

KARI, JICA partner to train Mwea rice farmers

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The Kenya Agriculture and Livestock Research Organization in partnership with the Japan International Cooperation Agency has initiated a training programme for rice farmers at the Mwea Irrigation Scheme.

The training involves cultivation of rice via water saving techniques which increase yields from 15 bags of rice per acre to 30 bags.

Kenya's annual rice demand stands at 540,000 metric tons, against a production of only 140,000 metric tons.

This means the country has to import the deficit to bridge the gap. The Mwea Irrigation Scheme is Kenya's biggest rice producing schemes, whose production was adversely

affected last year by prolonged drought that led to shortage of water at the scheme.

The Kenya Agriculture and Livestock Research Organization in conjunction with the Japan International Cooperation Agency have been training farmers on water saving techniques which entails flooding the paddy fields only twice as opposed to frequently, to minimize water usage.

Through this technique, farmers have been able to produce an average of 30 bags of rice per acre as opposed to the usual average of 15 bags.

To further increase rice production, KALRO is developing rice seeds that are drought resistant, disease free and can withstand different climatic and soil conditions.

The construction of the 15 million cubic liters Thiba dam is expected to facilitate putting more acres under irrigation, thus extending the scheme by an additional 2,200 acres.

The expansion programme is expected to double Mwea's rice production to about 120,000 metric tons annually.