

UPDATE ON KENYAN HORTICULTURE

Brought to you by the Kenyan Horticulture Development Program (KHDP) — a USAID-funded project aimed at increasing incomes through smallholder production and employment in the horticulture industry. USAID-KHDP works with public and private sector agencies to provide technical and marketing assistance to growers throughout Kenya. USAID-KHDP's main agribusiness partners include grower associations, input suppliers, processors, exporters, research institutions and trade associations.

“MAPATO ZAIDI KWA KUPITIA KILIMO BORA”

- **USAID funds horticulture for another year through “USAID-KHDP II”**
- **National horticulture policy and drought-related issues are priorities for National Taskforce**
- **KENYAGAP raising traceability and food safety standards on the local market**
- **Kenya set to become major player in tropical fruit juices**
- **Sweet potato popularity increasing**
- **Watermelon sales increasing**

USAID-KHDP II

The USAID-funded Kenyan Horticulture Development Program provided technical assistance to the Kenyan horticulture industry from October 2003 to March 2009.

Recognizing the central importance of horticulture to the national economy, USAID is funding a second phase of USAID-KHDP to run until March 2010. As well as maintaining its central role of supporting commercial horticulture for smallholders, this “USAID-KHDP II” program will target horticulture crops contributing to family food budgets (root crops and pulses); promote a range of irrigation and water management techniques; and provide resources for policy analysis.

The proceedings of USAID-KHDP’s March workshop “Increasing Horticulture Industry Competitiveness”, are now available (contact pgichuru@fintrac.com). The workshop was attended by 84 stakeholders from across the country and included smallholders, input suppliers, processors, exporters, traders, researchers, trainers, consultants, USAID managers, government officers and other horticulture service providers. Presentations were given by CEOs, technical experts and small-scale farmers. The stars of the show were smallholder growers from Nyanza, Western, Rift Valley, Coast and Central provinces who provided valuable insight into business



Photos by Fintrac Inc.

Mrs. Lorna Bruno, of the Karwa Women's group in Homa Bay, shows off watermelons ready to send to Nairobi.

development “on the front line” and attracted many questions. Their stories highlighted the importance of horticulture in food security, poverty alleviation and income generation at the grass roots level.

NATIONAL TASKFORCE ON HORTICULTURE

- The National Taskforce has been acting on a range of issues including the proposed national horticulture policy; effects of drought and produce shortages on exports; and EPZ economic zones for horticulture.
- At the meeting on July 23, discussions covered the upcoming All Africa Horticulture Congress; the falling water level of Lake Naivasha; and restrictions on Kenya’s avocado exports to South Africa.
- A new website for the Taskforce will be operational in August. It will have information related to the topics covered by the Taskforce on behalf of the industry and actions being taken.

KENYA HORTICULTURE COUNCIL – KHC

The KENYAGAP standard, which is benchmarked to GLOBALGAP, is now utilized for domestic and export marketing. FoodPLUS, managers of GLOBALGAP, officially announced an international workshop to be held at the Safari Park Hotel in Nairobi. The workshop will run

Sept. 14-18. Registration forms are available from the GLOBALGAP website: www.globalgap.org.

FPEAK started to implement the KENYAGAP local market protocol developed in collaboration with USAID-KHDP. The Kenya National Bureau of Standards (KEBS) accepted KENYAGAP certification as equivalent to its own approval for the local market. The two stamps will be applied alongside each other. FPEAK and USAID-KHDP have trained more than 600 growers to comply with the code. As a result of the standardization KENYAGAP-certified farmers are now being contracted by the major supermarket chains.

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE

In April, MOA, in collaboration with other stakeholders, organized a successful regional mango fair in Mwala District, Eastern Province. More than 1,000 farmers and a host of stakeholders along the mango value chain participated. Preparations are now in top gear for a national mango conference in November. The conference will bring mango growers, exporters and processors together with public sector policy makers to create a national strategy for mango development. According to MOA statistics, national mango production has reached 400,000 metric tons and is increasing at 5 to 10 percent per year. It is a potential source of income for rural families in many areas, such as Tana River and Ukambani, where rainfall is too low and erratic for production of many other crops.

USAID-KHDP News

Watermelon

Watermelon has emerged as a major commercial crop in Western Kenya following trials and demonstrations by USAID-KHDP-assisted growers. USAID-KHDP partner the Animal Draft Power and Rural Services Programme has linked watermelon producers to buyers in Nairobi, Nakuru, Eldoret, Kisii and Kisumu. Growers are selling more than 200 metric tons per month valued at more than two million shillings. Local consumption of this delicious and nutritious fruit is growing fast.

Smallholder flowers

Farmers supplying USAID-KHDP partner Nature Grown exported 240,000 stems to the Dutch auctions in June and July. Two new species, *Craspidia* and *Scabiosa*, are being tested for commercialization during the next winter season starting in September. Farmer training and technical assistance in agronomy, and postharvest handling of summer flowers continued. KARI Thika in collaboration with Nature Grown and the Ministry of Agriculture held two summer flower field days in Nyeri and Muranga. This attracted 80 new smallholder growers.



Photo by Fintrac Inc.

Mrs. Rispa Athan, of the Karwa Women's group in Homa Bay, talks about watermelon harvesting techniques.

Local market vegetables

Market prices for vegetables generally remained high but stable in June/July despite the little rain in most areas. Greenhouse producers continued to do well with tomatoes and sweet peppers. Interest in greenhouse production remained high and USAID-KHDP was inundated with requests for technical information during the month. Ten new structures were built with technical support from USAID-KHDP partners. Farmers in Central, Western and Rift Valley areas received training in drip irrigation for vegetable production.

Sweet potatoes

USAID-KHDP is intensifying support for sweet potato production. Planting continued in all project regions. Farmers at the coast distributed 60,000 vines for propagation. Sweet potatoes contribute significantly to food security at the national level but also have great potential for commercialization. Growers in Nyanza and Western areas have been growing the crop for many years and produce a wide range of varieties. USAID-KHDP is working with KARI, Farm Concern and market intermediaries to identify and multiply varieties that are suitable for both domestic and export markets.

Two varieties with export potential have been identified and vines for planting material are being bulked up. In the first round of export trials completed in July, only 10 percent were exportable because of damage caused by the sweet potato weevil, and overgrown and misshapen roots. Measures to remedy these problems are progressing.

GTZ-PSDA organized a two-day stakeholder workshop in Nairobi to start mapping the sweet potato value chain. After the workshop, a small committee, including USAID-KHDP, was selected to collect and analyze production and market data and identify areas of intervention.

Passion fruit

Passion fruit production continues to expand, especially in the Rift Valley and Coastal regions. As a result, the demand for quality seedlings is booming. USAID-KHDP continued its technical assistance to nurseries which are investing in new facilities to meet demand. More than 1.5 million yellow passion fruits seedlings were planted at the Coast alone.

USAID-KHDP partners Sunny Processors and Premier Foods have invested in new processing plants in Central Kenya and the Coast respectively. They will provide new markets for more than 10,000 smallholder growers. With support from USAID-KHDP, KARI Thika finalized trials of yellow passion fruits for yield and disease resistance. Seeds are now available for commercial planting by growers in appropriate zones. Yellow passion fruit require a relatively hot climate for optimum yields compared to purple varieties that do better in cooler areas of Central and Rift Valley.

USAID-KHDP partner Valley Orchard opened its new processing plant for purple passion fruit in Eldoret. It will serve growers across Rift Valley and Western provinces, in particular those receiving technical support from a new project being implemented jointly by USAID-KHDP and AMPATH (Academic Model Providing Access to Healthcare).

Kenya is already a major supplier of pineapple juice from Del Monte's plantation at Thika. With these new investments in production and processing of passion fruit and mango, Kenya has the potential to become a market leader in tropical fruit juice.

Chilli

USAID-KHDP's original objective of helping Kenya become the leading global supplier of African Bird's Eye (ABE) chilli is well on track. Production continues to expand in Coast, Nyanza and Western regions. More than 3,000 nurseries were established by coastal growers during the May-July rains.

Three companies, Mace Foods, Premier Foods and Equator Products, are buying from USAID-KHDP-assisted growers and their demand still exceeds supply. The processors offer technical assistance to growers supplying them on a regular basis and cover the whole country from Busia to Lunga Lunga and Lamu.

USAID-KHDP partner Moi University established four on-farm sites for observation trials of new ABE lines. These were selected for superior yields, color, shape and picking characteristics. Seed collected from these sites will be available for commercial planting in 2010.

"Scotch Bonnet" hot pepper trials were initiated at KARI Matuga. This habanero-type of pepper originated in the Caribbean and is renowned as one of the hottest "chillies" in the world. It is popular on the UK market and Uganda has become a leading supplier.



Photo by Fintrac Inc.

USAID-KHDP's Timothy Mwangi, left, helps Mrs. Hellen Wangari Kithaka, right, harvest sweet potatoes.

Butternut Squash

Following promotion of butternut as a nutritious crop for children and food insecure families, growers in Nyanza and Western regions are expanding their production to meet increased local and export demand. More than 30 USAID-KHDP-beneficiary groups are currently selling 100-150 metric tons per month, valued at Ksh1.0-1.5 million. Exporters prefer the orange-fleshed hybrid varieties but yellow types are also acceptable to local market customers.

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