

Crop diversification, market access increase farmer's income

NAIROBI — Zipporah Simiyu and other members of the Good Neighbors Community Network, in Western Province, Kenya, relied on maize and beans to feed their families and make a living. Facing pests and disease, inadequate market linkages, low-quality planting material and little technical support, Simiyu and the group's 38 other growers were struggling.

In January 2006, Fintrac agronomist Geoffrey Nyamota started working with the group. He provided technical support for various high-value crops at a demonstration plot established on Simiyu's farm. The group was also shown how to plan farms, diversify crops for better incomes and food security, control pests and disease through integrated pest management (IPM) and produce high-quality grafted passion fruit seedlings.

Simiyu and the other growers are now producing high-quality onions, tomatoes, kale, African leafy vegetables (ALVs), passion fruit, African Bird's Eye (ABE) chili and sweet potatoes. With further training in group dynamics and recordkeeping, combined with better market linkages for the group's products and grafted seedlings, they have seen their farms flourish and are embracing Fintrac's farming-as-a-business approach.

In implementing USAID's Kenya Horticultural Development Program (KHDP), Fintrac helped the grower group build a state-of-the-art passion fruit nursery. The nursery greatly increased the group's capacity to meet neighboring growers' demand for top-quality passion fruit seedlings. In June 2007, the group earned \$525 from seedling sales and sales have increased further to \$984 per month. Since starting with the program, Simiyu's monthly net income increased from \$105 to \$424.

Simiyu's increase in income has helped her build a better house and she is now a respected trainer for passion fruit production. She is proud of her new-found skills in recordkeeping, grafted seedling production, vegetable drying, IPM, seed propagation, cooperative production and marketing.

Fintrac is working in Central, Coast, Eastern, Nyanza, Rift Valley and Western provinces to increase incomes through smallholder production and employment in the horticulture industry. Fintrac is working with more than 15,000 members of 500 smallholder groups in conjunction with 52 private and public-sector alliance partners.



With improved income from new crops such as ABE chili introduced by Fintrac, Zipporah Simiyu has been able to build a better house for the members of her family while also improving food security.

Photos by Fintrac Inc.

"Thanks to USAID-KHDP, we have now become successful in the production and sale of various fruits and vegetables, and we do not need to buy these from the market. In fact, our neighbors too have turned to horticulture."

— Zipporah Simiyu, Farmer, Bungoma, Western Province