

NEWS & FEATURES · TANZANIA SUSTAINABLE SOYBEAN INITIATIVE (TSSI)

Unleashing Tanzania's Agricultural Potential: A Look at Soybean Production and Value Chain Enhancements at the Tanzania Poultry Show 2024

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The Tanzania Poultry Show 2024, hosted at Mlimani City, Dar es Salaam, brought together key players from the agriculture and livestock sectors to deliberate on Tanzania's current and future agricultural landscape. One of the most pressing topics discussed at the event was how soybean production could be scaled up to meet the country's growing demand for livestock feed and human consumption. The show highlighted the role of public-private partnerships, coordinated efforts, and value chain development in transforming the soybean industry.

The event featured a pivotal panel discussion moderated by Dr. Marcus Albany, Chair of the Soybean Association of Tanzania. The discussion explored possibilities for boosting soybean production and improving Tanzania's agricultural resilience. It centred on government efforts, private sector involvement, and stakeholder coordination to address the shortfall in soybean production.

Soybean: The Foundation for Tanzania's Feed Industry

Tanzania's soybean production has lagged behind the growing demand, especially for its crucial role in animal feed, specifically in the poultry industry. The country produces around 20,000 tonnes of soybeans annually, whereas national demand is estimated to be as high as 300,000 tonnes. The need for soybean meal in livestock feed, especially in poultry, has driven demand upwards, making soybeans a strategic crop for Tanzania's future food security and economic growth.

The Government's Role in Supporting Soybean Growth

Steven Michael, Director of Production and Marketing at the Ministry of Agriculture, explained the government's plan to increase soybean production. He emphasized the government's recognition of soybeans as a key agricultural commodity and pointed to the coordinated efforts between the Ministry of Agriculture, SAGCOT, and other stakeholders to expand production.

One significant initiative the government is working on is allocating 26 designated land areas for soybean farming. These lands will be available for leasing to local and international investors interested in cultivating soybeans. These designated zones, targeted explicitly for large-scale farming initiatives, will play a pivotal role in scaling up production.

Michael noted that the shortfall in domestic soybean production has led to high import

reliance, which raises costs for feed manufacturers and other industries dependent on soybeans. To combat this, the government has begun setting up aggregation centers, where smallholder farmers can bring their soybean harvests. These centers will make it easier for large buyers to access the crop without the logistical difficulties of sourcing from numerous small-scale producers. This move is expected to improve market coordination and ensure more stable market conditions for both farmers and buyers.

The Private Sector's Contribution: Demand for Soybeans in Animal Feed

The private sector, particularly the Tanzania Animal Feed Manufacturers Association (TAFMA), has been instrumental in driving demand for soybeans. Suphian Zuberi, CEO of Falcon Animal Feeds and Secretary-General of TAFMA, outlined the immense need for soybeans in the animal feed industry. He explained that animal feed production in Tanzania currently stands at 1 million tonnes per year, with 200,000 tonnes of soybeans needed to meet this production target.

Zuberi highlighted the shift from fishmeal to soybean meal in animal feed production. Fishmeal, once a primary source of protein, often contained contaminants such as sand, which reduced its nutritional value and led to suboptimal growth in livestock, particularly poultry. Soybean meal offers a more consistent and reliable source of protein, and its use has significantly improved feed quality.

Despite this, the industry faces several challenges, primarily the lack of local processing facilities that convert soybeans into high-protein soybean meal. Zuberi emphasized that investment in processing plants is crucial to Tanzania's efforts to increase domestic production and reduce its reliance on imports. By expanding local processing capacity, Tanzania can ensure a steady supply of soybean meal for the livestock industry and potentially become a regional hub for soybean products.

Stakeholder Coordination and the Role of SAGCOT

Abdallah Msambachi, Program Manager for the Tanzania Sustainable Soybean Initiative (TSSI) at SAGCOT, spoke about SAGCOT's central role in coordinating efforts to increase soybean production. The TSSI program, launched in collaboration with partners such as the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), World Food Programme (WFP), and Aspires Tanzania, focuses on improving production efficiency and creating better market access for farmers.

Msambachi explained that one of the critical findings from SAGCOT's Baseline Survey was the need for high-quality seeds. Improved soybean varieties such as Uyole 2 and Uyole 4 have the potential to increase production yields by as much as 50%. However, smallholder farmers have limited access to these seeds, which presents a major bottleneck in scaling up production. SAGCOT has been working with local and international partners to improve seed access and ensure farmers receive the technical training needed to maximize their yields.

SAGCOT's role extends beyond improving production. The organization also focuses on market linkages, connecting farmers with off-takers who can purchase their crops in large quantities. Msambachi noted that 18 off-takers have already committed to purchasing significant amounts of soybeans from local farmers, signaling a growing market for Tanzanian soybeans.

Addressing Challenges in Soybean Production

While the panel highlighted the opportunities for soybean production growth, they also acknowledged the industry's significant challenges. Bahati Majaliwa Yusuph, Assistant Director of Crop Development at the Ministry of Agriculture, pointed out that climate variability and a lack of irrigation infrastructure are major obstacles. Although Tanzania has made strides in expanding its agricultural output, much of the country's farming is still dependent on rain-fed agriculture, making it vulnerable to changes in weather patterns.

In addition to climate challenges, Yusuph emphasized the need for more value addition within the soybean sector. Tanzania lacks the processing infrastructure to convert soybeans into soybean meal at the scale necessary to meet domestic demand. This deficiency hampers the country's ability to produce high-quality animal feed and limits the potential for exporting value-added products to regional and international markets.

Yusuph underscored the importance of investing in processing facilities as a key solution to these challenges. By establishing more soybean processing plants, Tanzania can increase its capacity to produce soybean oil and soybean meal, both of which are critical for the livestock industry. Furthermore, these investments would help create new economic opportunities for smallholder farmers, processors, and other actors along the value chain.

Collaboration and the Future of Tanzania's Soybean Industry

The panel discussion clarified that collaboration between the public and private sectors is essential to unlocking Tanzania's soybean production potential. Public-private partnerships have already begun to bear fruit, as demonstrated by SAGCOT's Tanzania Sustainable Soybean Initiative, which has successfully brought together government agencies, private companies, and international organizations to tackle the challenges facing the soybean industry.

One of the most significant outcomes of this collaboration is the Farmer Profiling Report, which provides a comprehensive analysis of the soybean subsector and the challenges facing smallholder farmers. The report highlights the importance of improving agronomic practices, enhancing market linkages, and investing in infrastructure to boost productivity and ensure that smallholder farmers can play a central role in the growth of the soybean industry.

SAGCOT's Baseline Survey also identified the need for better access to inputs, such as seeds and fertilizers, to improve yields. In response, in collaboration with private sector partners, the government has begun working on input supply chains to ensure that farmers can access the resources they need to maximize production.

Tanzania's Path Forward in Soybean Production

The Tanzania Poultry Show 2024 showcased the tremendous potential in expanding soybean production and improving the country's agricultural value chain. With growing demand for soybeans in both the domestic and international markets, Tanzania has an opportunity to become a leading producer of soybean products for livestock feed and human consumption.