

Freighters into Kilimanjaro



Finally the dream has come true

By Modestus Njau.

In 2007, Tanzania scooped global Bronze Medal Award in an International Horticulture Fair held in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. The award was won after Tanzania Horticultural Association (TAHA) took part for the first time in this biggest horticultural show in the world, which attracted 1,000 exhibitors from 51 countries; and approximately 47,000 people from 108 countries.

Horticultural industry in Tanzania has been growing fast in the recent years. With about 20 firms, mostly exporters based in Arusha and Kilimanjaro regions, the industry earns the country about \$30 million annually and employs about 6,000 people majority of them women. It is projected that about 20,000 people will be employed in the next three years with the current annual growth of 8%.

The challenge

Most of horticultural produce from Tanzania is transported to Europe and other parts of the world via Nairobi Kenya mainly because there is limited cargo uplift space at Kilimanjaro International Airport (KIA). Currently KLM uplifts part of the produce on its passenger flights to Amsterdam. This has been a challenge to TAHA, which, in collaboration with the American international development agency USAID and FINTRAC they have been working jointly day and night to get air freight operators into Kilimanjaro. In this bid they embarked on a project called the TANZANIA AIR FREIGHT PROJECT (TAP) which is charged with the function of



Pallets of perishable cargo being loaded into MK Airlines freighter holds ready for uplift

offering technical and financial support to TAHA. The USAID funded program is designed to create a sustainable, commercially viable airfreight solution in order to realize introduction of freighter operations in Tanzania through Kilimanjaro International Airport to promote the horticultural industry in Tanzania.

TAHA has been providing a link for stakeholders involved including Tanzania Civil Aviation Authority, KADCO (Kilimanjaro Airport Development Company), fuel companies, Swissport Tanzania Ltd etc in order to have a joint effort and one objective.

At the same time, confident that finally the project would kick-off, TAP in collaboration with Swissport invited Mr. Tony Wright, an expert in cold chain management to run

perishable handling course to key cold store facility personnel in order to improve their knowledge in handling perishable cargo.

The dream has come true...

These efforts have now started to bear fruits as already MK Airlines has started to fly in B747-200 freighter once a week uplifting between 15 and 40 tons of horticultural produce on each flight. The first flight operated on the 6th December, 2008. Congratulations to TAHA, KADCO, TCAA and all other stakeholders involved.

Modestus Njau is Head of Cargo Services at Kilimanjaro International Airport. He holds an LLB degree and has a vast experience in ground handling industry.