

## Relief as China relaxes conditions imposed on avocado imports in deal with Kenya

- **The Agriculture CS says the government held talks with China**
- **Farmers will have to form strong cooperative societies from which exporters will buy fruits.**

The Chinese government has relaxed the stringent conditions it imposed on avocado imports from Kenya.

Agriculture CS Mwangi Kiunjuri on Thursday told farmers that the government held talks with the China and some requirements were removed. This followed an outcry among smallholder farmers that the conditions were too severe to be met.

“The government has been in consultation with China and they have agreed to do away with some of the strict requirements that seemed unfair,” Kiunjuri said.

Farmers will now have no hindrance as they will have an assured market, he added.

The deal by the two governments required local farmers to instal machines to freeze and peel the avocado fruits before they are exported. Farmers complained that the requirement would lock them out of the new market, despite their efforts to produce high-quality fruits.

Kiunjuri urged growers to form strong cooperative societies that will be dealing with exporters directly to avoid exploitation by brokers.

“All exporters have been directed to be dealing with farmers’ cooperative societies only. This gives the sector structures and makes it easy to control,” he said, adding that the farmers will then be able to better negotiate prices with exporters.



Kiunjuri called for cooperatives similar to the ones in the tea sector but cautioned farmers against allowing the problems in the tea sector to creep into their societies.

He spoke while issuing more than 30,000 macadamia and grafted avocado seedlings to thousands of farmers from Kiharu, Kangema and Mathioya constituencies.

The current market prices should fetch farmers at least Sh5,000 per tree per season if well tendered, he said. He pledged the government's commitment to food security and boosting farming, adding that investment in water projects will support the initiative.

"That's why we want to ensure farmers get the right seedlings that are certified so they are guaranteed good harvests," the CS said.

The government is also distributing 2.4 million tea seedlings in 16 counties this season and another 4.5 million seedlings will be distributed when the short rains begin in October.

Murang'a has received 50,000 tea seedlings, while bigger counties such as Uasin Gishu have received 100,000 each. Tea farming also boosts the country's forest cover as the bushes last for more than 20 years. The government has intensified forestation efforts.

The government has pumped Sh253 million into reviving the Mirichu water project in Kahuro that had stalled for 15 years. The Nyanjigi water project in Kangema has also received Sh106 million. It will be completed after collapsing years ago.

In Kiharu alone, 256 people have had pans constructed in their farms to conserve water and another 300 will benefit this year.

Kiharu MP Ndindi Nyoro, Muturi Kigano (Kangema) and Peter Kimari (Mathioya) lauded the government for the seedlings programme, saying they will put money into people's pockets.

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