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USAID-World Bank Study Explores Viability of Integrated Farming in South Darfur

KHARTOUM—The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the World Bank, and the South Darfur Ministry of Agriculture and Forests held a workshop on June 26 to discuss the new report, *Rehabilitation of Gum Arabic Ecosystems in South Darfur*, which examines the role of farming systems that integrate gum arabic, livestock, and food grains as a viable option in South Darfur to reduce poverty, conflict over natural resources, and degradation of the environment.

Financed by USAID and the World Bank's Post-Conflict Fund, the report originated from a request in 2009 by the Governor of South Darfur that the World Bank propose a plan to rehabilitate gum arabic production in South Darfur, which is the center of the Darfur region's gum arabic industry.

The report concludes that medium-sized farms in South Darfur, using a gum arabic ecosystem to produce gum arabic, annual crops, and livestock can be a financially and environmentally sustainable enterprise as a family farm. Not only does gum arabic make a modest contribution to net farm income, it also contributes more broadly, providing a favorable physical environment for crop and livestock production, leading to higher productivity.

Gum arabic is important for Sudan's economy, typically accounting for 10 to 15 percent of Sudan's non-oil export value. The annual average value of gum arabic exports has been approximately \$50 million, but it has exceeded \$100 million in the past. About 15 percent of Sudan's production of gum arabic comes from Darfur, mostly produced in South Darfur.

The current Governor of South Darfur, Abdelhamid Musa Kassa, and South Darfur State Minister of Agriculture and Forests, Dr. Ibrahim Dukheri, endorsed the report. Dr. Dukheri served as chairman of the workshop that examined the report's conclusions and a suggested action plan, which includes model pilot farms; support for private-sector tree nurseries, gum arabic producers' associations, and other farmers' organizations; farmer training; and policy development to support future gum arabic ecosystem development.

"This report is an important step in examining options for helping to rebuild livelihoods for the people of Darfur, while recognizing the challenges of climate change and competition for natural resources, including water," said USAID/Sudan Mission Director William Hammink. "We look forward to continuing to work with others on ways to help the people of Darfur."

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