

Koskei keen to drive the youth to farms with cash incentives



Agriculture Cabinet Secretary Felix Koskei addressing the media during the Brookside Livestock Breeds Show and Sale at the Jamuhuri Showground on June 26, 2013. Looking on is Brookside Dairy GM John Gethi (R). DIANA NGILA (NAIROBI)

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Cabinet Secretary Felix Koskei is seeking to have a third of youth fund set aside for farming practices in a bid to entice young people into farming sector.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries wants Sh2.5 billion to be directed to farming projects among youth to boost the country's food production and provide employment.

The youth have been allocated Sh6 billion for the year beginning July 1 to fund their various projects as a government's way of

empowering them.

Mr Koskei is particularly keen to boost production in fish, horticulture and livestock farming owing to the country's good performance in the sectors.

"Youth will soon have easy access to credit facilities to aggressively take up farming," Mr Koskei said Tuesday at the opening of the Brookside Breeder Show in Nairobi.

Despite high unemployment in the country, the youth have in the past shunned farming opting to pursue white collar jobs.

This comes after several attempts by the government to make farming to look appealing to young people have borne little results.

In the new scheme, both individuals and groups will be eligible to access the revolving fund to the tune of Sh500, 000 depending on need.

The ministry is set to reach out to every county to spread farming at grassroots and help reduce migration to urban areas which often result in overcrowding of towns.

Mr Koskei lauded the move to showcase better livestock farming practices in the country saying it will help reverse the dip in milk production witnessed last year.

Milk production fell 10 per cent to 495.2 million litres in 2012 on the back of delayed rains and high cost of manufactured feeds.

The ministry is now keen to step up its extension services to provide farmers information on preparation of silage and other animal feeds to cushion them from losses during dry spells.

Meanwhile, farmers complained of low prices milk is now fetching them. A litre of raw milk sells at Sh24 down from Sh34 three months ago.

The cost of animal feeds had also shot up putting pressure on the farmers.

The Brookside Breeder Show will be opened officially today by the Deputy President William Ruto who will oversee the unveiling of new technologies such as the transfer of embryo in animals.

This year's edition of the show which started in 1999 and held after every two years is expected to attract over 1000 dairy cows.