

MURANG'A COUNTY ASSEMBLY THE HANSARD

Wednesday, 10th June, 2015

The House met at 2:40 p.m.

(The Speaker Hon. Nduati Kariuki in the Chair)

PRAYERS

MOTIONS

DEVELOPMENT OF PROGRAMS FOR EASY ACCESS TO LOAN FACILITIES, EXHIBITIONS FOR THE VARIOUS AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS AND REWARD SCHEMES FOR FARMERS IN MURANG'A COUNTY

Hon. Charity Rugu: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am a nominated Member of County Assembly and I beg to move the following motion:-

Aware that agriculture is a fully devolved function as stipulated in part II of the Fourth Schedule of the Constitution of Kenya 2010, further aware that it earns the country foreign exchange, cognizant of the fact that most of the farmers in the County practice it for both subsistence and commercial purposes; this House urges the County Executive Member for Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries to develop various programs such as easy access to loan facilities, exhibitions for the various agricultural products and reward schemes to farmers.

Mr. Speaker sir this is an agricultural County yet our farmers have been neglected for a long time. As the first County Assembly under the devolved governance system, it is our duty to support our farmers. We have done a lot for them so far. I however still urge the House to support me after I present what I have so that we can do the necessary and help our people. We need to have an exhibition for the various agricultural products. We also need to have facilitation as well as reward schemes for farmers.

Mr. Speaker sir, these three items are very vital to our farmers. The programs will give our farmers room to improve the agricultural sector. How will a loan facility program benefit our farmers? It will help them purchase farm inputs such as animal feeds, seedlings, and other materials for planting. If the farmers are to be given loans by the County Government at a very low interest rate, they will be in a position to enhance agriculture.

Number two, it will help in building storage, most of the farmers in the lower part of our County grow maize and beans. These farmers have no storage units, therefore, if they get that little money from the County Government, they will manage to build storage units.

Mr. Speaker sir, we also have the dairy farming. When the farmers will be given this token or if they will be facilitated with the loans, they will also be in a position to rear the best breeds. This will help them produce more milk and the sales will be good. When farmers will be facilitated with the loans, they will acquire additional breeds of livestock as I had said earlier. We have the coffee, tea, avocados, and banana sectors. We also have the French beans in the lower side of our County. If these farmers are given that money, they will be in a position to improve these agricultural sectors.

Mr. Speaker sir, on reward schemes, the best farmers will be rewarded. I would like to remind this House that we have been crying about the Ward Development Fund. The

scheme I am talking about will begin from the ward level. Therefore, if the County Government considers giving rewards to the best farmers in the various crop sectors, they will be motivated. It will also help farmers maintain products of high quality including those from animals.

When our farmers realise that we are doing something for them, we will inculcate a competing spirit in them. I repeat and emphasise that it is from the ward level; not the County level as it is currently being done. If the competitive spirit is empowered by the County Government, farmers will recognise the work of this House.

Mr. Speaker sir, the last one is on the exhibitions. The exhibitions will be reserved for the farmers to display their goods and products. Again, this will be initiated at the ward level where the farmers, as few as they are, will be displaying what they produce; it could be potatoes, sweet potatoes, or Irish potatoes. It will not only be limited to coffee and tea because we have to think about the subsistence farming as well. The exhibitions will bring our people together. They will also create harmony amongst our people because they will be working together and speaking in one voice. The farmers will have common space to; for instance, compare their products such as sugarcane and so on; therefore, coming together will ensure the harmony of our people.

Mr. Speaker sir, it will also help partnerships leading to joint ventures and projects. People will as well share ideas when they come together. They will be interested to, for example, know why Kamahuha is growing bigger avocados than Kamacharia. The visitors will come and find them together; hence our farmers will be knowledgeable.

Individual farmers will also be provided with opportunities for face to face meetings, which is cost effective leading to achievement of great objectives because when people come together in an exhibition, they will have to exchange and share ideas.

Lastly, it will give visitors an opportunity to find out about the products and services on display. I urge this House to support this motion so that Wanjiku will appreciate whatever we do and people will see that we are doing something. I now call the able Chairman for Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries committee, James Kariuki, to come and second.

(Laughter)

Thank you Mr. Speaker sir.

Hon. James Kariuki: Mr. Speaker sir, I rise to second the motion. I will dwell on only two issues but mainly the access to loans for farmers. I remember when we went to Uganda sometimes last year; we were impressed by how the coffee farmers are treated by the Centenary Bank of Uganda which is owned by the Catholic Church.

In Kenya, we have the Co-operative Bank, Murata Sacco, and Unaitas Banks which purport to support farmers, especially in terms of loans. When I look at such banks, I do not see the difference between them and other commercial banks like the Kenya Commercial Bank, Equity Bank, Standard Bank, Barclays Bank, and so on, because the same interest rates that are charged in the commercial banks are equal to the ones charged by the Co-operative Bank, Murata Sacco, Unaitas and so on.

Mr. Speaker sir, one of the greatest impediments to growth in the agricultural sector is the high interest rates. I would like a facility where the County can maybe organise so that we can have something like a Murang'a Farmers Bank that can lend to farmers at low

interest rates of up to maybe 6% per annum. That way, farmers will be in a position to access easy and cheap loans that will make them grow their agri-businesses.

When we went to Uganda, we found that the coffee farmers there take their coffee to the hubs, which are equivalent to the co-operative societies in this country. They are given a certain amount of money immediately on delivery of their coffee based on the projected prices of coffee in the world market.

Mr. Speaker sir, this is a very good arrangement because it encourages farmers to be serious with coffee growing and they are never discouraged because they know that once you take your 100, 1000, or 2000 kilograms, you will get paid instantly. As a County Government, this is something we need to think very seriously about; how to pay farmers immediately and how they can access that money at low interest rates.

Mr. Speaker sir, the other issue that I would like to talk about is about the reward schemes. In the 70s and 80s, agricultural shows in this country were taken very seriously, there used to be reward schemes for the farmers who had done very well. Although they still exist, the kind of emphasis that used to be there in the past no longer exists.

The reward scheme helps in motivating the farmers to be better; hence become better producers and get better prices for their produce. They also act as mentors to other farmers so that if we have about five or 10 farmers who are doing very well in various aspects of agriculture in every ward, they get motivated and others learn from those particular farmers who do well, they therefore also act as mentors.

Mr. Speaker sir, they also create competition among the farmers; thus making them better producers. Therefore, I support the motion on all the three issues; the access to loan facilities; I would say easy and cheap loans; exhibition for various agricultural products which is already happening but we need to enhance it, especially at the ward or sub-county levels. I also, of course, support the reward schemes. I second.

(Question proposed)

The Speaker: Beth?

Hon. Danson Mburu: Thank you Mr. Speaker sir

The Speaker: Sorry, I said Beth.

Hon. Beth Ngugi: Thank you Hon. Speaker that I have caught your eye. I am a nominated MCA and rise to support this motion with a few points because much has been said by the two members who have spoken earlier on.

When we come to the part of exhibitions and trade fairs, you realize that when farmers are empowered, they will be able to participate in these exhibitions; an empowered farmer is emancipated from fleecing by the middlemen, normally called brokers where they reap where they did not sow.

After this liberation, the farmer will be motivated to work harder, he will be proud to be called a farmer knowing that he is assured of feeding his family and of course having surplus thus putting money in his/her pocket. Of course the farmer will be busy year in year out.

In these exhibitions, they will display their wares and products and have a point of selling to people interested in purchasing these agricultural products. The reward scheme is good but it is hinged on the success of loan facilities and exhibitions. The scheme can come in to farmers who comfortably and promptly pay his loan, he or she does not have to

fall in the category of 65 years, and even a young person can be a good farmer. This is a motivation to our young people who are idling and the old people will know that being old or retired, you are not obsolete.

Mr. Speaker, when these programmes are made or developed you will find that some sanity will come to our agricultural community and many farmers will start feeling that there is pride and joy in being a farmer in whatever one would want to engage in farming.

Hon. Danson Mburu: I stand to support the motion and congratulate the mover for bringing this important motion here which is talking about farming and agriculture and then say that you cannot succeed in farming of any kind unless you have some money to do the work. If one has this money and then goes to dairy farming, Mr. Speaker I think you can succeed in all ways to have enough milk, rear your cows properly.

On French beans, it will require some capital to carry on that kind of farming. If we have the money as stipulated in the motion, let it be set aside for the farmers in the county, there are things that need a lot of money like bee farming, but if one is given roughly Kshs. 50,000, one can start that business and carry on properly. In goat rearing, it requires some money; if the farmer is assisted he or she would also improve in farming. On mangoes or avocados all that you need is little to succeed.

Mr. Speaker, comparing the present and the past, when you applied for a loan in a bank, even though you had security, the loan took many months. Nowadays when you get to any bank, there is a credit section where you go, negotiate the terms; you are likely to be given some money. I am happy when you go to the credit section in banks and get younger men and women getting in there, discussing the terms and they are given money, it is very encouraging to see them get money for farming.

Mr. Speaker, if we had this facility in our county and the CEC is told to set aside some money so that instead of going to the bank, we have a farmer's bank, and then that would improve farming in our County. I support

Hon. Catherine Mugo: I rise to support the motion and congratulate the mover on the reward scheme and easy access to loans. Hon. Speaker we all know that agriculture is the backbone of our county, it is important for us to think of ways that we can sensitize our farmers and give them incentives to work harder to produce enough for sustaining families.

We can only have enough for families if we think of ways to promote production as the mover has said. We have suggested several ways, like exhibitions for agricultural produce, we usually have an agricultural show in Maragua, but if it were to happen in all sub-counties, it would encourage the farmers to work hard since where there is competition in many instances people work harder expecting a prize and even if they do not, the farm would still look better than it is today since there is competition with neighbours.

This is a good motion, I support easy access loans to be given to small scale farmers who we have in our county, this will ensure that they get quality seedlings; it will also ensure that farmers can afford manure to enrich the farm and promote produce.

I will also suggest that these loans as the mover has said, if the farmers can come together and have a revolving fund, that would be easy because it will call for very little from the County, the farmers would organize themselves like we have the issue of milk, which would be very easy to market their produce, We also realize that our County has few fishponds and these exhibitions would show people the need and how to establish a

fishpond and encourage farmers to visit the exhibitions so that the ideas they do not have, they would be able to visit these farmers from the exhibition, I support this motion.

Hon Mary Waithira: I rise to support the motion. The content in the motion is very important to our farmers bearing in mind that Murang'a is an agricultural county. The motion would be of essence if the Hon. Members agree to support it the way they are doing. Mr. Speaker when we talk about the county government starting programmes on easy access to loan facilities, this will mostly help women.

Sometimes when you go to the banks, we are always asked for security in terms of logbooks and title deeds. From the tribe that we come from we know many women do not own logbooks, even if you are bought for a vehicle by your husband, it has his name. Even in the inherited or purchased land, you find the husbands saying that it is their names that will appear in the title deeds. For you to be given a loan in a bank, it is a problem. Any farmers, whether a woman or a man can be able to access a loan facility from a commercial bank or whichever, I think this would be of much use.

Mr. Speaker, we want to bring programmes that may encourage our farmers in coming up with proper produce and the county government assisting in the value chain and with all this we will be improving the social and economic status of our people, so to this one, it will get to the ears of our farmers and improve our image as a House if these cited programmes go through.

Mr. Speaker, when we talk of these loans to acquire inputs, our farmers are lacking in the latest commercial tools and availability of fertilizers and other manure to apply to their crops. When there is money, we can be sure that the farmers will cultivate their land in time, buy the seedlings in time and even have money for harvesting.

When we talk of incentives, we can start with programs that have seed subsidies or fertilizers because this is a scheme that will also encourage our farmers. Mr. Speaker, when we talk of exhibitions, we know this might not be a problem to our government because we already have the agri- business exhibition shows but we need to put more effort and enhance it in a better way that our farmers will be able to access. It will also get to investors and in the same; they will be able to come and buy the produce or see the kind of produce that our Murang'a people are growing.

In all this, we are trying to see how our farmers can get good rewards, but if we fail to, we expose our farmers out there to brokers, the people who come to buy from them at a low price and later benefit and they are not the ones who grew the produce. At the end of the day, you will find that our farmers are demoralized and we want to enhance this and make it a living to our farmers so that they can go back to the days they used the farm produce to educate us, build good homes and start dairy projects.

I commend the mover of the motion and request the Hon. Members to continue supporting it the way they are doing so that by the end of the day, when it will get to the CEC, the implementation committee chairman who is not there but the members are, these are the kind of motions that we are saying that they need to be quickly pushed so that our farmers can get to see the products of what we have debating in this House. I support.

Hon. Rebecca Mwicigi: Mr. Speaker, if you remember during your time at the National Assembly, there was something called Guaranteed Minimum Returns (GMR) and you know this country never went into hunger when GMR was there. If this County has Guaranteed

Minimum Returns programme,; like the mover is asking, I know the farmers will go to the farm and hunger will be a thing of the past.

We need food security in our county and with this, we need to have all co-operatives being equipped with loan facilities and have the office in all co-operatives so that those offices can give the farmers whatever they need in their own co-operatives so that the County will grow.

Accessing these loans can be difficult, the newspaper had indicated that the Central Bank had raised the interest rates higher. Mr. Speaker, you know even those people who have borrowed, the banks will start adjusting their interest rates to go a little bit higher and some of the farmers might lose their land due to non-proper management of loans.

As we talk of the management, a lot of education must be done to the farmers. A loan should be given to a home not to the man or to the wife because if it is jointly guaranteed, nobody will allow their farms to be sold. There was the Kenya Farmers Union (KFA), if all the co-operatives can come up with something similar, KFA was so good, you could get even clothing and the loan would be deducted from your produce. The Agricultural Finance Corporation (AFC) is also trying and we still have to domesticate all these loan revenues to come to our own county

In Netherlands, a country the hon. members were able to visit, if you spent longer time in that country you will see all the farmers have a facility to access loans according to what they grow. If you are a dairy farmer you go to dairy section and you access the loan.

If these loans are given and given at a reasonable rate you will see farmers improving like the matatus are doing now because they have their own co-operatives where a co-operator can go and borrow and buy another car. If Murang'a farmers are enabled to access loans at a reasonable rate like the GMR was, which was about three per cent I know Murang'a farmers are very hard working and they will work towards securing food security.

Another point which is very important is that we have land for the market; we heard a land was bought at Kenol for the market. This should be prioritized so that when the farmers grow products in their farms they come direct to the market rather than the brokers coming in between so that anybody who wants to buy the produce can come to the market and buy the product directly from the farmers and I know even the exporters once they know if they come there they will get the avocados, French beans directly from the farmers they will come there and they can even contract a farmer directly to grow. It will be an eye opener, it will provide access to the market and I support the motion. I thank you.

Hon. Duncan Njuguna: I stand to support the motion simply because the trend we are in for the last two years of giving free things, the seedlings, coffee and potatoes vines will come to an end because if the farmers can access loan facilities through like now Agriculture Finance Corporation and we do have a branch here in Murang'a, the farmers will be able to do their farming better than they are doing now.

All they need is to know more about the Agriculture Finance Corporation and other bodies that do give loans to farmers. Therefore, if the government can facilitate loans to farmers to know more about these bodies instead of giving free things the better because we will be able to improve agriculture in this county

Also in exhibitions, nowadays we do not only parade the goods that we farm, there is also value addition. What bananas can do more than cooking and eating the way we do it,

there are other products that can come out of bananas. With that farmers can be able to farm on various products which we have in this county.

I think we should have agriculture shows not only at Gakoigo but in various sub-counties so that the farmers can access the products that are available in Murang'a County. With this kind of the motion that cannot eat much into our budget it is good that we support it and CEC Agriculture to implement the same so that we add value to our product and also get good returns from these products. With those few remarks I stand to support, I thank you Mr. Speaker sir.

Hon. John Gitau: I thank you Mr. Speaker sir, I stand to support the motion and actually give a pat on the back to the mover because she appears very alert that if our people are financed, do marketing and promotion we are going to solve quit a chunk of problem in Murang'a County.

As the previous speakers have said, Murang'a like many parts of Kenya is an agricultural county. Among the factors of production are capital, labour, land and entrepreneurship, what our people are lacking is capital.

Most of them have enough land and with capital even if you do not have land you are able to lease and grow crops. There should be a deliberate effort by the executive to encourage agricultural production, especially these days we have gone to what we are calling agri-business. Producing food materials not only for subsistence but for business

If we are able to support our farmers those who are planting maize and beans we make sure they have adequate fertilizers and they have it cheap, they also practice good farming methods then we ensure there is market for the products.

Marketing is the major problem. Our people are producing a lot of agricultural products but those who are buying the products are dictating the price which is very worrying.

In the matters to do with maize and beans, in cereals, the government should make an effort to have what we call buffer stocks and stabilization funds because you find when we have ample or excess production of maize and beans people from outside will come buy the products at low prices and then bring them back when there is shortage and they sell them at very high prices.

If the executive puts aside funds to buy these products when they are plenty and release them when they are scarce we are not only going to help farmers to realise good prices but also our people from going hungry.

Fertilizer and chemicals, if you compare two adjacent farms you can tell which farmer has money or which farmer is practicing good farming practices because when you plant the best seeds then you apply the best fertilizer and in time and then there is labour to especially till for the crop, that farm will blossom. You will find crops have a lot of difference from the farm where the farmer does not have a lot of capital and fertilizer is not applied.

So efforts should be made by the executive to ensure that we have seeds, the best fertilizers and they get to the farmers at the right time and we have market for these people.

The executive should also encourage what we call IT practices. Sometimes we struggle with our products here especially the horticultural products while there is a country looking for the same products. If we are able to market or to advertise these products in the websites and other IT platforms we will be assisting our farmers to get the market for their

products. This is a good motion and if it is well implemented it will solve half of the problems in Murang'a County, I support the motion.

Hon. Florence Nyambura: I would like to congratulate the mover of this motion because I remember before I came to the Assembly we used to have field days organized by the agricultural extension officers at district levels.

During the field days many people learnt a lot of things. We would go to Mathioya and at other times Mathioya would come to Kahuro. We used to go round the County by then they were districts and we would learn so much.

We used to have exhibitions and the trophies would be given. This encouraged competition in farming. I remember there were loans given by the national government through the ministry of agriculture to farmers and I remember in Kahuro the farmers were able to get the loan. There was also a loan called MADIF initiated by Murang'a and so many farmers were able to farm. The youth were encouraged and were able to get the loans and do farming.

Today if you tell a youth to go to bank to get a loan he or she will not be granted even our mothers and grandmothers cannot get loans because they do not have their own titles. You know our men are very hard in sharing the land and giving out the title deeds.

As an agricultural county we are going to reduce so much immorality in youth if we provide low interest loans for them to do farming and at the same time the living standards in our county will improve.

I would like to urge the CEC member for agriculture to implement it so that our county will improve with speed. Day in day out we are saying that we are improving the living standards of our people and when we implement a motion like this, it will improve the living standards. I support.

Hon. Charity Rugu: Mr. Speaker sir, I am a very happy lady this afternoon because this is my first motion to bring to this House. I thank you all members for supporting me and for your good sentiments. I thank you for encouraging me and for everything because there have been so many motions before this House and we do not see the implementation. I would urge the executive to implement this one so that at the end of the year we see change. I thank you Mr. Speaker sir and I thank you all for supporting me.

(Laughter)

(Question Put and Agreed To)

ADJOURNMENT

The Speaker: The House is adjourned until 2:30p.m tomorrow afternoon, I thank you.

The House rose at 3:36 p.m.