

SAGCOT CORRIDOR

Kilombero Cluster: A Fertile Frontier for Agricultural Diversity and Growth

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SAGCOT Partnership has branded the Morogoro region as a strategic agroecosocial landscape named Kilombero Cluster due to its unique climatic conditions, which support a blend of both temperate and tropical crops. This combination makes it a worthy region for diverse agricultural activities. The cluster spans across nine districts in Morogoro, offering fertile soils and abundant water resources. The area's geographic diversity allows for a wide range of agricultural production, positioning the cluster as a critical player in Tanzania's agricultural transformation and a distinct advantage in meeting the growing food and commodity of the country and beyond.

Figure 1: Location of the Kilombero Cluster in Tanzania

(Source: Morogoro Region Socio-economic Profile; National Bureau of Statistics, 2021; <https://sagcot.co.tz/index.php/en/>)

Key Value Chains in the Kilombero Cluster

The Kilombero Cluster is renowned for its diverse and high-priority value chains, which are not only important to the local economy but also contribute significantly to the national and regional agricultural markets. Below is a detailed breakdown of the unique value chains that define the Kilombero Cluster;

1. Rice

Kilombero is one of Tanzania's major rice-producing areas, particularly famous for its high-quality aromatic rice. The Cluster has large-scale, irrigated rice farms, as well as smaller-scale, rain-fed farming systems.

Rice is a staple food crop and a major cash crop in the region, making it crucial to food security. Kilombero rice is renowned for its excellent quality, contributing to both domestic markets and export demand.

2. Sugarcane

The sugarcane value chain is particularly important, as it feeds into both the local sugar industry and emerging bioenergy production. Morogoro Region is one of the leading sugarcane-producing areas in Tanzania, with a number of large-scale processing factories.

Sugarcane production contributes to food security (through sugar), industrial development (through ethanol for biofuel), and employment generation in the region.

The sugar industry has stimulated the development of input suppliers, transport networks, and processing facilities, which further increases its economic contribution. Sugarcane also serves as a feedstock for energy production, thus contributing to Tanzania's energy sector.

Figure 2: Sugarcane plantation in the Kilombero Valley

3. Spice

Spices such as Cloves, Cardamom, black pepper, Cinnamon, and Ginger are emerging as niches within the Kilombero Cluster and are recognised as strategic crops for agricultural development in the Morogoro Region.

The favorable climate, fertile soils are ideal for growing these crops, offering a unique opportunity for farmers to diversify their income streams and restoring biodiversity through agroforestry and encourage more environmentally friendly livelihoods. These spices have a high market value and are in demand locally and internationally, especially for flavoring, cosmetic, and pharmaceutical uses.

Figure 3: Spice Seedlings produced and distributed to Spice Farmers in Morogoro DC

Stakeholder Engagement

The success of the Kilombero Cluster Development heavily relies on the effective collaboration and engagement of multiple stakeholders. These include government institutions, private sector actors, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and local communities. Below are some examples of how these stakeholders contribute to the development of the Kilombero Cluster:

1. Government Institutions.

- Ministries such as MoA and MNRT Work on policy formulation, supporting infrastructure such as irrigation and roads, and promoting sustainable farming practices.
- Morogoro RS LGAs, facilitate local-level implementation of agricultural policies and provide extension services to farmers.
- Regulatory Authorities, such as TOSCI, ASA, NEMC, TPHPA, RBWB and TRA, provide education and licenses to agribusinesses, processors, and traders and ensure compliance with relevant laws and guidelines.

2. Private Sector.

- Agribusinesses, companies in the agricultural value chains, such as input suppliers, equipment manufacturers, and Agri-tech firms, help introduce innovation and improve efficiency in farming practices.
- Investors, local and international investors play a significant role in funding large-scale agricultural projects, including rice and sugarcane processing.
- Financial Institutions such as NMB, TADB, YETU Microfinance, and CRDB also play a crucial role in financing agricultural interventions across the Cluster.

3. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).

- Sustainable Agriculture NGOs, Organizations like Norges Vel, Farm Africa and Agriterro provide training, technical assistance, and capacity-building for farmers in the Kilombero Cluster. They help farmers adopt climate-smart agriculture practices and improve yields

sustainably.

- Environmental NGOs, Organizations such as AWF, WWF and IUCN focused on environmental conservation work alongside farmers to prevent soil erosion, improve soil fertility, and promote biodiversity conservation.

4. Local Communities.

- Smallholder Farmers, Smallholder farmers are key actors in the Kilombero Cluster, involved in farming. They benefit from extension services, training, and new agricultural technologies introduced by various stakeholders.
- Farmer Groups and Cooperatives, Community-based organisations are integral in helping smallholder farmers access markets, inputs, and financial services.

5. Academic and Research Institutions.

- Research Institutions, Universities, and organisations such as the Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA) and the Tanzania Agricultural Research Institute (TARI) conduct vital research on crop varieties, soil health, and sustainable farming practices, all of which directly impact the success of the Kilombero Cluster.

A Call to Support the Kilombero Cluster's Agricultural Transformation

The transformation of agriculture in the Kilombero Cluster requires continued collaboration and support from all sectors. To achieve greater success and sustainability, we call on:

- Public Sector, to prioritize investments in infrastructure such as roads and irrigations, soil health management, and capacity-building initiatives for local farmers. There is also a need for enhanced policy frameworks that support the growth of the identified value chains.
- Private Sector, to continue investing in agro-processing, agricultural technologies, and market access initiatives. Supporting smallholder farmers through fair trade, training programs, and market linkages will empower them to scale their operations and improve productivity.
- Civil Society and NGOs will continue providing support in terms of technical assistance and research that will help improve soil health, water management, and sustainable farming practices across the cluster.
- General Public, to engage with and support initiatives aimed at improving local livelihoods, whether through advocacy, responsible consumption, or support for local products from the Kilombero Cluster. Your involvement is crucial to the collective effort of creating a prosperous, sustainable agricultural future.

Together, we can ensure that the Kilombero Cluster continues to thrive as a hub of agricultural excellence, driving economic development, food security, and environmental prosperity.