

# Agriculture and transport drive Sudan forward

## Nation's infrastructure and natural assets projects are encouraging development

Blessed with 84 million hectares of arable land and the River Nile, Sudan's agricultural industry generates about 40 percent of GDP, forms 90 percent of non-oil exports and employs 80 percent of the workforce.

Key agricultural products include sugar, gum Arabic, cotton, oil seeds, maize and livestock.

As with other economic sectors, Sudan and China enjoy strong bilateral cooperation across the agricultural industry and Chinese-made machinery is used extensively on farms, fields and in processing operations.

This common interest has boosted Sudan's agricultural potential and development, created higher production levels, raised capacity and improved efficiency.

In June 2009, Khartoum hosted the first Forum on Agricultural Cooperation between China and Sudan. The four-day event, which was attended by senior officials from the agricultural ministries of both governments plus hundreds of delegates from the private sector, was described by analysts as the launch-pad for closer bilateral integration.

**“We are looking to form partnerships with anyone interested in a fair deal and expect our partner to bring new technology and finance.”**

ABDELHALIM ISMAIL ALMUTAFIE  
MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE

Joint ventures between agricultural enterprises and government departments will not only improve food security but also increase sustainable development.

According to Sudan's Minister of Agriculture Abdelhalim Ismail Almutafie, Sudan offers investors a wealth of rewarding FDI opportunities in the development of various

agricultural and livestock products and services.

The concept of Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) centered around the management of land and resources is being embraced as officials seek fresh funding, new technology, quality materials such as fertilizers, plus better training, skills and knowledge.

“We need to increase both productivity and expansion of project schemes,” the minister said. “Sudan has 1.6 million hectares of irrigated land but we want to increase that figure and also boost productivity in 60 million hectares of rain-fed agricultural land.

“We are engaged in very constructive discussions with the Chinese to attract their companies to the sector.”

The minister said the sector needs to grow at 20 percent a year to cover rising domestic demand and highlighted four profitable sectors identified as being ideal for fresh FDI: cereals, sugar, milk and animal production.

“Some of these crops can be produced out of season and exported to Europe,” he stated.

“We are looking to form partner-

ships with anyone interested in a fair deal and expect our partner to bring new technology and finance, with a strategy focused on the local and foreign market. With PPPs, management companies will deal with the farmers without owning their land but sharing in profitability after achieving quality standards of production.”



Sudan's diverse topography includes rivers, forests and the Sahara Desert.

PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

### Rich in natural resources

Sudan's main source of fresh water, the River Nile flows south to north and is the subject of intense regional discussions about the future usage rights of its precious resources.

With responsibility for the management of water reserves and helping ensure thousands of farmers and millions of citizens continue to receive reliable supplies of water for irrigation projects or drinking purposes is the Ministry of Irrigation and Water Resources.

The ministry oversees all irrigation, hydropower and water projects and operations, with many of its activities centered on the banks of the Nile, including the Merowe Dam Project.

Greater access to clean drinking water and water for sanitation and irrigation is a key government goal and international partners like China play a very important role in this vision, through support from the public and private sector, plus donor agencies.

“I think the Sino-Sudanese relationship is excellent,” said Minister of Irrigation and Water Resources, Kamal Ali Mohammed.

“China has given us loans that we have used to establish important drinking water projects in rural and urban areas. We really appreciate

the role China is playing in Sudan, as well as other parts of Africa, and are very keen to continue and grow our relations.”

Sudan's 10,000 kilometers of roads are the backbone of the transport network and at the heart of many of the infrastructure projects being carried out by Chinese companies.

Up to 90 percent of goods are carried by road but many are in need of repair and flood during the rainy season rendering them impassable.

As a result, the Ministry of Transportation is modernizing and expanding the network and plans to develop railway lines and river transport routes to lift efficiency levels and lower costs. Railway stock is often imported from China.

### New roads steer growth

Officials have set aside an additional \$787 million for a further 1,255 km of roads as Sudan looks to become a regional transportation hub, bridging the Middle East and Africa.

By providing access to markets and resources and routes to trade, the ambitious nation aims to lay the foundations for economic development and link towns and cities in the nine neighboring countries that are members of Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA).

Driving development in this sector is the National Highway Authority (NHA).

A parastatal organization, the authority is working to connect cities, ports, production facilities and industrial sites throughout the country's 26 states.

From its modern headquarters in the capital, the NHA identifies and plans all road building projects and organizes investment and financing programs.

Construction is normally undertaken by Chinese firms that are encouraged to award to Sudanese subcontractors a third of the work so that investment benefits local

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WAKEEL  
NHA DIRECTOR GENERAL

enterprises and workers.

“Our priority is to connect the capitals of our states and also connect our ports and ship building centers with our many neighbours,” explained NHA Director General, Hamid Mohamoud Wakeel.

“We are connecting countries and now have two roads to Ethiopia, two to Egypt, and a road to Kenya. We also need to build new railways to reduce transport costs that will, in turn, lower the cost of goods.”

He added: “With every year that goes by, the transport situation here improves and we believe more and more opportunities for investment in transport networks and services will arise. We hope China continues to participate and cooperate in mutual projects, not just in transport infrastructure but other sectors like agriculture and education, as they will be rewarded.”

Sudan's infrastructure improvements and increased connectivity extend to modern Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) networks such as fixed line, mobile and Internet services.

Like many other African countries, the liberalization and privatization of the telecoms industry, combined with massive increases in public and private sector investment in digital and fiber-optic technology, has generated substantial double-digit market growth.

Significant FDI opportunities exist in the delivery and expansion of these services to businesses, government departments, individuals, hospitals, schools, and universities.

Minister of Information, Kamal Mohamed Obeid, listed the country's completely liberalized market and an advanced fiber-optic network that covers 17,000 km, as two of the sector's major competitive advantages.

“We have a population of more than 40 million and have approximately 9 million phones,” he said. “We have made connections with the rural areas through which we provide electricity, computers and satellite phone services to people connect directly. In addition, we have launched e-medicine and e-education services in different regions of the country, and connected 26 universities.”

## The communication super highway

As one of Africa's largest countries, the challenges facing Sudan's transport sector stretch far and wide as the ambitious nation continues on the journey to socioeconomic development. With responsibility for the roads network, the National Highway Authority is driving Sudan towards prosperity and is seeking Chinese investors for projects like the Peace Road that will link northern and southern Sudan.



National Highway Authority

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