



Optimism high as EAC coops law gets close

By ANTHONY TAMBWE

TANZANIA is set to benefit from a harmonized law on cooperatives which will include all the East African Community member states.

This was revealed during the public hearing on the EAC Cooperative Societies Bill 2014 in Dar es Salaam on Wednesday, where member countries were represented by their respective members in the East African Legislative Assembly EALA.

Addressing reporters soon after the hearing, an official from the Ministry of East African Cooperation, Abdulla Makame said that Tanzania is set to benefit from the Bill because it will open the market for Tanzanian products.

He said that the government will make sure that they support the Bill when it is tabled before them, but added that special attention will be monitored to ensure that it does not interfere with the country's policies.

He said that the Bill, apart from benefitting the private sector in the country, will also work hand in hand to meet with the government's initiative of combating poverty.

"Tanzania produces surplus food each year, and if

you take an example of maize, we produce nearly a million metric tons every year, while the country's need is less than 800 tonnes. It is through such cooperation that we can be sure to get a good market for the remaining maize," he said.

The object of the Bill is to provide a legal framework for the cooperative societies in the Community, and it will take cognizance of Article 128 of the Treaty for the establishment of the East African Community, in which the Partner States agreed to adopt programmes that would strengthen and promote the role of the private sector as an effective force for the development of their respective economies.

He said that when enacted, the Bill would realize the harmonization of national co-operative laws in line with the EAC regional integration process and the EAC Treaty.

On his part, Mike Sebalu, a member of the EALA from Uganda further said that the Bill would also provide opportunities for joint ventures through pooling resources, participating in regional and international business opportunities across different sectors and subsectors.

He said that the efforts to advance the EAC Cooperative

Societies Bill started in 2009, when a comparative study of cooperatives was conducted to examine the co-operative laws of Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda.

The Tanzania Federation of Co-operatives (TFC) recently convened a national stakeholder consultation workshop in Dodoma, where participants included leaders in the co-operative movement from across the country.

Some of the main proposals that emanated from the consultation and other submissions included that an agency at the EAC level should be formed to promote co-operative development at the regional and international levels.

"To the best of our knowledge, this Bill is the first of its kind to be advanced from outside the government. As such, it has attracted a lot of positive interest in the region among various private and public institutions," said Stephen Muchiri, the Eastern Africa Farmers Federation Chief Executive Officer.

He said that the Bill was read for the first time at the EALA in January this year, and then was circulated to the respective national parliaments for discussions and debate.