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JICA support for Tigray's farmers in Ethiopia

The Sasakawa Africa Association (SAA) has received a grant for 100 million yen (US \$1.29 million) from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) to promote rice production and processing over a four year period in Ethiopia's Tigray province. The project will also introduce other crops with market potential as well as improve production technology for traditional crops.

With marginal climatic conditions, Ethiopia's northernmost province, Tigray, is one of the poorest regions in Ethiopia. However, as demonstrated by previous SAA activities, upland rice is well-suited to Tigray's environmental conditions, not least its periodically waterlogged soils. Rice production in the region, introduced in 2006, had grown to 5,000 hectares three years later.

Improved agricultural productivity, allied to increased agroprocessing opportunity and marketing strategies, will lead to income generation for Tigray's impoverished farming communities and strengthen food security in the region. SAA's close relationship with the national agricultural extension service will also help to build capacity and develop cost-effective models for extension delivery and sustainability.

This is the second JICA-funded project to be implemented by SAA in Ethiopia. The first is helping to enhance the self-sustainability of women's agroprocessing cooperatives in the provinces of Oromia, Amhara and the Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples Regions.

"We have worked closely with JICA over several years, not least on rice production," says Aki Miyamoto, SAA's Executive Director. "This second project is a further indication of our growing collaboration."

SAA, funded by the Nippon Foundation of Japan, has worked in Ethiopia since 1993. The two JICA-funded projects are part of the JICA Partnership Programme, through which JICA promotes and encourages cooperation activities for local people in developing countries with Japanese development partners.

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Notes to editors

- The Sasakawa Africa Association (SAA), and its Sasakawa-Global 2000 (SG 2000) agricultural programmes, were launched 25 years ago by Japanese philanthropist Ryoichi Sasakawa, Nobel Laureate Dr Norman Borlaug and former US President Jimmy Carter in response to the devastating 1984 famine. In the intervening years, these programmes, mainly funded by The Nippon Foundation, have engaged thousands of frontline extension workers and millions of farmers in 14 sub-Saharan African countries in promoting higher-yielding technologies for staple food crops.
- Today, following a major restructuring of SAA, activities are concentrated on four focus countries – Ethiopia, Mali, Nigeria and Uganda – with the emphasis on a more integrated approach to extension services, including extension education, strengthening smallholder food systems along the value chain and reaching out to marginalised farmers, particularly women farmers.

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