knows in Australia is eighty years old, still producing.

PROCESSING: FROM FRUIT TO PREMIUM PRODUCTS

Lulu Maguru, the company’s cider master, manages a product range that includes ten distinct cider varieties, 100 percent cold-pressed apple juice, organic apple cider vinegar with active mother culture, dried apples, and artisan jams. All products are certified organic; no artificial preservatives, flavours or stabilisers. Products are stocked in Shoprite and Shoppers supermarkets in Dar es Salaam.

“We’ve done some calculations. Even if we had a lot of apple trees well managed here, just in Tanzania, I can’t see us ever being able to supply all the apples in Tanzania. The market is that large.”

– Peter Schuurs, Managing Director, Tamu Tamu Tanzania

PRODUCT RANGE

- ◆ Cold-pressed apple juice (500ml, 1.5L)
- ◆ 10 cider varieties: all certified organic
- ◆ Organic ACV with active mother culture
- ◆ Dried apples
- ◆ Strawberry and plum jams
- ◆ Tomato and onion relish

EXPORTS

- ◆ Ghana, Nigeria, DRC, Kenya, Zambia
- ◆ Grafted seedlings + agronomic knowledge

08

PRIVATE SECTOR & AGRIBUSINESS

The Cold Chain Gap That Is Costing Tanzanian Farmers Millions

Across the dairy, avocado, tomato and apple value chains, production performance in the Southern Highlands is strong. But the post-harvest infrastructure to capture that value is missing, and the loss falls entirely on the farmer.

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Hance Byanda at the Tanzanice Avocado Packhouse, Njombe Town — March 2026.

Imagine harvesting 300 kilograms of premium-grade Hass avocado from a single tree, fruit that earns TZS 2,500 per kilogram on the export market, and then watching it soften and bruise in a truck that spent twelve hours on a damaged feeder road between your farm and the nearest packhouse.

This is not a hypothetical scenario. It is a routine occurrence across the Ithemi Cluster’s most productive agricultural zones. And it is, in the assessment of the AGCOT board delegation, one of the two or three most urgent structural constraints on unlocking the full economic value that Tanzania’s Southern Highlands is capable of generating.

FOUR VALUE CHAINS, ONE SHARED PROBLEM

COLD CHAIN GAPS

- ◆ Avocado: Ruvuma fruit damaged in transit; rejection at packhouse
- ◆ Dairy: farm-gate cooling absent at many collection points
- ◆ Tomatoes: 20–30% post-harvest loss without pre-cooling
- ◆ Apples: no deciduous cold storage limits market reach

In avocados, the critical gap is between harvest and the certified packhouse. Tanzanice’s Hance Byanda described the specific problem in Ruvuma: fruit arriving at the packhouse from Songea-area farms after long road journeys in unrefrigerated trucks shows damage levels that force rejection of a significant portion of the load.

In dairy, the gap is solar-powered cooling at farm-gate level. ASAS Dairies, with 400,000 litres per day capacity, depends on milk collection centres that aggregate supply from thousands of smallholder farmers. When those centres lack refrigeration, milk deteriorates in transit.

In tomatoes, pre-cooling at farm gate would dramatically reduce the 20 to 30 percent post-harvest loss that is routine. In apples, Tamu Tamu requires specialised cold storage for deciduous fruit allowing controlled-atmosphere ripening.

THE INFRASTRUCTURE MATHEMATICS

The case for co-investment in cold chain infrastructure is straightforward: every shilling invested in the post-harvest infrastructure chain multiplies the value of every shilling already invested in farmer training, cooperative development and export certification. AGCOT is bringing specific co-investment proposals to the Ministerial table to make this case concrete and actionable.

“The farmers see none of it coming back in roads, in cold storage, in the infrastructure that would make their produce worth more,” Kirenga said. “That is a structural failure AGCOT is raising with the relevant ministries.”

THE PRIVATE SECTOR IS READY TO CO-INVEST

The message from every private sector actor was consistent: they are willing to invest in cold chain infrastructure if enabling conditions are in place. ASAS Dairies has already invested in several milk-cooling nodes. Tanzanice has built packhouse cold storage at significant capital cost. Tamu Tamu has installed controlled-atmosphere storage for its processing operation. What these investments require is reliable electricity, quality roads, and a regulatory environment that does not erode return on capital.

TZS 52B

Crop Development Fund collected (2024), return to farm infrastructure undemonstrated

“Wakulima hawaoni chochote kirudi katika barabara, katika ghala baridi, katika miundombinu inayofanya mazao yao kuwa na thamani zaidi.”

– “Farmers see none of it coming back in roads, in cold storage, in infrastructure that would make their produce worth more.”

GEOFFREY KIRENGA, CEO, AGCOT

PRIVATE SECTOR READY

- ◆ ASAS Dairies: investing in cooling nodes
- ◆ Tanzanice: packhouse cold storage built
- ◆ Tamu Tamu: controlled-atmosphere storage
- ◆ All require: reliable power + roads + regulation

Fair Agro: The Iringa Company Quietly Transforming Smallholder Irrigation

While the Southern Highlands celebrates its avocado and potato success stories, one Iringa-based company has been building a different kind of infrastructure: one seedling, one drip line and one AMCOS franchise at a time.

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Faraj of Fair Agro Enterprises (left) with AGCOT Board Chairman Dr. Ally Hussein Laay (centre) — Fair Agro Enterprises, Ihemi Cluster, March 2026.

Suleman Farej does not use the word “transformation” lightly. “The problem is not willingness,” he told the AGCOT board delegation at Fair Agro’s expanding seedling propagation facility. “Farmers are willing. They are capable. The problem is two things: affordability of good inputs and accessibility of good practices. If we solve both of those at the same time, transformation happens by itself.”

Fair Agro Enterprises Ltd operates across three integrated subsidiaries: Fair Farm, its commercial farming operation; Fair Miche, its seedling propagation division; and Fair Input and Technologies, combining agrochemical retail with precision DripTape irrigation infrastructure.

THE WATER PROBLEM AND ITS SOLUTION

Tanzania’s Southern Highlands receive adequate rainfall during the wet season. The problem for commercial farmers is that they only receive it during the wet season. Fair Agro’s DripTape irrigation delivers water directly to the root zone of individual plants through a low-pressure buried drip line, eliminating the evaporation and runoff losses that make conventional sprinkler irrigation inefficient. Fair Agro’s experience demonstrates DripTape reduces water use by up to 50 percent compared to sprinkler systems while maintaining or improving yield.

“If ISOWELU AMCOS could irrigate, they could grow twice a year,” Farej noted. “They already said this to the board: that irrigation is their next step. We are the company that can provide that step.”

THE AMCOS FRANCHISE MODEL

FAIR AGRO FACTS

50%

Water reduction with DripTape vs sprinkler

3

Active AMCOS franchise points

3.3M

Seedlings per month target capacity

“Tatizo si nia. Wakulima wana nia. Tatizo ni hizi mbili: bei ya pembejeo nzuri na upatikanaji wa mazoea bora.”

– “The problem is not willingness. Farmers are willing. The problem is affordability of good inputs and accessibility of good practices.”

SULEMAN FAREJ, FOUNDER & MD, FAIR AGRO ENTERPRISES LTD

THREE SUBSIDIARIES

- ◆ Fair Farm, commercial demonstration farming
- ◆ Fair Miche, F1 seedling propagation

Three AMCOS cooperatives in the Iringa cluster area are currently operating as Fair Agro franchise points, authorised retail outlets for certified seeds, fertilisers, crop protection products and technical advisory services, positioned within walking distance of the farmers who need them.

“Many farmers are buying inputs from informal traders who sell counterfeit or expired products,” Farej said. “The AMCOS franchise guarantees that what the farmer buys is what it says it is.”

◆ Fair Input & Technologies, DripTape + agrochemicals

WOMEN'S PROGRAMME

- ◆ 50 family gardens with drip irrigation
- ◆ Water tanks installed at household level
- ◆ Food security + income generation

10

PRIVATE SECTOR & AGRIBUSINESS

2% Is Not Enough: Tanzania's Certified Seed Gap Is Strangling the Potato Sector

The Njombe Regional Commissioner confirmed it directly: certified potato seed meets less than 2 percent of regional demand. One farm in Iringa is positioned to help solve the problem, if the system allows it.

KILIMOKWANZA.ORG • FARM FOR THE FUTURE, ILULA, IRINGA REGION • MARCH 2026



Dr. Lutgart Lenaerts (First Secretary, Royal Norwegian Embassy) in a flowering potato field, Ihemi Cluster — March 2026.

When the Njombe Regional Commissioner confirmed during the board delegation's Day 1 courtesy call that certified seed potato supply meets less than two percent of regional demand, the number landed in the delegation's notes as one of the most significant data points of the entire visit.

Two percent. In a region that is among the most productive potato-growing landscapes in sub-Saharan Africa. In a region where ISOWELU AMCOS has demonstrated a fourfold yield improvement attributable directly to certified seed adoption. Where the case for certified seed has been made, proven and documented over nine years.

“If the certified seed is not available, nothing else matters,” CEO Kirenga told the board. “You can train, finance, build cooperatives, open markets. But if the farmer plants an uncertified, degenerate variety, the yield ceiling is fixed at a level that prevents everything else from working.”

FARM FOR THE FUTURE: A NATIONAL SEED SECURITY ANCHOR

Farm for the Future Tanzania, the 350-hectare commercial operation outside Ilula in Iringa Region, combines seed maize production in partnership with SeedCo Tanzania, an expanding macadamia programme with 69 hectares under development, and a certified seed potato programme the management team views as strategically central.

In the 2025–2026 season, Farm for the Future planted seven hectares of certified seed potato. The yield was modest: the reason: a shortage of quality seed from the upstream supply chain. The Sylvin variety had

SEED GAP FACTS

<2%

Certified seed meets regional potato demand (Njombe)

4×

Yield increase ISOWELU achieved using certified seed

193 ha

FFF seed maize (current season)

69 ha

FFF macadamia, first harvest expected 2027

“Kama mbegu bora haipatikani, kila kitu kingine hakina maana. Unaweza kufundisha, kufadhili, kujenga ushirika, kufungua masoko. Lakini kama mkulima anapanda aina isiyoidhinishwa, kiwango cha juu cha mavuno kimewekwa tayari.”

– “If certified seed is not available, nothing else matters. You can train, finance, cooperate, open markets. But if the farmer plants uncertified variety, the yield ceiling is already fixed.”

effectively stopped producing commercially viable quantities, leaving a supply gap that the system had not yet filled.

THE BOARD'S RECOMMENDATION

The board incorporated the seed security challenge into its field-verified Ministerial brief. The recommendation: a formal seed security programme, government-funded and privately operated, targeting thirty percent of Njombe Region's certified seed potato requirement within five years, using Farm for the Future as the primary production anchor.

FFF OVERVIEW

- ◆ 350 ha own + 100 ha leased (Catholic mission)
- ◆ Partners: SeedCo, Yara, HZPC, Silverlands
- ◆ ACE NGO: children's farm + women's programme
- ◆ Norwegian equipment demos in Mbeya + Iringa
- ◆ Ilula Orphan School: 60% of farm investment

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PRIVATE SECTOR & AGRIBUSINESS

The Cider Master of the Southern Highlands

At 1,800 metres above sea level in Iringa Region, Lulu Maguru manages ten distinct cider varieties, an organic apple cider vinegar operation, cold-pressed juice lines and artisan jams: a product range that exists nowhere else in Tanzania.

KILIMOKWANZA.ORG • TAMU TAMU TANZANIA LTD, IFUNDA, IRINGA REGION • MARCH 2026



Cider, juice and vinegar from Tamu Tamu Tanzania, Ifunda — pressed from Southern Highlands fruit.

The tasting comes before the explanation. When the AGCOT board delegation arrived at Tamu Tamu Tanzania's processing facility, Lulu Maguru had arranged the full product range on a table in order of production complexity. She started from the right, with the simplest product, and worked left through the cascade of what Tanzania's apple industry can become when someone decides to take it seriously.

"This becomes this, which becomes this, and then this," she said, moving between bottles. The board members leaned forward.

THE PRODUCTS

The juice: 100 percent cold-pressed apple juice, nothing added. No water, no sugar, no preservatives. "If you want to know what a Tanzanian apple tastes like, this is the answer."

The ciders: ten varieties, each with a distinct flavour profile ranging from dry to semi-sweet to fruit-forward. All certified organic. Maguru described them with the precision of a winemaker.

PRODUCT RANGE

- ◆ 100% cold-pressed apple juice (500ml, 1.5L)
- ◆ 10 cider varieties, certified organic
- ◆ Organic ACV with active mother
- ◆ Dried apples, no additives
- ◆ Strawberry jam (on-farm strawberries)
- ◆ Plum jam
- ◆ Tomato and onion relish

"Hakuna kitu kama hiki Tanzania. Hakuna saidia nyingine ya Tanzania. Hakuna juisi ya tofaa inayolinganishwa. Ukinunua hizi"

“There is nothing like this in Tanzania,” she said, without evident boasting, simply as a statement of fact. “No other Tanzanian cider. No comparable Tanzanian apple juice. If you want these products and you live in Tanzania, you either buy ours or you buy imported. That is the market we are in.”

The organic apple cider vinegar: unfiltered, with the ‘mother’ visible as a cloudy sediment. Positioned for health-conscious consumers and food preparation. The dried apples, strawberry jam, plum jam and tomato and onion relish complete the range. Each product uses Tanzanian raw materials only.

THE VALUE ADDITION LOGIC

Behind the tasting table is a processing philosophy directly relevant to the corridor model’s objectives. Tanzania has historically exported raw agricultural commodities and imported the processed products derived from them at dramatically higher values. Cashews roasted in India. Cloves distilled in France. Avocados cold-pressed in South Africa. The value addition happens elsewhere.

Tamu Tamu’s processing operation is the counter-model: grow the fruit in Tanzania, process it in Tanzania, sell the premium product in Tanzania and increasingly in export markets. The 2,500 outgrowers who supply the company’s fruit are direct participants in this value chain.

*nchini Tanzania, unanunua zetu au za nje.
Hiyo ndiyo soko letu.”*

– “There is nothing like this in Tanzania. No comparable juice. If you want these products in Tanzania, you either buy ours or you buy imported. That is our market.”

**LULU MAGURU, CIDER MASTER, TAMU
TAMU TANZANIA LTD**

RETAIL PRESENCE

- ◆ Shoprite, Mlimani City, Dar es Salaam
- ◆ Shoppers supermarket, Dar es Salaam
- ◆ Premium hospitality sector
- ◆ Specialty food retail

USD 50M+

Tanzania’s annual apple import bill: all avoidable

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PRIVATE SECTOR & AGRIBUSINESS

3.3 Million Seedlings a Month: Fair Agro’s Quiet Revolution

Kenya’s commercial vegetable farmers buy seedlings. Tanzania’s mostly still direct-seed. Fair Agro is building the infrastructure to close that gap, and the scale of what is under construction at Igumbilo Village may change how the entire country thinks about smallholder horticulture.

KILIMOKWANZA.ORG • FAIR AGRO ENTERPRISES LTD, IGUMBILO VILLAGE, IRINGA REGION • MARCH 2026



Indoor seedling propagation at scale, Iringa Region — March 2026.

The first structure is already working. Six hundred square metres of controlled-environment seedling propagation, sheltered, irrigated, temperature-managed. Tomato seedlings in neat trays. Pepper transplants. Brassica seedlings. Onion starts. All F1 hybrid varieties, selected for yield, disease resistance and market quality.

The second structure is being built. Two thousand eight hundred square metres. When complete, Fair Agro's total propagation capacity will be approximately 3,400 square metres, producing over 3.3 million seedlings per month.

THE KENYA-TANZANIA DIVIDE

In Kenya, the majority of commercial vegetable farmers in productive regions no longer direct-seed their F1 tomatoes, capsicums, cabbages or onions. They buy certified transplants from accredited nurseries. The result: predictable planting dates, consistent stand establishment, and a final product with the uniformity that modern buyers require.

In Tanzania, most smallholder vegetable farmers still direct-seed. There are reasons beyond tradition: quality certified seedlings have historically been expensive, difficult to obtain rurally, and uncertain in provenance. "Farmers have been burnt before," Farej acknowledged. "They paid for F1 and got something else. Our job is to be the supplier that earns that trust back."

MAKING AFFORDABILITY THE STRATEGY

The Fair Miche business model is built around affordability as a first principle. Pricing is engineered at the point where a smallholder farmer "does not think twice before buying." This means building at scale to reduce per-unit propagation costs, managing inputs tightly, and locating distribution through the AMCOS franchise network.

"If a farmer has to travel two hours and spend TZS 5,000 in transport to buy seedlings from a city agro-dealer, the price calculation includes that transport cost," Farej said. "Through the AMCOS, the farmer walks to their cooperative and buys certified seedlings. That changes everything."

Three point three million seedlings per month is approximately 40 million transplants per year, enough for over 32,000 acres of tomato production per year. The constraint is not demand. It is building the supply infrastructure, distribution network, quality assurance and farmer trust simultaneously.

FAIR MICHE FACTS

600 sqm

Existing propagation structure

2,800 sqm

New structure under construction

3.3M

Seedlings per month at full capacity

"Wakulima wamewahi kuungua. Walimlipa kwa F1 na wakakuja na kitu kingine. Kazi yetu ni kuwa msambazaji ambaye anarudisha imani hiyo, kwa kuwa wa kubali, wa kufuatilia, wa kuwa thabiti na wa kuwa wa bei nafuu."

– "Farmers have been burnt before. They paid for F1 and got something else. Our job is to be the supplier that earns that trust back."

SULEMAN FAREJ, FOUNDER & MD, FAIR AGRO ENTERPRISES LTD

CROPS PROPAGATED

- ◆ F1 tomatoes
- ◆ F1 peppers and capsicums
- ◆ Brassicas (cabbage, kale, broccoli)
- ◆ Onion transplants
- ◆ Other F1 vegetable varieties

SUPPLY PARTNERS

- ◆ East West Seeds
- ◆ Holland Greentech
- ◆ HZPC (potato)
- ◆ Positive International
- ◆ Osho Chemicals / AtoZ

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PRIVATE SECTOR & AGRIBUSINESS

The Man Who Fixed Broken Things and Found His Farm

Peter Schuurs left Australia twenty-five years ago for a three-year African adventure. He worked through Botswana, Sudan, South Sudan and Uganda. He eliminated countries one by one until only Tanzania remained. Then he found a broken apple farm in Iringa, and decided to stay.

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The question comes from CEO Kirenga: "How did you end up here?"

Peter Schuurs smiles carefully, because of the cold. He coughs once, apologises, and begins.

"My wife and I, my late wife, and our four young children left Australia twenty-five years ago to work in Botswana for three years, have an African adventure, and go back to Australia."

A pause. "We never went back."

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF AFRICAN AGRICULTURE

25 years

Working in African agriculture before acquiring Tamu Tamu (Peter Schuurs, MD)

50 → 10

Apple varieties, inherited 50, kept 10 that work commercially

From Botswana, where the family spent four years rather than three. To Khartoum for four more years. Then South Sudan, until war drove them out. Uganda, where his wife and children settled while he commuted. Another war. Uganda again. Until the children grew up, finished their schooling in Africa, and returned to Australia for university.

“We decided we wanted to stay in East Africa,” Runge said. “So the question became: if we’re going to stay and do something, what do we do?” His answer came from twenty-five years of observation. “I fixed broken things. There are a lot of broken agricultural things in Africa. So we decided, let’s find a broken thing for ourselves, instead of working for others.”

ELIMINATING COUNTRIES

The Runge worked through East Africa’s countries, eliminating them one by one for reasons ranging from political risk to soil conditions. “Literally, the last country standing was Tanzania. If Tanzania was not going to work, we had run out of countries.”

They found Tamu Tamu Tanzania: a ten-year-old apple business that had never found a formula that worked commercially. Fifty apple varieties, forty unsuitable. The brand existed. The land was there. The trees were in the ground. But the business was broken. Schuurs looked at it and saw the thing he had spent twenty-five years learning to see.

THE MODEL HE BUILT

What Runge constructed at Tamu Tamu is a closed-loop apple value chain. The farm produces grafted seedlings. It sells them to outgrowers. It provides extension support through a company-funded field officer. When outgrowers have fruit, they call the company; the company buys it back. The fruit goes to Lulu Maguru’s processing operation.

The outgrower network extends to Karagwe, Moshi, Arusha and Makete. And the company exports grafted seedlings to Ghana, Nigeria, DRC, Kenya and Zambia, positioning Tanzania as a source of apple production expertise for the wider African tropical highland ecosystem.

“There are a lot of broken agricultural things in Africa. We decided: let’s find a broken thing for ourselves, instead of working for others. Tanzania was the last country standing. If it hadn’t worked, we had run out of countries.”

– Peter Schuurs, Managing Director, Tamu Tamu Tanzania

“Kuna mambo mengi ya kilimo yaliyovunjika Afrika. Tuliama: tutafute kitu kilichovunjika kwetu wenyewe, badala ya kufanya kazi kwa wengine. Tanzania ilikuwa nchi ya mwisho iliyobaki.”

– “There are a lot of broken agricultural things in Africa. We decided: find a broken thing for ourselves. Tanzania was the last country standing.”

PETER SCHUURS, MANAGING DIRECTOR, TAMU TAMU TANZANIA

BIOGRAPHY

- ◆ Australian; 4 children grown up in Africa
- ◆ Botswana (4 years) → Sudan (4 years)
- ◆ South Sudan → Uganda (multiple postings)
- ◆ Specialisation: fixing broken agricultural enterprises
- ◆ Bought Tamu Tamu 2022 with late wife
- ◆ No regrets stated; currently has a cold

SEEDLING EXPORTS

- ◆ Ghana, Nigeria, DRC, Kenya, Zambia
- ◆ Tanzania becoming regional apple expertise hub

C

SECTOR ANALYSIS & POLICY

Analytical and investigative features examining systemic constraints, market failures, policy gaps and national opportunities in Tanzania's agricultural sector. Drawn from CEO camera interviews, board meeting proceedings and frank field discussions. Some of this material is sensitive; all of it is important.



Irrigated smallholder plots in the Southern Highlands, March 2026.

Tanzania's Avocado: From 400 Certified Farmers to 20,000: The Scale-Up Opportunity

Tanzania's avocado production is projected to increase nearly sixfold within this decade. But the GlobalGAP certification pipeline has barely grown in years. If uncertified volume floods the market, a decade of investment could collapse overnight.

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Avocado scale-up across the Southern Highlands, March 2026.

Tanzania's avocado sector is, by every production measure, a success story. Smallholder farmers are earning life-changing incomes. Export companies have cracked European, Indian and South African markets. New supply areas are opening in Ruvuma, Kigoma and Morogoro.

The industry is also, according to the most careful analysis conducted during the AGCOT board's March 2026 field visit, sitting on a structural time bomb.

By 2030, Tanzania's avocado production is projected to reach 143,000 metric tonnes: a nearly sixfold increase on current certified volumes. The buyers who will receive that fruit expect every kilogram to carry GlobalGAP certification. It is not a preference. It is a market access requirement. Today, Tanzania, Tanzania's leading export company, works with between 300 and 400 certified outgrowers. Against 143,000 metric tonnes, that number is orders of magnitude too small.

THE CERTIFICATION BOTTLENECK

GlobalGAP certification requires farmers to maintain detailed records of every input applied, demonstrate traceability from planting to packing, comply with pesticide residue limits enforced by independent testing, and submit to annual audits. For a smallholder farmer on three to five acres accessible only by seasonal road, every requirement represents a cost and a complexity.

"We are projecting 143,000 metric tonnes of avocado production by 2030," CEO Kirenga told the board. "Our certified outgrower base is a fraction of what it needs to be. We are building production capacity faster than we are building certification capacity. That is a dangerous imbalance."

▲ 2030 RISK, CRITICAL

- ◆ Projected 2030 production: 143,000 MT
- ◆ Current certified outgrowers: 300–400
- ◆ Order fulfilment rate (each exporter): 5–10%
- ◆ Uncertified surplus: domestic market cannot absorb at scale
- ◆ Risk: price collapse destroys decade of investment
- ◆ Window to act: 3–5 years

"Tunajenga uwezo wa uzalishaji haraka zaidi kuliko tunajenga uwezo wa uhakiki. Hiyo ni usawa hatari."

– "We are building production capacity faster than we are building certification capacity. That is a dangerous imbalance."

GEOFFREY KIRENGA, CEO, AGCOT

BOARD RECOMMENDATION

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE BALANCE BREAKS

Production reaches 143,000 metric tonnes. Certified channels can absorb perhaps twenty to thirty percent. The remainder, uncertified and excluded from export markets, enters the domestic market simultaneously. The Tanzanian domestic market does not have the absorptive capacity to receive tens of thousands of additional metric tonnes without a catastrophic price collapse.

“One bad season, one market collapse, and the farmers who are just entering their first productive harvests will walk away from avocado,” said Board Member Rugambwa. “We have seen this happen with other crops in Tanzania.”

WHAT THE BOARD RECOMMENDED

The board designated the 2030 avocado market risk as the highest-urgency single item on its six-point Ministerial policy agenda. The specific ask: a government-funded, industry-coordinated programme to accelerate GlobalGAP certification for a minimum of 5,000 additional outgrowers within three years, with a pathway to 20,000 by 2028. The window: three to five years before the new planting cohort reaches full production.

- ◆ Certification acceleration programme
- ◆ Target: 5,000 new GlobalGAP outgrowers in 3 years
- ◆ Pathway: 20,000 by 2028
- ◆ Funding: government + Crop Development Fund
- ◆ Coordination: Ministry of Agriculture + TPHPA

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SECTOR ANALYSIS & POLICY

Unlocking Soya's Potential: The Off-Taker Opportunity in the Southern Highlands

Tanzania's soya farmers in the Southern Highlands produce a crop the world wants. An estimated half their transaction value is captured by informal traders before the farmer sees a shilling. The solution is an anchor industrial off-taker, and it does not yet exist.

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There is a number that circulates among agricultural economists working in Tanzania's Southern Highlands that does not appear in policy documents and rarely features in development reports. It is uncomfortable enough that it tends to remain in private conversations and closed-room briefings.

Smallholder soya farmers in the Ihemi Cluster lose an estimated fifty percent of their potential transaction value to informal middlemen before the commodity reaches any formal market.

Half. Before the farmer's effort, their input costs, their seasonal risk and their land are compensated at any level approaching market value, half of what the crop is worth at the next link in the chain has already been extracted by traders operating in the absence of competing buyers, price transparency, or cooperative aggregation infrastructure.

HOW THE MIDDLEMAN TRAP WORKS

A farmer with two to five acres of soya at harvest has a perishable, bulky commodity and a limited window to sell before quality deteriorates. The buyer, a local trader or aggregator, has market price information, storage capacity, and the patience that comes from dealing with dozens of farmers simultaneously. The farmer does not have time to wait for a better offer, access to real-time prices, storage, or transport to reach an urban wholesale market. The price reflects this asymmetry.

THE MISSING OFF-TAKER

The solution, in principle, is straightforward: an anchor industrial off-taker that provides guaranteed purchase at a published floor price, creates market certainty, and forces competing buyers to improve their terms. In the avocado value chain, the presence of certified export buyers drove the farm-gate price from TZS 250 per kilogram to TZS 2,500 per kilogram over fourteen years. The mechanism was simple: once farmers had an alternative buyer who paid a fair price, they stopped accepting the old price.

Soya does not yet have an equivalent anchor off-taker at the scale needed to transform the market structure. Building that structure is the opportunity AGCOT is bringing to the partnership table.

WHAT THE BOARD DECIDED

SOYA MARKET FAILURE

50%

Estimated farmer income captured by middlemen

“Kinachofanyika kwenye soya kinafanana na kilichokuwa kikifanyika kwenye parachichi kabla ya AGCOT. Soko lilivunjika. Mkulima alibeba gharama. Suluhisho ni mnunuzi wa kimkakati.”

– “What is happening in soya is what happened to avocado before AGCOT. The market was broken. The farmer bore the cost. The solution is an anchor buyer.”

AGCOT BOARD ANALYSIS, DAY 3, IRINGA, MARCH 2026

AVOCADO COMPARISON

- ◆ 2011: TZS 250–300/kg (no anchor buyer)
- ◆ 2026: TZS 2,500/kg (Tanzanice as anchor)
- ◆ Mechanism: competing buyers → price rises
- ◆ Soya: mechanism absent, no competing buyers

BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS

- ◆ Investment guarantee for first-mover processors
- ◆ Co-financing for cold chain and storage
- ◆ Long-term contract regulatory framework

The board meeting formally incorporated both soya and potato off-taker gaps into the Ministerial engagement framework. The specific question: what deal structure, de-risking instrument or facilitation role does AGCOT need to play to close these gaps before the 2030 commercialisation target? Potential mechanisms identified: government-facilitated investment guarantees for first-mover processors; public-private co-financing for cold chain and storage infrastructure; and a regulatory framework creating commercial certainty for long-term offtake contracts.

◆ Ministerial engagement: Agriculture + Industry

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SECTOR ANALYSIS & POLICY

The Last Mile: Infrastructure Investment That Will Unlock the Southern Highlands

Tanzania's farmers are producing more than the roads can carry. Targeted investment in feeder road infrastructure between farms and packhouses would multiply the return on every shilling already invested in farmer training, cooperative development and export certification.

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Hance Byanda had a problem. He had successfully opened a new supply area for Tanzanice Agrofoods in Ruvuma Region. The fruit was good. The farmers were committed. The offtake agreement was in place. Then the trucks tried to get through.

“The farmers harvest their fruit in perfect condition at the farm,” Byanda told the board delegation. “By the time it arrives at the packhouse, a large portion has already been rejected because of the roads. The roads in the Songea area are impassable. The fruit bruises in transit. The farmer gets less. And next season, they wonder whether it is worth the effort.”

The feeder road problem has appeared in every stakeholder consultation, every value chain analysis, and every field mission report produced across the SAGCOT and AGCOT era. Both the Iringa and Njombe Regional Secretariats raised it as the single top constraint on agricultural commercialisation.

TZS 52 BILLION AND COUNTING

The AGCOT board approach to the infrastructure question is precise rather than general. AGCOT is bringing specific, identified routes to the Ministerial table, routes that connect specific farms to specific packhouses, with the return on investment quantified in farmer income, export volume and tax receipts from a growing agricultural sector. These are not abstract road requests. They are evidence-based partnership investment proposals.

THE COMPOUNDING LOSSES

The road problem produces compounding losses across multiple points in the value chain. At the farm gate, quality degrades in the extended transit window. At the packhouse, rejection rates from new supply areas reflect transit damage rather than farm-level failure. At the cooperative level, the mathematics of collective action require that the promise made to farmers, that quality investment will be rewarded, is delivered. When a farmer who has done everything right watches their fruit arrive damaged because of a road they cannot control, the promise breaks.

A CROSS-MINISTRY INVESTMENT PRIORITY

The board incorporated the feeder road challenge into the Ministerial brief with specific road-to-packhouse investment cases, submitted for cross-Ministry infrastructure decision-making. The case: specific roads connecting specific farms to specific packhouses, with the return on investment, in farmer income, export revenue, and tax receipts from a growing agricultural sector, calculated and presented.

▲ ROAD CONSTRAINT, EVIDENCE

- ◆ Named top constraint by: Iringa RAS, Njombe RAS, Tanzanice, ISOWELU, multiple partners
- ◆ Direct loss: Ruvuma avocado rejected at packhouse, road bruising, not farm failure
- ◆ TZS 52B collected by Crop Development Fund (2024)
- ◆ Return to road infrastructure: unconfirmed
- ◆ Impact: farm quality investment not rewarded; trust erodes

“Wakulima hawaoni chochote kirudi katika barabara. Na matunda yanaoza barabara.”

– “Farmers see none of it coming back in roads. And the fruit is rotting on the roads.”

GEOFFREY KIRENGA, CEO, AGCOT

CROSS-MINISTRY REQUIRED

- ◆ Ministry of Works and Transport
- ◆ Ministry of Agriculture
- ◆ TARURA (district roads)
- ◆ Ministry of Finance (Crop Fund accountability)
- ◆ Board: present specific road cases with ROI

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SECTOR ANALYSIS & POLICY

From USD 20 Billion to USD 100 Billion: The Ministerial Case AGCOT Is Taking to Government

After four days in the field witnessing what organised smallholder agriculture can produce, the AGCOT board has a message for Tanzania's Ministers of Agriculture and Livestock: the window for transformation is open now. What is required is political commitment, not more funding.

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Dr. Ally Hussein Laay (left), Board Chairman of AGCOT Centre, with Hon. Daniel Chongolo (right), Tanzania's Minister of Agriculture, following the AGCOT board's Ithemi Cluster field-visit briefing at the Ministry of Agriculture, Mtumba, Dodoma — 13 March 2026.

On the afternoon of Day 3, in a meeting room in Iringa following visits to Farm for the Future and Fair Agro Enterprises, the AGCOT board of directors sat down to convert four days of field evidence into strategic decisions.

They had spent four days observing what Tanzania's agricultural corridor model had produced: TZS 450 million per season from ten acres; a billion-shilling cooperative with a less-than-three-percent default rate; an export company that had cold-called Dutch buyers until someone agreed to a test shipment; a children's farm teaching the next generation; a Norwegian investor exporting seedlings to five African countries.

They also had four days of evidence about where additional investment and coordination would unlock the next stage of growth: feeder road infrastructure that would fully connect farms to packhouses; a certification pipeline that needs to scale alongside the growing production base; structured markets for soya and potato that would do for those value chains what the avocado certification model did for the Southern Highlands.

THE NUMBERS: WHERE TANZANIA IS AND WHERE IT NEEDS TO BE

Tanzania's agricultural exports currently generate under USD 3 billion per year. The national Vision 2050 targets USD 100 billion by mid-century: a more-than-thirty-fold increase. The intermediate milestone: USD 10 billion by 2030. Tanzania is currently at less than one-third of that target with four years remaining.

THE SIX-POINT POLICY REQUEST

The board produced a formal six-point framework for the CEO's Ministerial engagement. First: smallholder finance guarantee structures for TZS 1.2 million per acre in avocado expansion. Second: cold-

NATIONAL TARGETS

USD 3B

Current annual agricultural exports

USD 10B

2030 target

USD 100B

Vision 2050 target

SIX PARTNERSHIP PROPOSALS

- ◆ 1. Smallholder finance guarantees (avocado expansion)
- ◆ 2. Cold chain co-financing framework
- ◆ 3. ★ GlobalGAP certification acceleration (HIGHEST)
- ◆ 4. Fair Agro formal national partnership
- ◆ 5. Off-taker incentives, soya & potato
- ◆ 6. Feeder roads with quantified ROI

“Dirisha la mabadiliko ya kilimo Tanzania liko wazi sasa. Miundombinu ipo. Sekta binafsi inawekeza. Wakulima wako tayari. Kinachohitajika ni ahadi ya kisiasa.”

chain infrastructure co-financing framework. Third (HIGHEST PRIORITY): certification acceleration programme targeting 5,000 new GlobalGAP outgrowers in three years. Fourth: formal Fair Agro partnership at national scale. Fifth: off-taker gap investment incentives for soya and potato. Sixth: specific feeder road investment cases with quantified ROI.

“Tanzania’s agricultural transformation window is open now. The infrastructure exists. The private sector is investing. The farmers are ready. What is required from government is not funding alone, but the political commitment that converts a working corridor model into a national policy priority.”

– AGCOT Board, formal resolution, Day 3 Board Meeting, Iringa, 11 March 2026

The unanimous board vote to carry these proposals to the Ministerial table closed a loop that had begun on the afternoon of Day 1 in a potato field in Lusitu Village, where a woman explained she was harvesting 200 bags per acre from a farm that had once produced five tonnes per hectare. What the government and private sector built together there is the evidence for what the partnership can build everywhere.

– “The transformation window is open now. The infrastructure exists. Private sector is investing. Farmers are ready. What is required is political commitment.”

AGCOT BOARD, DAY 3, IRINGA, MARCH 2026

NORWAY CONTEXT

- ◆ Embassy present across all 4 days
- ◆ International partners follow government commitment
- ◆ Norway leverage multiplies what already works
- ◆ Cannot substitute for what is absent

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SECTOR ANALYSIS & POLICY

Quality at Scale: How Tanzania Protects Its Avocado Reputation in a Growing Market

Tanzania’s avocado export success depends on consistent quality assurance from farm to packhouse. As production grows and more buyers enter the market, AGCOT is working with regulatory institutions and the Ministry to build the quality infrastructure that protects market access and rewards every farmer who has invested in doing things right.

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Tanzania’s avocado sector has earned its reputation in European supermarkets, Indian distributors and South African packhouses through consistent quality. Tanzanian Hass avocado, grown at altitude in volcanic soil with long ripening periods, is premium product. Maintaining that reputation as volumes grow and new supply areas come online is one of the most important investments the partnership between government and industry can make in the coming years.

The challenge is straightforward: as more farmers enter avocado production, and as more buyers enter the market to compete for supply, the quality assurance system must scale alongside them. The certifications, inspections, input standards and traceability protocols that have secured Tanzania’s access to premium markets need to reach every farmer in every new supply area: not just the pioneering cooperatives that established the standard.

BUILDING THE QUALITY ARCHITECTURE

Quality assurance in export horticulture has multiple layers. At the farm level, it requires trained farmers applying approved inputs at the right timing and maintaining records that demonstrate compliance. At the cooperative level, it requires extension services and agronomists who can support that compliance consistently. At the regulatory level, it requires inspection capacity and certification systems that are efficient, affordable and trusted by international buyers.

Tanzania already has the institutional framework, TPHPA and the certification bodies that work alongside it, that provides the foundation. The partnership opportunity is to invest in that framework’s capacity alongside the investment being made in production: so that every new tonne of avocado arriving at export channels arrives with the quality credentials that secure the premium price.

THE PARTNERSHIP INVESTMENT PROPOSAL

AGCOT is working with TPHPA, COPRA and the Ministry of Agriculture to identify the specific capacity investments: in inspection infrastructure, certification training, and agrochemical compliance education for farmers: that would allow the quality system to keep pace with production growth. The private sector brings the farmer organisation and training investment. Government brings the regulatory infrastructure and the public confidence that comes from a credible, well-resourced quality authority. Together, these protect the reputation that both sides have worked to build.

QUALITY ARCHITECTURE

- ◆ Farm level: trained farmers, approved inputs, records
- ◆ Cooperative level: extension services, daily agronomist support
- ◆ Regulatory level: TPHPA inspection + certification
- ◆ Market level: buyer confidence in Tanzania origin

“Sifa ya parachichi ya Tanzania ni mojawapo ya mali muhimu za kilimo ambazo nchi imejenga katika miaka kumi na tano iliyopita. Kuipalinda tunapopanua, si gharama. Ni uwekezaji unaofanya upanuzi kuwa endelevu kibiashara.”

– “Tanzania’s avocado reputation is one of the most valuable agricultural assets the country has built. Protecting it as we scale is not a cost: it is the investment that makes scale commercially sustainable.”

GEOFFREY KIRENGA, CEO, AGCOT

PARTNERSHIP INSTITUTIONS

- ◆ TPHPA, inspection and phytosanitary certification
- ◆ COPRA, crop products regulatory authority
- ◆ Ministry of Agriculture, regulatory coordination
- ◆ AGCOT, farmer training and cooperative extension

“Tanzania’s avocado reputation is one of the most valuable agricultural assets the country has built in the last fifteen years. Protecting it as we scale is not a cost. It is the investment that makes scale commercially sustainable.”

– Geoffrey Kirenga, CEO, AGCOT

◆ Private sector, packhouse standards and buyer compliance

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SECTOR ANALYSIS & POLICY

A New Market Opens: How Tanzania Can Claim India’s Growing Appetite for Avocado

The Middle East conflict has rerouted European avocado shipments to India, creating an opening Tanzania has not yet seized. A TZS 300,000 social media investment could establish a market worth hundreds of millions. The opportunity is real. The window is now.

KILIMOKWANZA.ORG • TANZANICE PACKHOUSE, NJOMBE REGION • MARCH 2026

The ripple effects of geopolitical crises travel in unexpected directions. For Tanzania’s avocado farmers, the ongoing conflict in the Middle East has produced a specific, immediate and entirely solvable problem that was playing out in real time during the AGCOT board’s March 2026 field visit.

The mechanics: the Middle East crisis has disrupted shipping routes and consumer markets that absorbed a significant share of avocados originally destined for Europe. As European buyers adjusted their supply, some volume was diverted to India: a large, growing consumer market where avocados are gaining popularity. In theory: an opportunity. In practice: Tanzanian avocado brand recognition in India is negligible.

THREE HUNDRED THOUSAND SHILLINGS

CEO Kirenga, during the Tanzanice packhouse debrief, told the board what it would take. “Our distributors in India are saying Tanzania should invest in advertisement of avocado in social media in India,” he said. “The bill is around TZS 300,000.”

Three hundred thousand Tanzanian shillings. Approximately USD 115. A trivially small sum relative to the value at stake. “No one is aware of that, and no one is willing to pay for it,” Kirenga said. “Individual companies cannot do it alone: the brand benefit is collective. That is a government responsibility. But government does not know this is needed.”

HOW AGCOT WAS WORKING THE PROBLEM

AGCOT was not simply observing: it was actively working the informal channels that, in the absence of formal government mechanisms, are the only ones available. Kirenga described advising Byanda on how to engage the Njombe Regional Commissioner about the India advertising need, coaching him on the framing that would make the Regional Commissioner understand why acting was in his personal and institutional interest.

THE BROADER BRAND PROBLEM

The TZS 300,000 advertising gap points toward a structural deficit in how Tanzania manages its agricultural export brand internationally. New high-value exports, avocado, apple products, macadamia, have no equivalent marketing infrastructure. The brand is being built, by default, by individual companies navigating individual markets. Tanzania needs a mechanism that can act on market intelligence when it has it: not when the bureaucratic cycle delivers it six months later.

THE NUMBERS

TZS 300K

Cost of India social media campaign to rescue current season

USD 115

Approximate USD equivalent of TZS 300K

“Hakuna anayejua hilo, na hakuna anayetaka kulipa. Kampuni moja haiwezi kufanya peke yake, faida ya chapa ni ya pamoja. Hiyo ni jukumu la serikali. Lakini serikali haijui hii inahitajika.”

– “No one knows this, and no one is willing to pay. A single company cannot do it alone: the brand benefit is collective. That is a government responsibility. But government doesn’t know this is needed.”

GEOFFREY KIRENGA, CEO, AGCOT

MECHANISM

- ◆ AGCOT advising exporters on RC engagement
- ◆ RC → presses Minister/PS for campaign funding
- ◆ Target: India social media campaign this season
- ◆ Goal: build Tanzanian avocado brand in Indian market

STRUCTURAL GAP

- ◆ No real-time government market intelligence response
- ◆ Avocado, apple, macadamia: no national brand infrastructure
- ◆ Each exporter currently fulfilling 5–10% of available orders

Tanzania's USD 90 Billion Mango Moment

Tanzania grows 700,000 tonnes of mangoes every year and exports almost none internationally. When India, Malaysia and Latin America have no mangoes to sell, Tanzania's harvest is ripe, and the world price doubles. This is the opportunity that avocado was fifteen years ago.

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In 2011, when SAGCOT was established, avocado was not a crop anyone took seriously as an export commodity. Farmers grew it. Some of it was eaten locally. Most of it rotted.

Today, avocado defines the economic ambitions of Njombe and Iringa. The farm-gate price has increased tenfold in fourteen years. Thousands of smallholder families have rebuilt their livelihoods around a tree crop that had no structured commercial value chain when SAGCOT started.

“We took fourteen years to do that with avocado,” CEO Kirenga said, in the extended camera interview. “What crop is in the same position today that avocado was in 2011? What crop is Tanzania sitting on that the world wants, that we are not yet selling internationally?” His answer: mango.

THE GLOBAL MANGO MARKET

The global trade in fresh mangoes and mango-derived products is approximately USD 90 billion per year. Tanzania produces an estimated 700,000 metric tonnes annually, placing it among the largest mango producers in sub-Saharan Africa. Of that volume, international exports are a negligible fraction. Most is consumed domestically or lost to post-harvest waste.

THE SEASONAL WINDOW

What makes Tanzania's mango opportunity compelling, and structurally similar to the avocado opportunity SAGCOT exploited, is calendar arithmetic. The world's largest mango-producing countries sit primarily in the Northern Hemisphere. Their harvests peak between March and August. Tanzania harvests mangoes primarily between October and February.

“When Tanzania harvests, India has no mangoes,” Kirenga said. “Malaysia has no mangoes. Latin America has no mangoes to sell. The price a Tanzanian exporter can achieve in that window is nearly double what is available when the Northern Hemisphere is in full production. We have a natural market advantage built into the calendar. We are not using it.”

PROCESSING: THE VALUE MULTIPLIER

As with avocado, the full opportunity in mango lies not only in fresh export but in value-added processing: dried mango for European health food markets, mango pulp and juice, mango extracts and concentrates for pharmaceutical and cosmetics. “You do not export a raw mango and then import a mango juice at ten times the price,” Kirenga said. “You export the juice. That is how agricultural exports reach USD 100 billion.”

MANGO OPPORTUNITY

USD 90B

Global mango market (fresh + processed)

700,000 T

Tanzania annual mango production

≈2x

Price premium in Tanzania's harvest window vs peak season

“Wakati Tanzania unavuna, India haina maembe. Malaysia haina maembe. Amerika ya Kusini haina maembe ya kuuza. Tuna faida ya asili ya kalenda. Hatutumii.”

– “When Tanzania harvests, India has no mangoes. Malaysia has no mangoes. We have a natural market advantage built into the calendar. We are not using it.”

GEOFFREY KIRENGA, CEO, AGCOT

GEOGRAPHIC REACH

- ◆ Central Corridor: Morogoro, Dodoma, Tabora
- ◆ Lake Zone: Mwanza, Kagera, Shinyanga
- ◆ Coast region and Dar es Salaam
- ◆ Mtwara and Lindi
- ◆ Tanzania: 95%+ land area grows mango

AVOCADO PRECEDENT

- ◆ 2011: TZS 250–300/kg (same position as mango today)
- ◆ 2026: TZS 2,500/kg (14 years of value chain investment)
- ◆ Same analysis applies to mango now

Hybrid vs. Heritage: Tanzania's Seed War Explained

A confusion between hybrid seeds, improved open-pollinated varieties, and genetically modified organisms is holding back millions of Tanzanian smallholders from the yields their land can produce. Tanzania has never approved GM crop commercialisation. Hybrid vigour is science. Here is what every farmer needs to know.

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Planting improved seed under irrigation in the Southern Highlands — March 2026.

In farmers' markets, on agricultural radio programmes, in WhatsApp groups serving smallholder farming communities across Tanzania, a debate has been running for years that generates more heat than light. The subject: seeds. Specifically, whether the improved and hybrid seeds promoted through formal agricultural development programmes represent a genuine improvement, or an imposition of external technology that displaces local seed heritage and makes farmers dependent on corporate suppliers.

THREE CATEGORIES THAT ARE NOT THE SAME THING

Traditional or heritage varieties: seeds selected, saved and improved by farmers across generations, adapted to specific local conditions. These have genuine value: they are free to reproduce, often well-adapted to low-input conditions, and frequently produce crops with flavour and nutritional profiles consumers prefer. The limitation is yield: most traditional maize varieties in Tanzania produce between 0.5 and 3 tonnes per hectare.

Open-pollinated improved varieties (OPV): formally bred, but the farmer can save and replant without significant yield loss. Typically produce more than traditional varieties under comparable conditions.

Hybrid varieties: the F1 generation produced by crossing two distinct parental lines. Hybrid seeds cannot be saved and replanted without yield loss. In exchange, farmers access hybrid vigour: the systematic yield advantage that certain F1 genetic combinations produce. Under Tanzanian conditions, certified hybrid maize can produce 8 to 15 tonnes per hectare.

THE GMO CONFUSION

The most consequential confusion in Tanzania's seed debate is the conflation of hybrid seeds with genetically modified organisms. Hybrid seeds are produced through conventional plant breeding: selecting

SEED CATEGORIES

- ◆ Traditional: 0.5–3 T/ha maize, free to replant
- ◆ OPV improved: higher yield, can be saved
- ◆ Hybrid F1: 8–15 T/ha, must buy fresh each season
- ◆ GMO: biotechnology-derived, NEVER approved in Tanzania

0.5–3 T/ha

Maize with traditional varieties

8–15 T/ha

Maize with certified hybrid varieties

“Elewa hesabu ya kipato: bei mara wingi. Tani moja inakupa shilingi laki tano. Tani kumi zinakupa shilingi milioni tano. Shamba ni moja. Juhudi ni sawa. Tofauti ni mbegu.”

– “Understand the income equation: price times quantity. One tonne gives you 500,000. Ten tonnes gives you 5,000,000. Same field. Similar effort. The difference is the seed.”

GEOFFREY KIRENGA, CEO, AGCOT

CONFIRMED FACTS

two parent plants with desirable characteristics, crossing them under controlled conditions, using the F1 offspring. No genetic material is inserted, deleted or modified using biotechnology.

Tanzania has never permitted the commercial cultivation or sale of GM crops. No seed that a Tanzanian farmer can legally purchase from a registered seed company is a GMO. “People are confusing these two things, and the confusion is not accidental,” Kirenga said. “There are people who, for various reasons, want farmers to distrust improved seed. Tanzania has never allowed GMOs in the commercial seed supply. Every certified hybrid seed that a farmer can legally buy here is not a GMO. That is a fact, and it is important.”

THE INCOME EQUATION

“Understand the income equation,” Kirenga said. “Price multiplied by quantity. If the price of your maize is TZS 500 per kilogram, then one tonne gives you TZS 500,000 and ten tonnes gives you TZS 5,000,000. The field is the same size. The management effort is similar. The difference is the seed. This is what the farmer who chooses local variety over hybrid is giving up.”

The seed choice question is not entirely separable from the market question: who you are growing for, and what that market pays a premium for. A farmer growing for home consumption or culturally specific food traditions may have rational reasons to prefer a traditional variety. But a farmer growing commercially should choose the input that gives the highest return. For most commercial crops in Tanzania, under good management, that means certified improved varieties. That is not ideology. That is arithmetic.

- ◆ Tanzania: NEVER approved GM crop commercialisation
- ◆ All certified hybrid seeds in Tanzania: non-GMO
- ◆ Hybrid ≠ GMO: they are different technologies
- ◆ TOSCI certifies all commercial seed varieties sold
- ◆ Conflation is factually incorrect and commercially damaging

ISOWELU EVIDENCE

- ◆ Certified Sagitta hybrid: 28 MT/ha
- ◆ Local varieties before: 7 MT/ha
- ◆ Same farms, same land, same farmers
- ◆ Difference: the seed

D STRATEGIC & INSTITUTIONAL

Features that set the AGCOT model in its national and international context: the corridor investment framework, the fourteen-year Norway partnership, and the compact mechanism that taught government and private sector to share a table and keep their word to each other.



AGCOT's Corridor Model: One Cluster, USD 6.34 Billion, and a Blueprint for Africa

Fourteen years of multi-stakeholder investment across Iringa and Njombe have produced a model the board is now mandated to replicate across four national corridors. The Ihemi Cluster is not just a success story. It is a template.

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Board Chairman Dr. Ally Hussein Laay (left) and CEO Geoffrey Kirenga in front of the four-corridor national map, AGCOT offices, Ministry of Agriculture, Mtumba, Dodoma.

When the Southern Agricultural Growth Corridor of Tanzania was established in 2011, it was a concept: a framework for coordinating public and private investment in a specific geographic area with a specific agricultural mandate. Fourteen years later, the AGCOT board of directors walked through the proof that the concept works.

Total investment mobilised across the SAGCOT corridor amounts to USD 5.02 billion from the public sector and USD 1.32 billion from private investment: a combined USD 6.34 billion directed toward agricultural transformation in the Southern Highlands. The corridor now supplies an estimated sixty percent of Tanzania's national food needs.

The board's March 2026 field visit came at a moment of institutional expansion. The government has mandated AGCOT to extend the corridor model into three additional national corridors: the Mtwara Corridor covering Lindi, Mtwara and Ruvuma; the Central Corridor covering Morogoro, Dodoma, Singida, Tabora and the Lake Zone; and the Northern Corridor covering Tanga, Kilimanjaro, Arusha and Manyara.

WHAT THE MODEL IS

The AGCOT corridor model is a structured public-private partnership platform. Government brings infrastructure investment, regulatory facilitation and political commitment. The private sector brings capital, market access and operational expertise. Development partners bring technical knowledge and additional financing. AGCOT provides the coordination architecture that makes all three work together toward shared objectives.

What distinguishes the model from conventional development programmes is geographic precision. Rather than attempting sector-wide reform, AGCOT focuses investment on defined corridors where the concentration of activity creates economies of scale that individual farms, companies or government departments cannot generate alone. A packhouse becomes viable when enough certified farmers are within its catchment. A feeder road becomes investable when enough certified production it connects. A cooperative becomes bankable when it has enough aggregated volume to negotiate with a formal lender.

THE CORRIDOR MODEL

USD 6.34B

Total investment mobilised (USD 5.02B public + USD 1.32B private)

60%

Share of Tanzania's national food needs from AGCOT corridor

4

National corridors AGCOT is now mandated to develop

"Hatujafika hapa kufanya kwa wakulima yale wanayoweza kufanya wenyewe. Tumefika kujenga mazingira ambayo wanaweza kufanya hivyo."

– "We are not here to do for farmers what they can do for themselves. We are here to build the conditions."

DR ALI HUSSEIN LAAY - CHAIRMAN, AGCOT BOARD

FOUR CORRIDORS

- ◆ SAGCOT/Ihemi: Southern Highlands – 14 years, proven
- ◆ Mtwara: Lindi, Mtwara, Ruvuma – activating now
- ◆ Central: Morogoro, Dodoma, Singida, Tabora, Lake Zone
- ◆ Northern: Tanga, Kilimanjaro, Arusha, Manyara

Chairman Dr Ali Hussein Laay described the essential logic: “We are not here to do for farmers what they can do for themselves. We are here to build the conditions in which they can do it. The infrastructure, the market linkages, the policy environment: these are what AGCOT creates. The transformation is what the farmers do with those conditions.”

SIX PRIORITY VALUE CHAINS

Within each cluster, AGCOT works through the Cluster Development Framework: a structured stakeholder process that identifies the highest-potential value chains for each corridor’s specific agroecological and market conditions. For the Ihemi Cluster, six value chains emerge as priorities: soya, tomatoes, potatoes, dairy, tea and avocado. Each has a Strategic Value Chain Partnership: a formal multi-stakeholder group tracking progress, identifying constraints and coordinating responses.

The results across fourteen years are visible in every site the board visited. ASAS Dairies processing 400,000 litres per day. ISOWELU AMCOS with a fourfold yield increase and a billion-shilling credit facility. Tanzanice shipping certified avocado to five continents. Beno Mgaya earning TZS 450 million from ten acres. These are not isolated successes. They are the outputs of a systematic, sustained programme.

THE NATIONAL MANDATE AND WHAT COMES NEXT

CEO Kirenga described the strategic imperative in his camera interview: “The Ihemi Cluster is the proof of concept. It is the evidence base. Now the question is not whether the model works: we can see it works. The question is how we transfer it. How we codify what we have learned here and replicate it, at speed, in the corridors that are waiting for it.”

The board’s Day 3 meeting formally resolved that the six-point partnership framework presented to the Ministries of Agriculture and Livestock would be anchored in the Ihemi Cluster’s documented evidence: making the case that the returns on investment already achieved in the Southern Highlands are the most credible projection of what the national corridor expansion can deliver.

“The Ihemi Cluster is the proof of concept. The question is not whether the model works. The question is how we transfer it: how we codify what we have learned here and replicate it, at speed, in the corridors that are waiting.”

– Geoffrey Kirenga, CEO, AGCOT – camera interview, Iringa, March 2026

SIX IHEMI VALUE CHAINS

- ◆ Avocado – export flagship
- ◆ Potatoes – cooperative success story
- ◆ Dairy – ASAS 400,000L/day
- ◆ Tomatoes – Darsh Industries / Red Gold
- ◆ Soya – off-taker opportunity being developed
- ◆ Tea – highlands premium product

Why Norway Is Still Betting on AGCOT After Fourteen Years

The Royal Norwegian Embassy has been with AGCOT since 2011. In March 2026 their team was present at every site visit, from the potato fields of Lusitu to the children's farm at Ilula. That consistency is not coincidental: it is strategic.

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Dr. Lutgart Lenaerts (Royal Norwegian Embassy) in a flowering potato field, Ihemi Cluster — fourteen years of partnership visible in a single frame.

When the AGCOT board delegation visited the Njombe Regional Secretariat on the morning of Day 1, Chairman Dr Ali Hussein Laay made a direct acknowledgement to Norway.

“Of all our development partners,” he told the room, “Norway is the one that has been with us from the beginning and stayed with us through everything. When we were SAGCOT, Norway was there. When we became AGCOT, Norway was there. When we had difficult years, Norway was there. The relationship we have with the Norwegian Embassy is not a project relationship. It is a partnership in the full meaning of that word.”

Two representatives of the Norwegian Embassy’s agriculture, climate and environment team were present for all four days of the board’s field visit: Dr. Lutgart Lenaerts, First Secretary for Agriculture, Climate and Environment at the Norwegian Embassy, and Programme Officer Yassin Mkwizu. They attended every site visit, participated in every debrief and were present at the board’s Day 3 formal meeting. They were not observers. They were partners.

WHAT NORWAY HAS FUNDED

Norway’s partnership spans the full range of AGCOT’s work. Core institutional support has sustained AGCOT’s operational capacity through the transition from SAGCOT to the expanded national mandate. Programme-level funding has supported the Cluster Development Frameworks, the Strategic Value Chain Partnerships, and the policy advocacy infrastructure that allows AGCOT to bring field evidence to the Ministerial table.

At the farm level, Norwegian-supported programmes have been among the most visible contributors to the transformation the board witnessed. The Norwegian equipment programme being demonstrated by Farm for the Future: small-scale mechanisation appropriate for Southern Highland smallholder farms: was specifically cited by CEO Kirenga as a partnership that bridges the gap between large commercial machinery and the practical needs of organised smallholder cooperatives.

THE NOREC EXCHANGE: NORWAY AT THE DEEPEST LEVEL

Of all the expressions of the Norway-AGCOT partnership visible during the March 2026 visit, the NOREC exchange programme at the Children’s Farm may be the most meaningful. Two Norwegian

NORWAY PARTNERSHIP

2011

Year Norway joined SAGCOT/AGCOT

14 years

Continuous partnership: longest of any AGCOT development partner

“Wakati tulipokuwa SAGCOT, Norway walikuwepo. Wakati tulipokuwa AGCOT, walikuwepo. Wakati tulikuwa na miaka ngumu, walikuwepo.”

– “When we were SAGCOT, Norway was there. When we became AGCOT, Norway was there. When we had difficult years, Norway was there.”

DR ALI HUSSEIN LAAY - CHAIRMAN, AGCOT BOARD

NOREC EXCHANGE AT ILULA

- ◆ Norwegian volunteers Sigrid Sydaether & Juditte Diab: 9-month placement
- ◆ Specialisation: nutrition education
- ◆ 2 Tanzanian staff working in Norway simultaneously
- ◆ Bilateral: knowledge flows in both directions
- ◆ Programme: NOREC (Norwegian Agency for Exchange Cooperation)

NORWEGIAN SUPPORT AREAS

- ◆ Core institutional support for AGCOT

nutrition specialists, Sigrid Sydaether and Juditte Diab, have been living and working at Ilula for nine months as part of a bilateral exchange. Their Tanzanian counterparts are simultaneously working on a partner children’s farm in Norway. The exchange is funded by NOREC: the Norwegian Agency for Exchange Cooperation. Knowledge flows in both directions.

“We are not here to teach,” Sigrid Sydaether told the board delegation. “We are here to learn together. What we bring from Norway is some knowledge about nutrition education. What we learn here is how that knowledge applies in this specific context. That is what we take back.”

WHAT FOURTEEN YEARS OF PATIENCE PRODUCES

Norway’s investment in AGCOT reflects a judgement that the corridor model works, and that continued investment in a proven model delivers better results than perpetual reinvention. Dr. Lutgart Lenaerts, First Secretary for Agriculture, Climate and Environment at the Norwegian Embassy, speaking at the Farm for the Future site visit, made this explicit: “We have been here before. The farm has changed. What we saw five or six years ago: the scale, the variety programme, the equipment: it is simply not what we see today. The trajectory is clear. That is why we are still here.”

Board Chairman Laay, after the brief exchange with the Norwegian volunteers, told the delegation: “This is what a real partnership looks like. Not money going one way. Knowledge going both ways. People from both countries learning from each other at the level of a classroom, a farm, a child’s first harvest. This is what fourteen years of partnership can produce.”

“This is what a real partnership looks like. Not money going one way. Knowledge going both ways. People from both countries learning from each other at the level of a classroom, a farm, a child’s first harvest.”

– Dr Ali Hussein Laay – Chairman, AGCOT Board of Directors, Njombe, 9 March 2026

- operations
- ◆ Cluster Development Frameworks
- ◆ Strategic Value Chain Partnerships
- ◆ Norwegian smallholder mechanisation equipment
- ◆ Policy advocacy infrastructure
- ◆ Children’s Farm NOREC exchange programme

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STRATEGIC & INSTITUTIONAL

The AGCOT Compact: How Tanzania Learned to Make Government and Business Sit at the Same Table

When SAGCOT started in 2011, government and private sector in the Southern Highlands barely trusted each other. Today, regional commissioners call investors by first name and pick up the phone when a problem needs solving. The compact model built that.

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From left: Mark Magila (CEO, ACT), Minister Daniel

Chongolo (Ministry of Agriculture), Tullah Mloge (Partnerships, AGCOT) and Anna Mtaita (Finance, AGCOT) — Ministry of Agriculture, Mtumba, Dodoma, 13 March 2026.

Khalid Mgaramo joined SAGCOT in February 2017 as an infrastructure specialist. His job was to understand the infrastructure constraints facing investors and farmers in the corridor and advocate

THE COMPACT MODEL

for their resolution with the government institutions responsible. It was a difficult brief. The gap between what private sector actors needed and what government understood about those needs was wide.

“When we first came to work in the cluster, there was not much trust between government and business,” Mgaramo said. “Each side had its own concerns, its own interests, its own way of operating. Bringing them into the same room and getting them to commit to shared objectives in writing: that was a significant thing to attempt.”

WHAT A COMPACT IS

A compact, in the AGCOT operational framework, is a formal multi-stakeholder agreement signed at cluster level. It brings together high-level public sector representation (specifically the regional commissioners), private sector representation including major investors and farmers’ organisations, and non-state actors including NGOs and development partners. Each signatory commits to specific actions within their domain. The compact is reviewed annually. It is a living accountability framework that evolves with the cluster.

The first Ihemi compact was signed in 2015, four years after SAGCOT’s establishment. The delay was deliberate. “The compact could not happen before there was a foundation of demonstrated results,” Mgaramo explained. “You cannot ask a regional commissioner to sign a commitment to private sector investors before those investors have demonstrated they are serious, capable and trustworthy. The compact is the product of the relationship. It is not where the relationship starts.”

FROM COMPACT TO TRANSFORMATION: THE ASAS DAIRY STORY

The most concrete evidence of the compact’s transformative effect is ASAS Dairies. When the compact was signed in 2015, ASAS had installed processing capacity of approximately 50,000 litres per day and was using less than 20,000 litres. The compact addressed the supply bottleneck specifically. Government committed to supporting milk collection centres and cold chain infrastructure. Private sector partners committed to forage supply and breed improvement. NGO partners committed to farmer training. AGCOT coordinated the multi-partner response.

Over the following decade, the supply base grew. By March 2026, ASAS Dairies was processing close to 400,000 litres per day: a more-than-twenty-fold increase from the utilisation level of a decade earlier: working with approximately 12,000 smallholder dairy farmers.

TRUST AS INFRASTRUCTURE

“When I started in 2017, if a private investor had a problem, they would come to AGCOT and we would try to help them navigate the government system. We were the intermediary because there was no direct relationship. Now, if an investor has a problem, they call the Regional Commissioner directly. The RC knows them. Knows their business. Understands why solving their challenges is in his interest as a regional leader.”

The compact, Mgaramo argues, is the mechanism that built that relationship: not because it created goodwill, but because it created a shared record of commitments and outcomes that both sides could reference. “When you have signed a document together and you review it together every year, you cannot pretend you do not know what the other side is trying to do. You know. And you have agreed to help. That is what changes the relationship.”

“Now, if an investor has a problem, they call the Regional Commissioner directly. The RC knows them, knows their business, knows their challenges. That is what the compact built. Not a document. A relationship with a record.”

– Khalid Mgaramo – Cluster Manager, Ihemi, AGCOT – camera interview, Iringa, March 2026

2015

Year of first Ihemi Cluster compact

Annual

Review cycle for all compact commitments

“Makubaliano ni matokeo ya mahusiano: si mahali ambapo yanaanza. Jenga mahusiano kwanza. Makubaliano yanafuata.”

– “The compact is the product of the relationship: not where it starts. Build the relationship first. The compact follows.”

KHALID MGARAMO - CLUSTER MANAGER, IHEMI, AGCOT

THREE COMPACT SIGNATORIES

- ◆ Government: Regional Commissioners of Iringa and Njombe
- ◆ Private Sector: investors, agribusinesses, farmer organisations
- ◆ Non-state actors: NGOs, development organisations, technical partners

ASAS DAIRY: COMPACT EVIDENCE

- ◆ 2015: 50,000L installed capacity; <20,000L actual processing
- ◆ Compact: cold chain, collection centres, forage, breed improvement
- ◆ 2026: ~400,000L/day processing capacity
- ◆ 12,000 farmers in supply network across 3 regions
- ◆ Increase: more than 20x utilisation in 10 years

agricultural transformation that leaves half the population behind is not transformation: it is growth. These features document what genuine inclusion looks like in practice.



Njombe Regional Commissioner Hon. Anthony John Mtaka with Dr. Lutgart Lenaerts (First Secretary, Royal Norwegian Embassy) — Njombe, March 2026.

17 INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT

Women, Goats, and the Future of Farming at Farm for the Future

Farm for the Future runs a 350-hectare commercial seed enterprise and a parallel social programme that supports young single mothers, raises Norwegian-breed dairy goats, and trains the next generation of farmers. The two operations are deliberately separate: and deliberately inseparable.

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Dairy goats at the Farm for the Future, Ihemi Cluster — March 2026.

Farm for the Future Tanzania is, formally, a commercial agribusiness: 193 hectares of certified seed maize produced in partnership with SeedCo Tanzania, 69 hectares of macadamia under development, and a growing seed potato programme. But adjacent to the seed fields, run by the ACE NGO in partnership with the farm, is a set of activities where some of the most distinctive social transformation the board witnessed across four days is taking place.

THE WOMEN FOR THE FUTURE PROGRAMME

The most established of ACE’s social programmes is Women for the Future, now in its third phase. The programme works with twenty-five young women who have given birth before the age of twenty-four: single mothers in the four villages surrounding the farm, among the most economically vulnerable members of their communities. Over two years, each receives training in farming, business skills, entrepreneurship, financial literacy and: crucially: women’s rights and human rights education.

WOMEN FOR THE FUTURE

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Programme beneficiaries (Phase 3: 2024–2026)

40+

Families with Norwegian dairy goats

200+

Dairy goats across programme

“Ili mwanamke awe huru, anahitaji kujua jinsi ya kulima na jinsi ya kudai haki zake. Hizi si mada tofauti. Ni mada moja.”

“We believe that for a woman to become socially and economically independent, she needs to know both how to farm and how to assert her rights,” the ACE programme coordinator told the board. “These are not separate topics. They are the same topic.”

At the end of the programme, each woman graduates with a startup capital package: income earned from agricultural activities during the programme. She then chooses her path. Some continue farming. Some start small businesses. Some do both. The flexibility is intentional.

THE DAIRY GOAT PROGRAMME

ACE has introduced Norwegian-breed dairy goats to more than forty families across the four surrounding villages. The goats serve a dual function: fresh milk provides direct nutritional support to the household, and the surplus is sold, generating daily cash income from an asset that produces every day rather than once per season. At the time of the March 2026 visit, the total goat population across the programme was over 200 animals. ACE is developing a collection centre model that would aggregate goat milk and enable small-scale processing.

THE PARADOX OF PLENTY

One of the more counterintuitive findings from the board visit: the Southern Highlands are among the most agriculturally productive regions in sub-Saharan Africa, yet malnutrition, particularly among children under five, remains a persistent public health challenge in the same communities. The explanation lies in the structure of smallholder farming. When primary crops are cash crops, the income they generate can mask a nutritionally poor diet if it is not directed toward diverse food purchase. The Women for the Future Programme addresses this specifically.

THE CHICKEN HOUSE FOR SUSTAINABILITY

ACE has established a layer hen facility at the farm: currently over 1,700 hens: specifically to generate the income needed to run the Children’s Farm education programme without full donor dependency. Egg revenues are directed toward the operational costs of the school programme. A second chicken house is planned. “We are building something that does not stop when the donor funding stops,” the coordinator said. “That requires building income sources of our own.”

“For a woman to become socially and economically independent, she needs to know both how to farm and how to assert her rights. These are not separate topics. They are the same topic.”

– ACE Programme Coordinator – Farm for the Future, Ilula, 11 March 2026

– “For a woman to become independent, she needs to know how to farm and how to assert her rights. Not separate topics. The same topic.”

ACE PROGRAMME COORDINATOR - FARM FOR THE FUTURE

SUSTAINABILITY MODEL

- ◆ Chicken house: 1,700+ laying hens
- ◆ Egg sales fund Children’s Farm operations
- ◆ Second chicken house planned
- ◆ Goat milk collection centre: next income stream
- ◆ Commercial farm cross-subsidises social programmes

PROGRAMME TRAINING

- ◆ Farming and crop management
- ◆ Business skills and entrepreneurship
- ◆ Financial literacy
- ◆ Women’s rights and human rights education
- ◆ Startup capital package on graduation

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INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT

Njombe’s Six Avocado Factories: An Industrial Footprint Built by Smallholders

Six avocado processing facilities now operate in Njombe Region: an industrial footprint that did not exist fifteen years ago. Every one was built to process fruit grown by organised smallholder farmers. This is what a functioning value chain looks like when it reaches scale.

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The number is easy to say but difficult to fully appreciate without the context of what Njombe Region’s avocado sector looked like fifteen years ago. Six processing facilities. Running day and night shifts during peak harvest. Serving a supply base of certified smallholder farmers trained, organised and market-linked through the AGCOT corridor model. Exporting to Europe, India and South Africa. In 2010, Njombe had none of this.

HOW THE INDUSTRIAL FOOTPRINT GREW

The growth of processing infrastructure followed the growth of certified outgrower supply: the two are inseparable. Tanzanice Agrofoods, which pioneered the export trade and established the first certified packhouse in the region, demonstrated to subsequent investors that the supply base was real. As the certified outgrower network expanded from dozens to hundreds, the economic case for additional

NJOMBE AVOCADO FACTS

6

Processing facilities in Njombe Region (2026)

30+

Companies buying avocado at peak harvest season

TZS 250/kg

Farm-gate price in 2011

TZS 2,500/kg

Farm-gate price in 2025

processing capacity strengthened. Five additional facilities followed. Each made its investment decision based on the visible evidence of what Tanzanice had demonstrated.

THE DAY-AND-NIGHT SHIFT ECONOMY

During peak harvest season, all six facilities run day and night shifts: the signal, in any industry, that genuine commercial demand is outstripping available supply. The capacity pressure that night shifts reflect is also the most important argument for the certification pipeline expansion that the board has designated its highest-priority Ministerial item. Each of the six facilities is currently filling only five to ten percent of its available international buyer orders. The buyers are there. The packhouses are there. The farmers are there. What is missing is the GlobalGAP certification that converts a smallholder's fruit into a packhouse's exportable product.

THE SEEDLING EXPORT SIGNAL

One of the most telling indicators of Njombe's maturity is the reversal of seedling flows. In the sector's early years, certified Hass avocado seedlings were imported into Tanzania from Kenya. Today, grafted avocado seedlings produced in Njombe and Iringa are exported to Burundi. The region that was importing agricultural knowledge a decade ago is now exporting it.

THIRTY BUYERS FIGHTING FOR YOUR FRUIT

During the March 2026 board visit, Tanzanice's Hance Byanda estimated that more than thirty companies were actively competing to purchase avocados in Njombe during peak harvest season. In 2010 there were none. The change from zero to thirty competing buyers is the most direct measure of what a functioning value chain does to farmer income: the difference between TZS 250 per kilogram and TZS 2,500 per kilogram over fourteen years.

"In 2010, Njombe had no commercial avocado value chain. Today it has six processing facilities running night shifts and thirty-plus buyers competing for supply. That is what fifteen years of organised corridor investment looks like."

– AGCOT field documentation – Ihemi Cluster, March 2026

"Wanunuzi zaidi ya thelathini wanashindana kupata parachichi za Njombe wakati wa mavuno. Hivi ndivyo mnyororo wa thamani unavyoonekana unapokomaa."

– "More than thirty buyers compete for Njombe avocado at harvest. This is what a value chain looks like when it matures."

**HANCE BYANDA - TANZANICE
AGROFOODS, MARCH 2026**

THE CERTIFICATION BRIDGE

- ◆ Packhouses filling 5–10% of available buyer orders
- ◆ Gap: not enough certified outgrowers
- ◆ AGCOT certification acceleration programme
- ◆ Target: 5,000 new GlobalGAP outgrowers in 3 years
- ◆ Pathway: 20,000 by 2028

SEEDLING REVERSAL

- ◆ 2011: importing seedlings from Kenya
- ◆ 2026: exporting grafted seedlings to Burundi
- ◆ Tamu Tamu: exporting to 5 African countries
- ◆ Tanzania becoming regional tree-crop expertise hub

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INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT

From 12,000 to 400,000 Litres a Day: How ASAS Dairy Transformed Southern Tanzania

A dairy processing facility using less than a quarter of its installed capacity in 2015 now processes 400,000 litres of milk per day and works with 12,000 smallholder dairy farmers. The transformation was not accidental: it was the product of sustained, coordinated compact partnership.

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Harvesting cabbage at Fair Agro Enterprises, Ihemi Cluster — March 2026.

ASAS Dairies sits in Iringa town and on a working morning it is easy to understand why AGCOT identifies it as one of the Ihemi Cluster’s landmark success stories. Milk tankers arrive continuously from collection centres across Iringa, Njombe and Mbeya. Processing lines run around the clock. In 2015, ASAS had installed processing capacity of approximately 50,000 litres per day and was using less than 20,000. The bottleneck was not equipment. It was milk.

WHAT THE COMPACT MADE POSSIBLE

The first Ihemi Cluster compact in 2015 identified dairy as one of the six priority value chains. What followed was a decade of incremental, multi-partner action building each link in the supply chain. Government committed to supporting milk collection centres and improving road infrastructure. Private sector partners committed to breed improvement programmes and forage supply. NGO partners committed to farmer training. AGCOT coordinated the connections between all parties.

The results compound. Better-fed cattle produce more milk. More milk makes collection centres viable. Viable centres attract more farmers. More farmers means more volume. More volume makes the processing facility’s investment economical. And a viable processing facility invests further: in better equipment, new product lines, and the marketing that builds consumer relationships.

400,000 LITRES AND WHAT IT MEANS

By March 2026, ASAS Dairies was processing close to 400,000 litres per day: a more-than-twenty-fold increase from a decade earlier. Working with approximately 12,000 smallholder dairy farmers. A dairy farmer with a productive cow providing five to fifteen litres per day earns between TZS 5,000 and TZS 15,000 daily from milk sales: a daily income stream that most cash-crop farmers can only access seasonally. “Maziwa unapouza ni kila siku pesa inaingia,” Kirenga said. Milk, when you sell it, brings money every day.

THE POWDERED MILK MOMENT

The most significant recent development is ASAS’s launch of a powdered milk production line. Most powdered milk consumed in Tanzania is imported: a paradox for a country producing billions of litres of fresh milk annually. Tanzania has the milk. What it has lacked is the industrial infrastructure to convert it into a shelf-stable product. ASAS’s investment in this line closes that gap in the Southern Highlands and is the kind of value addition that transforms Tanzania from a milk producer into a dairy products exporter.

SHEFA AND THE REPLICATION OF THE MODEL

A second facility, Shefa, is operating on a similar model: adding processing capacity and competing for farmer milk supply in ways that raise prices and service quality throughout the cluster. The presence of two competing processors replicates, in dairy, the dynamic that thirty-plus buyers have created in avocado. The farmer has leverage. That leverage is reflected in the price they receive. The model: attract anchor processor, build supply base, attract competing processors, watch farmer incomes rise: is the AGCOT corridor playbook applied to dairy. It has worked.

“Maziwa unapouza ni kila siku pesa inaingia. Ng’ombe nzuri inayotoa lita kumi mpaka kumi na tano kwa siku: hiyo ni TZS 10,000 mpaka 15,000 kwa siku. Kazi ngapi zinaweza kukulinda hivyo?”

– Geoffrey Kirenga, CEO, AGCOT – “Milk, when you sell it, brings money every day. A good cow producing 10–15 litres: that is TZS 10,000–15,000 every day. How many jobs can protect you like that?”

ASAS DAIRY FACTS

400,000 L

Daily processing capacity (2026)

12,000

Smallholder dairy farmers in supply network

20x

Capacity utilisation increase since 2015

“Maziwa unapouza ni kila siku pesa inaingia. Hiyo ndiyo nguvu ya ufugaji wa ng’ombe wa maziwa.”

– “When you sell milk, money comes in every day. That is the power of dairy farming.”

GEOFFREY KIRENGA - CEO, AGCOT

NEW PRODUCT LINES

- ◆ Fresh milk (established)
- ◆ Long-life UHT milk (established)
- ◆ Butter (established)
- ◆ Powdered milk (newly launched)
- ◆ Import substitution: most powdered milk currently imported

COMPACT COORDINATION

- ◆ Government: collection centres + road improvement
- ◆ Private sector: breed improvement + forage supply
- ◆ NGOs: farmer training + cooperative organisation
- ◆ AGCOT: coordination across all partners

SECOND PROCESSOR: SHEFA

- ◆ Competing processor in same supply area
- ◆ Competition raises prices and service quality for farmers
- ◆ Replicates the avocado multi-buyer dynamic in dairy

The Children's Farm: Teaching Tanzania's Next Farmers Before It Is Too Late

At Farm for the Future's ACE programme, forty schools are sending children to learn farming, animal husbandry and nutrition. Norwegian exchange volunteers are teaching alongside Tanzanian staff. And a young Norwegian nutritionist noted something honest: many of these children view farming as punishment. The programme is changing that.

KILIMOKWANZA.ORG • ACE CHILDREN'S FARM, ILULA, IRINGA REGION • MARCH 2026



Pupils at the Farm for the Future, Ithemi Cluster — March 2026.

The children arrive by bus. Three classes per week: Tuesdays and Wednesdays for primary school groups, Thursdays for secondary. They come from forty schools in the Ilula area, under a memorandum of understanding with Tanzania's Ministry of Education. Their session lasts two and a half hours. In that time they will plant, tend, harvest, cook and eat.

“We learned very quickly that a lot of the children here associate farming with punishment,” said Sigrid Sydaether, one of the two Norwegian nutrition specialists placed at Ilula through the NOREC exchange. “If you did something wrong at home, you had to go weed. If you failed at school, you became a farmer. We are trying to show them that agriculture is a viable career path: that you can make money, that it is interesting, that it can be something you choose rather than something that happens to you.”

THE PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

Each school visit is structured in three phases. First, students rotate between crop production and animal husbandry learning stations. Second, they come together for a meal: prepared by ACE staff on first visit, by the students themselves on subsequent ones, as part of nutrition education. Third, a facilitated reflection on what they have observed, planted and eaten. For secondary students, sessions go deeper into value chain concepts: not just how to grow a crop, but how it moves from field to market, how quality determines price, and how farming as a business differs from farming as subsistence.

By February 2026, two months into the pilot year, ACE had reached 446 students against a full-year target of 1,400. The pace suggests the target is achievable.

CHILDREN'S FARM FACTS

40

Schools in the programme

446

Students reached in first 2 months

1,400

Full-year target (primary + secondary)

“Watoto wengi wanaona kilimo kama adhabu. Tunajaribu kuwaonyesha kwamba ni njia ya kazi inayoweza: unaweza kupata pesa, ni ya kuvutia, ni kitu unachochagua.”

– “Many children see farming as punishment. We are trying to show them it is a viable career path: one you can choose.”

SIGRID SYDAETHER - NOREC EXCHANGE VOLUNTEER, ILULA

SESSION STRUCTURE

THE NOREC EXCHANGE

Sigrid Sydaether and Juditte Diab, two Norwegian nutrition specialists, have been living and working at Ilula for nine months through the NOREC bilateral exchange. Their Tanzanian counterparts from Farm for the Future are simultaneously working on a partner children's farm in Norway. The exchange is not aid or technical assistance: it is genuine bilateral learning. "What I brought from Norway is some knowledge about nutrition education," Sigrid Sydaether told the board. "What I am learning here is how that knowledge applies in this specific context. That is what I will take back."

THE ILULA ORPHAN SCHOOL CONNECTION AND THE MALNUTRITION PARADOX

The Ilula Orphan School: a boarding school for children who have lost one or both parents: owns sixty percent of Farm for the Future's commercial investment. The Children's Farm programme, on land owned sixty percent by an orphan school, teaching children from forty local schools about farming as a career, is one of the most elegant examples of aligned interest in the Ihemu Cluster.

Board Chairman Laay raised the observation that struck many delegates as one of the most important contextual facts of the visit. "This area is incredibly productive. And yet malnutrition is high. Maybe by coming here, looking at how things are, you can advise us on how to address that." The programme's nutrition component: where students learn the connection between what they grow and what their bodies need: is a direct response to this paradox.

"We are trying to show them that agriculture is a viable career path: that you can make money, that it is interesting, that it can be something you choose rather than something that happens to you."

– Sigrid Sydaether – NOREC Exchange Volunteer, ACE Children's Farm, Ilula, 11 March 2026

- ◆ Phase 1: Crops + animal husbandry rotation
- ◆ Phase 2: Communal meal with nutrition education
- ◆ Phase 3: Facilitated reflection
- ◆ Secondary: value chain and farming-as-business sessions

OWNERSHIP

- ◆ Ilula Orphan School: 60% of farm commercial investment
- ◆ Ministry of Education MOU: formal programme framework
- ◆ Farm revenue supports the school and its students

30 INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT

Hadija Jabiri: The Young Woman Who Built a Packhouse the Size of a Football Field

She started with a small produce transport company. AGCOT nurtured her. Today she has a massive packhouse, exports fresh avocado to international markets, and runs an avocado oil processing line. She is the human face of what the corridor model produces when it works for young women.

KILIMOKWANZA.ORG • IHEMU CLUSTER, IRINGA REGION • MARCH 2026

In AGCOT's internal communications, Hadija Jabiri is referred to with a quiet pride different in quality from how the organisation discusses its other success stories. Beno Mgaya is the paradigmatic smallholder. ISOWELU is the cooperative model. ASAS Dairies is the anchor processor success. But Hadija Jabiri is something else: the youth entrepreneurship case that AGCOT holds up to show that the corridor model works for young Tanzanian women building businesses from nothing.

"We have been nurturing her from the beginning," CEO Geoffrey Kirenga said in his camera interview. "We wanted her to be visible. We wanted other young people, young women especially, to see what she has built and say: I can do that too. We put her out there as a symbol of what is possible. And now I am watching other young people beginning to do what she did. The symbol is working."

THE BEGINNING: A TRANSPORT COMPANY CALLED JIBRI

Hadija Jabiri's entry into the agricultural value chain was through logistics. Her first business, Jibri, moved horticultural produce from Southern Highlands farms to urban markets. The transport business gave her something most young agricultural entrepreneurs lack: market intelligence. She saw which crops got good prices. She saw which farmers were organised. She understood the value chain from inside a truck. And she saw avocado: the volumes, the buyers competing for supply, the prices rising season after season. She decided she wanted to be on the other side of that transaction.

FROM TRANSPORT TO PACKHOUSE

HADIJA JABIRI PROFILE

1

Packhouse: as large as half a football field

2

Operations: fresh export + avocado oil processing

"Tulikuwa tunamtumia kama mfano: tunataka vijana wengine, hasa wasichana, waone alichokujenga na waseme: nami naweza. Mfano unafanya kazi."

– "We put her out there as a symbol: we want young people, especially young women, to see what she built and say: I can do that too. The symbol is working."

GEOFFREY KIRENGA – CEO, AGCOT

BUSINESS JOURNEY

- ◆ Start: Jibri produce transport company
- ◆ AGCOT support: market connections, certification, financing
- ◆ Growth: fresh avocado export operation

The move from transport to processing required capital, market relationships, regulatory certification and patient strategic support. AGCOT’s role was to bring Hadija into the cluster’s private sector networks: connecting her with export buyers who could provide market certainty to justify a packhouse investment, with certification bodies whose approval is required for international markets, and with financing institutions whose support makes physical infrastructure possible.

The result, as CEO Kirenga described: “Her packhouse now is kubwa kama nusu ya kiwanja cha mpira wa miguu”: as large as half a football field. Inside, both a fresh avocado export packing line and an avocado oil processing unit for international markets.

THE DUAL OPERATION

Hadija Jabiri’s enterprise, operating as GBRI Business Solutions / EatFresh, is a textbook example of value addition in practice. Fresh avocado export addresses the premium export market. Avocado oil processing converts fruit that does not meet fresh export grading standards into cold-pressed oil selling at premium in cosmetics, culinary and pharmaceutical markets. Together, the two operations mean almost no avocado arriving at her facility is wasted.

THE SYMBOL THAT IS WORKING

“She can never go back to where she was,” Kirenga said. “The business she has built is too large, too established, too integrated into international supply chains. She has passed a threshold that cannot be undone. That is what real transformation looks like. Not a good season. Not a good year. A structural change in what is possible for her and for her family.”

For every young person in Tanzania watching what Hadija Jabiri has built and deciding to try to build something similar, the symbol is doing exactly what AGCOT designed it to do.

“She can never go back to where she was. The business is too large, too established, too integrated into international supply chains. She has passed a threshold that cannot be undone. That is what real transformation looks like.”

– Geoffrey Kirenga, CEO, AGCOT – camera interview, Iringa, March 2026

- ◆ Expansion: avocado oil processing for international markets
- ◆ Brand: GBRI Business Solutions / EatFresh

AGCOT YOUTH PROGRAMME

- ◆ Mastercard Foundation + AGRA co-funded
- ◆ Coordinator: Khalid Mgaramo (Ihemi Cluster Manager)
- ◆ Regions: Iringa, Njombe, Ruvuma, Mbeya, Songwe
- ◆ Kikombo Farms: second youth agribusiness case study

F

GOVERNMENT VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Two regional commissioners speak candidly about what AGCOT’s corridor model has produced in their regions, what it still needs, and why Tanzania’s agricultural transformation is both real and incomplete. These are not courtesy endorsements. They are substantive government contributions to the policy conversation.



During the AGCOT board field visit, Southern Highlands — March 2026.

The Man Championing Smarter Use of Avocados for Farmer Wealth

Njombe Regional Commissioner Hon. Anthony John Mtaka used the AGCOT board's field visit dinner to deliver one of the most candid, data-charged and impassioned appeals for agricultural transformation heard in the Southern Highlands in years. Funny, specific, and then, without warning, almost scolding.

FEATURE BY THE AGCOT KILIMOKWANZA.ORG • HILLSIDE HOTEL, NJOMBE • 9 MARCH 2026

There is a certain kind of speech that catches a room off guard: not because it is loud, but because it refuses to be diplomatic. It names things. It quotes numbers. It points at the food on your plate and asks, not unkindly, how you could have wasted so much of it for so long. That was the speech Hon.

Anthony John Mtaka, Regional Commissioner of Njombe, gave on the evening of 9 March 2026, before an assembled audience of AGCOT board members, Norwegian Embassy officials, private sector partners, cooperative leaders and his own constituents at the dinner marking the opening of the board field visit.

Mtaka spoke in Swahili and English in the same breath, sliding between registers and audiences without losing a step. He was funny. He was specific. And the room, alternately, laughed and took notes.

“Tulikuwa tunalisha nguruwe. We were feeding pigs. That same fruit is now an export product, a processed oil, a by-product of global value. And we nearly threw it all away.”

– Hon. Anthony John Mtaka, Regional Commissioner, Njombe – 9 March 2026

A GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL WHO SPEAKS LIKE A PRIVATE SECTOR MAN

Mtaka opened by declaring he would speak in Swahili, because everyone in the room deserved to understand what he was about to say. Then he began with the work itself: the nature of AGCOT's presence in Njombe, and why it is unlike anything else operating in the region.

“Kazi yetu ni kazi ambayo haitakiwi. Our work is work that goes beyond what is required. You cannot rest when the floor still needs to be laid. Large-scale agricultural construction is needed: and every person must contribute without waiting for the right moment.”

He recalled the moment he first encountered AGCOT's work: not as a regional commissioner, but as a district officer, when CEO Kirenga made a presentation at his office. Others around him were not fully convinced. The impact, he said, proved to be better than any initiative he had seen.

“Lazima ujadhalike, uwe interested kama huyu Kirenga. You must become passionate, as interested as Kirenga was. Not as a formality: as a way of life.”

– Hon. Anthony John Mtaka

THE PIGS, THE OIL, AND TWELVE PRODUCTS FROM A SINGLE TEA LEAF

He took the avocado: the very crop Tanzania was packaging for export a few kilometres away: and told its origin story in Njombe with the matter-of-factness of someone who had watched it happen. Grade two, grade three avocados: rejected, dumped, animal feed. Today that same fruit is processed into oil, fetching TZS 20,000 per kilo and more. He asked the room, rhetorically but piercingly: how many more products are we still feeding to the pigs?

On tea, he went further. The Kababe Tea Factory, a USD 35-million investment and the most modern tea facility in East and Central Africa, was, he argued, only scratching the surface. A deep processing technology exists that extracts twelve distinct products from a single tea leaf: each sold as a raw material on the global market. One extract is used in the transport of live fish from China to America. Others go into pharmaceuticals, beauty products, cleaning agents, nutraceuticals. Then the question: “Kwanini sisi tusifanye wenyewe? Why can't we do this ourselves?”

On potatoes: Tanzania produces 160 million kilos per year and processes almost none. He urged those present not to compete among themselves: Njombe, Mbeya, Iringa and Morogoro are not competing regions but complementary nodes in a national seed and output network that nobody has yet fully mapped or activated.

HON. ANTHONY JOHN MTAKA

- ◆ Regional Commissioner, Njombe Region
- ◆ Speaking: AGCOT Board Field Visit Dinner
- ◆ Venue: Hillside Hotel, Njombe
- ◆ Date: 9 March 2026
- ◆ Language: Swahili and English

KEY NUMBERS IN HIS SPEECH

12

Products extractable from a single tea leaf

160M kg

Tanzania's annual potato production: almost none processed

TZS 20K+

Grade-two avocado oil price per kilo today: once fed to pigs

USD 35M

Kababe Tea Factory: most modern in East & Central Africa

HIS CENTRAL ARGUMENT

- ◆ Tanzania has too many opportunities
- ◆ Constraint: not resources, partners or capital
- ◆ Constraint: people brave enough to act
- ◆ AGCOT is the closest thing to that culture

“Benki ni mikulu. Leo unaona benki ngapi? Hii haikutokea kwa bahati.”

– “The banks are giants now. Look how many are here. This did not happen by accident.”

**HON. ANTHONY JOHN MTAKA - RC
NJOMBE, 9 MARCH 2026**

Mtaka traced a journey of financial culture that mirrored the agricultural transformation: a time when farmers borrowed in hundreds of thousands and now borrow in hundreds of millions, when no bank wanted to touch agriculture in the Southern Highlands and now multiple institutions compete for the sector's business. "Benki ni mikulu. The banks are giants now. This did not happen by accident."

His central argument: not that Tanzania lacks resources, partners or capital, but that the country has not yet built the culture of systematic, high-commitment agricultural entrepreneurship that the scale of its potential demands. AGCOT, he implied, is the closest thing to that culture currently existing. He closed not with a summary but with a demand: be curious, be in the field, be like Kirenga was when he walked into a district office and refused to accept that agriculture was ordinary.

"Kirenga alikuwa anakuja bei ni kodi inaweza kumi na tisa elfu. Sasa haiwezi set tu elfu sita. Hakuona washaangaa, sasa haelewekani. Kirenga used to come when the price was only nineteen thousand. Now it cannot stay at six thousand. That is what transformation looks like from inside."

– Hon. Anthony John Mtaka, Regional Commissioner, Njombe

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GOVERNMENT VOICES FROM THE FIELD

The Weight of Iringa: Elias Luvanda and the Unfinished Business of Tanzania's Agricultural Capital

Representing RC Hon. Kheri James at the AGCOT Board Field Visit, Elias Luvanda brought into the room not just his principal's authority but an unsparing account of what Iringa Region has built, what it still lacks, and what it demands of everyone at the table.

FEATURE BY THE AGCOT KILIMOKWANZA.ORG • IRINGA REGIONAL SECRETARIAT AND IRINGA SUNSET HOTEL • 10-11 MARCH 2026



Elias Luvanda addresses the AGCOT board delegation at the Iringa Regional Secretariat — 11 March 2026.

The AGCOT board arrived in Iringa in the middle of the afternoon, trailing a day that had begun at first light in Njombe. Iringa Regional Commissioner Hon. Kheri James was not present. In his place sat Elias Luvanda, carrying the brief of a region that has, in many ways, already done the hardest part of the agricultural transformation story: and is now living with the consequences of its own success.

“Iringa did not wait for the model to be perfected. We built it. The packhouse, the export channel, the farmer relationships: we built all of that before anyone was certain it would work. What we need now is for the system around that foundation to catch up.”

– Elias Luvanda, representing RC Hon. Kheri James

THE REGION THAT WENT FIRST

It was from Iringa that the first consignment of Tanzanian avocados was carried to European supermarket buyers who did not believe the fruit existed in this country. Before Tanzania established its packhouse here around 2015, most of Tanzania’s avocados were being trucked to Kenya, repackaged, and sold to the world as Kenyan produce. Luvanda came to the courtesy call holding this history not as nostalgia but as argument: a region that built the country’s first export infrastructure for a crop it was told could not be commercialised has earned the right to have its remaining problems treated seriously.

“What happened here with avocado is the proof of concept for the entire AGCOT model. Iringa is where the country learned it could compete on the global market. The question now is whether we will invest in Iringa the way Iringa invested in the country.”

– Elias Luvanda

143,000 TONNES AND THE CERTIFICATION CLIFF

Production is projected to reach 143,000 metric tonnes by 2030: a near six-fold surge. That projection is not the problem. The problem is what happens if the volume arrives before the certification infrastructure does. Without GlobalGAP certification, a production surge of that magnitude does not create wealth: it floods the local market, collapses prices, and can bankrupt the smallholder farmers who planted in good faith.

“We are telling farmers to plant. We are telling them the market is there, the price is good, the future is avocado. And that is all true. But if we do not close the gap on GlobalGAP certification before 2030, we will have made them a promise we cannot keep.”

– Elias Luvanda

He asked the board to treat the GlobalGAP gap as a 2026 problem, not a 2030 one. The planting decisions being made now will determine the 2030 harvest. The certification process takes time. “AGCOT’s role here is to convene the solution before the crisis arrives. We have the farmers. We have the production. We have the market relationships. What we need is a certification programme that runs ahead of the harvest curve, not behind it.”

THE ROAD THAT TWO INDUSTRIES ARE DESTROYING

The most charged exchange concerned timber trucks. The Southern Highlands is avocado country, dairy country, apple country: and also timber country. Heavy timber loads share the same rural road network as milk tankers, produce trucks and potato runs. The problem: timber trucks are destroying roads faster than TARURA can fix them, and the lighter agricultural value chains are losing.

“A tea farmer who cannot get her leaf to the factory on time because the road is impassable is losing income she cannot recover. A dairy farmer whose milk spoils before the tanker can reach him has lost his entire day’s work. These are not abstract costs. They are the reason smallholder transformation stalls.”

– Elias Luvanda

Luvanda asked the board to use its convening authority and access to national-level policy forums to push for a structured resolution: a policy conversation about axle loads, road maintenance funding, and who bears the cost of damage caused by which industry.

COLD CHAIN, FAIR AGRO, AND THE MARKET LINKAGE THAT COMPLETES TRANSFORMATION

ELIAS LUVANDA

- ◆ Representing: RC Hon. Kheri James, Iringa
- ◆ Day 2: Iringa Regional Secretariat courtesy call
- ◆ Day 3: Formal board meeting, Iringa Sunset Hotel
- ◆ Dates: 10–11 March 2026

THREE GAPS HE NAMED

- ◆ 1. GlobalGAP certification: 2026 problem, not 2030
- ◆ 2. Cold chain: solar PV, apple storage, tomato pre-cooling
- ◆ 3. Institutional continuity: Iringa’s place protected as AGCOT expands

143,000 MT

Projected 2030 avocado production: certification must scale first

50%

Soya farmer income lost to middlemen: market linkage the fix

“Uthibitisho wa dhana unastahili kujengwa juu yake, si kuachwa mahali pake wakati programu inaendelea.”

– “A proof of concept deserves to be built upon, not left in place while the programme moves on.”

ELIAS LUVANDA - DAY 3 BOARD MEETING, IRINGA

KEY ASKS TO THE BOARD

- ◆ Treat GlobalGAP gap as 2026 priority
- ◆ Mandate cold chain investment assessment
- ◆ Convene national dialogue on timber trucks and road damage
- ◆ Formalise Fair Agro with quality accountability structures
- ◆ Protect Iringa’s programme intensity as AGCOT expands

On cold chain: the cluster is producing world-class apples and premium-grade avocados that are losing value because post-harvest temperature-controlled infrastructure does not exist at the scale needed.

Luvanda proposed that the board mandate a specific cold chain investment assessment: mapping gaps and setting out the case for structured public-private investment in solar PV milk cooling, apple cold storage and tomato pre-cooling.

On Fair Agro Enterprises: the regional government’s experience had been positive, but Luvanda set a standard. Any formalisation at national scale should include explicit commitments on farmer support quality, monitoring and accountability. “What we have seen is a company that understands the farmer. The question is whether, at national scale, they can maintain that quality of engagement.”

“A farmer who doubles her yield but receives the same price because the market structure has not changed is not a transformed farmer. She is a more productive subsistence farmer. The transformation only completes when the market linkage changes alongside the production.”

– Elias Luvanda, on soya and potato market structure

THE THREE GAPS AND THE PROOF OF CONCEPT CLAUSE

At the formal Day 3 board meeting, Luvanda named three gaps: GlobalGAP certification, cold chain infrastructure, and what he called the institutional continuity gap: the risk that AGCOT’s expansion from the SAGCOT corridor model to the national mandate creates a period in which the Southern Highlands loses the intensity of support it received during the corridor phase.

“SAGCOT built something here that took ten years to build. The relationships, the trust, the embedded knowledge of how this region works: that cannot be replicated quickly elsewhere, and it should not be diluted here in order to fund the replication. I am asking the board to ensure that as AGCOT grows, Iringa’s place in the model is protected, not assumed.”

– Elias Luvanda, Day 3 formal board meeting

The board took the point. RC Hon. Kheri James had sent the right person. And by the time the board departed on the morning of 12 March, everyone in the room knew it.

13 MARCH 2026 · MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, DODOMA

In the Room at Dodoma

THE DODOMA DELEGATION

1. Mark Magila — AGM Chairperson, AGCOT Centre
2. Dr. Ally H. Laay — Board Chairman, AGCOT Centre
3. Laurean R. Bwanakunu — Board Member, AGCOT Centre
4. Geoffrey Kirenga — CEO, AGCOT Centre
5. Mhe. Jitu Soni — Chairman, ACT
6. Tullah Mloge — Head of Partnerships, AGCOT Centre
7. Anna Mtaita — Head of Finance and Administration, AGCOT Centre

THE MINISTER’S PRIORITIES

1. Bring the BBT Initiative closer to youth, focusing on practical and quickly achievable opportunities.
2. Zone crops as a strategy to reduce the country’s reliance on imports.
3. Reduce post-harvest losses in both horticulture and cereals.

IN PHOTOGRAPHS

The Ihemi Cluster Field Visit



The board delegation in the potato fields of the Ihemi Cluster.



Preserves from Southern Highlands fruit.



Highland apples at Tamu Tamu, Ifunda — Iringa Region.



Peter Schuurs, Managing Director of Tamu Tamu Tanzania.



Juice pressed from highland fruit.



Irrigated horticulture at Fair Agro Enterprises, Ihemi Cluster.



Inspecting irrigated planting in the Southern Highlands.



The delegation inspects a field harvest in the Ihemi Cluster.



A Fair Agro harvest — Iringa Region.





Dr. Lutgart Lenaerts (centre) examines potato flowering with delegation members, Ihemi Cluster — March 2026.



The AGCOT board and partners delegation at the Farm for the Future, Ilula — Ihemi Cluster, March 2026.

Kilimokwanza.org — Ihemi Cluster Special Supplement
AGCOT Board Field Visit · Iringa & Njombe · 9-13 March 2026

FROM THE FIELD · KILIMOKWANZA.ORG