PRESS RELEASE

Kandeki Water Project Commissioned Under Phase III Of Government of Kenya, Germany & Equity Bank Partnershipto Boost Irrigation in Kirinyaga County

Kirinyaga, Kenya | Monday, 17th November 2025- Hundreds of smallholder farmers in Kirinyaga County are set to benefit from reliable irrigation and improved agricultural productivity following the commissioning of the Kandeki Water Project under Phase III of the Smallholder Irrigation Program for the Mt. Kenya Region (SIPMK).

The project was officially launched in Kirinyaga during a ceremony presided over by the Cabinet Secretary for Water, Sanitation and Irrigation, Eng. Eric Muriithi Mugaa, the Deputy Governor of Kirinyaga County, H. E. David Githanda, Ambassador of Germany to Kenya, Sebastian Groth, Equity Group Holdings Managing Director and CEO Dr. James Mwangi and the Principal Secretary for Irrigation CPA Ephantus Kimotho.

The commissioning ceremony marked a key milestone in the ongoing collaboration between the Government of Kenya, Government of the Federal Republic of Germany, Equity Bank and Equity Group Foundation. The event was attended by officials from the Ministry of Water, Sanitation and Irrigation, the Ministry of Agriculture, Equity Group Foundation, Equity Bank Kenya, representatives of the German Embassy and KfW development bank, and the Kirinyaga County Government, alongside hundreds of farmers benefitting from the initiative.

While addressing participants at the event, Kirinyaga County Deputy Governor Mr. Githanda said, “We are happy with the progress of the Kandeki Irrigation Project. We thank Equity Bank, and the Kenyan and German governments for partnering to make small-scale irrigated farming a success. As the county government, we have been working with all stakeholders through initiatives such as capacity building to ensure projects like this thrive. We will continue to collaborate closely with all partners for the benefit of our farmers.”

The project is designed to empower smallholder farmers to move from rain-fed to irrigated agriculture and has already benefitted hundreds of local farmers engaged in high-value agricultural enterprises such as tomato farming, French beans, fish farming, and poultry rearing.

At the event, the Cabinet Secretary for Water, Sanitation and Irrigation Eng. Eric Muga noted, “Through the Kandeki Water Project, I have seen and heard success stories from coffee, tomato, French bean and capsicum farmers. This is the transformation we want to see. I appeal to farmers to make good use of water by embracing smart agriculture that enables them to produce more while using less. Agriculture is the backbone of our economy, and to achieve lasting success, we must move away from relying solely on rain-fed farming and focus on supporting farmers through irrigation. Projects like Kandeki are helping to improve livelihoods, stabilize production, and empower rural communities to thrive despite climate variability. The project would not have been a success without the support of our partners - Equity Bank and the German government. This achievement belongs not only to the farmers but also to our partners, Equity Bank and the German government through KfW."

The German Ambassador Sebastian Groth reaffirmed Germany's long-standing partnership with Kenya in supporting sustainable agriculture and water resource management.

"Germany and Kenya are longstanding partners in strengthening agricultural resilience and fostering rural development," said Ambassador Groth. "Through programs like the Smallholder Irrigation Program for the Mt. Kenya Region, we have seen how access to water and finance can unlock potential in rural communities. The success of the Kandeki project demonstrates that with the right partnerships, smallholder farmers can achieve productivity, sustainability, and prosperity."

Speaking at the event, Dr. James Mwangi lauded the collaboration between government, development partners, and the private sector, describing it as a model of how finance and technology can drive sustainable agriculture and economic resilience.

"The Kandeki Water Project is more than an irrigation scheme. It is a story of transformation and empowerment," said Dr. Mwangi. "Through this partnership, farmers are not just accessing water; they are accessing opportunity. By combining finance, knowledge, and community ownership, we are proving that smallholder farmers can drive Kenya's food security and economic growth. Our goal is to replicate this success across the country and build an ecosystem where every farmer has access to water, markets, and financing."

The Smallholder Irrigation Program for Mt. Kenya Region (SIPMK) was launched in 2005 through a bilateral cooperation between the Government of Kenya and the German Government through KfW Development Bank, with Equity Bank serving as the financial intermediary.

The program's objective is to develop community-based piped water systems that enable smallholder farmers to irrigate their farms, enhance productivity, and improve their livelihoods.

Through Phases I to III, the Bank has financed 15 irrigation projects across Meru, Tharaka Nithi, Embu, and Kirinyaga counties, covering more than 2,000 acres and benefiting over 5,000 farmers.

Equity has invested more than KES 322 million in irrigation infrastructure financing, with additional production loans and market linkages that connect farmers to both local and export markets through partnerships with off takers.

The program uses an inclusive financing model where farmers, organized into cooperatives, contribute 10% of the total project cost upfront and access affordable credit from Equity Bank to finance their share of the infrastructure. The Government of Kenya through funding by the German Government provides the remaining portion through grants, ensuring affordability and ownership at the community level.

The Kandeki Water Project, now at full operational capacity, is among the most successful under the current phase, with an implementation rate exceeding 98%. It provides reliable water for irrigation and domestic use across approximately 1,145 acres, supporting hundreds of households in the region.

The initiative has enabled farmers to diversify into high-value crops, increase production, and access new markets, improve incomes, and enhance food security in a region that has faced increasing rainfall variability due to climate change.

During the visit, Equity Group and partners evaluated the program's overall impact in preparation for Phase V of the SIPMK. The expansion aims to replicate the success of the Kandeki project in additional counties and extend irrigation infrastructure to more farming communities.