

Agro park project receives positive go-aheads from donors

USD 300 mln set aside for infrastructure development so far

By Birhanu Fikade

Following the government's plan to construct integrated agro processing industrial parks in major productive corridors of the country, the African Development Bank (AfDB) and other partners have pledged to extend financial and technical supports to realize the development of four major agro parks.

Together with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the Ministry of Industry co-organized an international agro industry investment forum which brought about 1,000 participants altogether to spend three days of meetings starting from October 5., 2016. Li Yong, general of UNIDO was part of the forum to observe the making of the industrial projects in the country.

According to Gabriel Nigatu, the East



From left Ahmed Abitew, Minister of Industry was joined by officials and participants during the three day agro processing investment forum where the potential agro products have been displayed

Agro park project...

CONT'D FROM PAGE 6

African regional director of the AfDB along with the newly 800 million dollars fund the bank allocated for the country which will run for the coming three years, the agro processing industrial parks are also at the bank's table likely receiving funds. He told The Reporter that AfDB is in a position to provide funds which he declined to give monetary figures. However, a unique and bold proposition has been made for Africa, Gabriel said. He mentioned that AfDB is in a position to avail USD 2.5 billion for the coming 10 years to finance the agricultural sector in Africa. Out of that amount, Ethiopia as well is going to have a considerable share, Gabriel said.

In addition to the AfDB, the European Union Commission for Eastern and Southern Africa Region Development Cooperation, the governments of Italy via the Italian Development Agency and the Netherlands via UNIDO have specifically requested to partner with the government of Ethiopia on its agro processing industrial efforts.

"With foreign direct investment flows to the country amounting to over USD two billion in 2015 alone, Ethiopia is becoming a hot spot for investors, especially in textiles and garments," Yong said, while confirming the country is likely to receive both financial and technical assistances.

Ahmed Abitew, minister of Industry said that the government has already set aside some USD 300 million dollars for the infrastructural developments where the integrated agro industrial parks will be built in the Amhara,

Oromia, Southern and Tigray regional states. The total finance required is about USD 1.5 billion or some 30 billion birr. The total land size the regional governments required to allocate is expected to reach some 7sq.m.

The total cost to construct the four agro parks in the four regions as indicated in the overview document collectively reached to be USD 660 million.

According to Ahmed, depending on the prospects of the pilot agro parks, the 13 major growth corridors are mapped for potential development of agro parks in a 100km radius.

The industrial investment forum which Prime Minister Hailmariam Dessalegn pledged to brand it as annual occasion the country hosts regularly, has served as a showcased Africa for having a huge potential to be considered as industry friendly continent. Carlos Lopes (PhD), the departing executive secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) addressed the audience provoking misconceptions towards Africa marginalized the continental potential of industrialization.

"Can Africa make industrialization happen?" Lopez asked, while arguing that annually there are half-a-trillion dollars of industrial goods manufactured in Africa making their way to the global markets. "We are not there yet but we are there in the industrialization", he claims. Regrettably, Africa imports 30 billion dollars of processed food which Lopes pointed out as weaknesses of African countries.