

# Rural electrification boost farmers' earnings

## DAILY NEWS Reporter

RURAL electrification has proved to be efficient driver in promoting value addition particularly of agricultural products that helped farmers to fetch premium market prices.

Statistics from Rural Energy Agency (REA) shows that there are 16 small hydropower projects operating since 1970's and 13 projects with a total capacity of 28.8 MW which are in various stages of development.

Presenting research paper on

Management of the Hydro power plants in southern highlands in Dar es Salaam on Tuesday, Mr Stephen Kirama, the University of Dar es Salaam lecturer and consultant said there was an increase of the processing and value addition to some selected products like sunflower, timber and coffee due to extension of electricity services in rural areas.

"Besides, increases in production and revenue, communities in these areas are highly motivated for further energy usage to alleviate

poverty," he said.

The small hydropower projects are Lupali, Imiliwaha, Lugarawa, Mawengi, Wino, Matembwe and Ikondo located in Njombe Region, Ludewa District and Songea District.

The hydropower projects provides modern low cost energy services to households, business enterprise like milling machines, garages, juice extracting (jam and juice), poultry (incubators), tailoring business and normal kiosk.

He said the hydropower

projects are also supplying for the public institutions like schools, hospitals, health centres and public offices within the village governments. Students in both boarding and day enjoy extra studies during evening due to power availability.

"The maternal and child health services have also improved not only during delivery in which they are no longer using fuel lamps but also accessibility of vaccination has increased," he said.

Since most of the projects

are either non profits oriented or cost recovering, Mr Kirama called upon the government to subsidize and provide VAT exemptions as an incentive to keep them operating with an end goal to provide high quality services.

Also, it is high time that the National Environment and Management Council (NEMC) to suspend the planned environmental fees to be paid annually for use of water in generating electricity.