

UPDATE ON KENYAN HORTICULTURE

Brought to you by the Kenya Horticultural 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”

- **Kenya Agriculture Research Institute (KARI) attracts 330 delegates to Kenya for the All Africa Horticulture Congress, which is hailed a major success**
- **GLOBALGAP 2009 Tour hits Nairobi as growers are squeezed by high certification costs**
- **National Task Force on Horticulture moving fast on new horticulture policy**
- **Horticulture Crops Development Authority launches 2009-2013 Strategic Plan and receives ISO 9001 certification.**
- **Kisumu regional show highlights horticultural growers**
- **Equity Bank signs up more smallholder producers**
- **Domestic and export production hit hard by prolonged drought and water shortages**

KHDP NEWS

USAID extended its support to horticulture in April 2009 by increasing the resources available to the industry through KHDP. As a result, the program is extending assistance to smallholders in new areas. KHDP opened a new office this September in Kibwezi to assist growers in Ukambani and Taita-Taveta. At the same time, new staff members were added to offices in Kisumu, Eldoret and Thika to meet increasing demand for technical assistance from smallholders, business service providers and other industry stakeholders in those areas. Commercial horticulture is fast becoming a nationwide, de-centralized business with watermelons from Kisumu, essential oils from Naro Moru and chilies from Kwale rivaling the traditional vegetables and flowers produced by Central and Rift Valley growers.



Photo by Fintrac Inc.

Charity Wambui, from a family in the Karii Banana and Sweet Potato Self Help Group in Mwea, shows off a large sweet potato, one of her favorite foods.

National Task Force on Horticulture

The Task Force continued to work on major issues facing the industry, with funding support from KEPHIS.

A team was selected to spearhead the process of drafting a new National Horticulture Policy comprising: Ministry of Agriculture, Horticultural Crops Development Authority (HCDA), Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS), Agriculture Sector Coordination Unit (ASCU), Kenya National Federation of Agricultural Producers (KENFAP), Kenya Horticulture Council (KHC) and Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI). Co-opted members are the Export Promotion Council (EPC), Kenya Organic Agriculture Network (KOAN) and Kenya Bureau of Standards (KEBS).

The drafting committee was constituted in September 2009 and will be expected to complete its work by June 2010. It will operate through thematic working groups on issues including production, marketing, regulation and infrastructure.

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (MOA)

In response to the negative impact of de-forestation on climate and rainfall, MOA is preparing to gazette a new regulation requiring 10 percent of commercial farm area to be planted with trees. Plans were finalized for the National Mango conference to be held on Nov. 19-20, 2009 in Nairobi.

The MOA and KHDP cooperated to promote horticulture at the Kisumu Regional Show. Five KHDP-assisted smallholder groups participated at the MOA stand and

showed a range of products being commercialized by farmers in the Kisumu area.

HORTICULTURE CROPS DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (HCDA)

On Sept. 7, 2009, HCDA launched its Strategic Plan for 2009-2013. The launch was officiated by Minister of Agriculture Hon. William Ruto, who stressed the importance of horticulture to the economy and congratulated HCDA on achieving ISO 9001 certification.

The plan identifies six strategic themes and key results that will enable the authority to serve stakeholders and complete its mandate, which is development in policy, legal and institutional frameworks; marketing and value addition; research; capacity building; resource mobilization; corporate image; and advocacy.

ALL AFRICA HORTICULTURE CONGRESS

The first All Africa Horticulture Congress (AAHC) was held at the Nairobi Safari Park Hotel, from Aug. 31 to Sept. 3. More than 330 delegates from 42 countries attended, and 30 were African delegates. Participants included policy makers, researchers, development partners, producers, exporters and consumers from all over the world. During the official opening, Minister Ruto challenged participants to think about how to help smallholder farmers remain relevant and commercially viable in the industry. Emphasis was on government commitment to support the horticulture industry through policy development, irrigation provision and an enabling environment for investment in line with Vision 2030.

The Congress was organized by the Kenya Agriculture Research Institute (KARI) in cooperation with the International Society for Horticultural Science (ISHS), GlobalHort and the Fresh Produce Exporters Association of Kenya (FPEAK). During the break-out sessions, delegates agreed unanimously that the event was a success. Resolutions included a commitment to hold the next Congress in South Africa in 2012 and the production of a new African Horticulture Journal.

GLOBALGAP

The GLOBALGAP Tour 2009 was hosted by FPEAK at the Nairobi Safari Park hotel on Sept. 14-18. The goal was to bring together all interested parties concerned with international standards including smallholders, large-scale producers, service providers, buyers and consumers. Associated events included "train the trainer" courses, field visits and a regional smallholder task force meeting. A total of 17 Kenyan auditors and GLOBALGAP commercial practitioners were trained.

High third-party auditor costs prevent many growers, particularly smallholders, from achieving GLOBALGAP certification. To overcome this, FPEAK is negotiating with certification companies in Kenya to "bulk purchase" certification for its members at a more competitive price. Members, who could include smallholder groups in



Photo by Fintrac Inc.

Not only delicious, sweet potatoes are rich in starch, complex carbohydrates, dietary fiber, beta carotene (a vitamin A equivalent nutrient), vitamin C, and vitamin B6.

future, will be able to pay for certification costs through membership fees.

CROPS AND PRODUCTS

Drought in many areas of the country has drastically reduced yields and production of horticulture this year. Total exports of all horticultural products were down by an estimated 16 percent in August, although demand in Europe was strong. Fresh produce was hit hardest by the drought, with exports 27 percent below 2008 levels. Scarcity of potatoes, cabbages, tomatoes and other vegetables forced local market prices up by 30 percent to 50 percent above the previous five-year average.

Sweet potatoes

Sweet potatoes are becoming an important food crop for many families, particularly in Western, Central and Coast areas. It has great potential for commercialization to meet local and export demand. KHDP-assisted growers at the Coast planted 125,000 vines in June and started harvesting the first tubers in August. So far, more than 20 tons have been harvested with about half consumed at home and the balance sold. Prices were solid since the peak harvest coincided with Ramadan. Farmers preferred the Tainung variety because of its fast growth cycle (mature tubers within two months), good flavor and soft texture, which saves on cooking fuel. It is also a highly nutritious variety.

Passion fruit

Passion fruit production was severely affected by drought in most areas. As a result, farm gate prices in Rift Valley and Central areas reached Kshs 70 per kilo for grade 1 and 50 for grade 2.

A new passion fruit initiative for Western Kenya and parts of Rift Valley was launched at the Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital in Eldoret on Sept. 22. The Value Initiative Programme (VIP) will promote growth and

investment in the passion fruit value chain. The main beneficiaries will be microenterprises and farmers in HIV/AIDS-affected communities. It will be implemented by a consortium including the Academic Model Providing Access to Healthcare (AMPATH), the Export Development Council (EPC) and Fintrac/KHDP. The funding partner is the Small Enterprise Education and Promotion (SEEP) Network, which connects microenterprise practitioners from around the world to build capacity and create new income.

The launch was attended by growers, public sector agencies, fresh fruit traders, processors and banks. Equity Bank continued lending to passion fruit growers in the area through August and September in anticipation of high prices for the remainder of the year.

Watermelons

Cucurbits such as melon and squash can survive drought once they are established and still produce a crop. Watermelon growers in Western Kenya, assisted by KHDP partners ADFPP and RSP, continued to supply high quality melons to Nairobi and other markets across the country throughout September at farm gate prices of Kshs 5-20 per kilo.

Butternut squash

Growers in Nyanza and Western regions continued producing butternut throughout month. The crop is used by many families as a supplement to maize and beans to meet food shortages.

African Bird's Eye (ABE) Chili

ABE plants can survive drought and re-grow when the rain comes. Hot, dry weather can actually improve the quality of chilies once they have set. Consequently, ABE provided the only source of income for many growers assisted by KHDP partners in Nyanza, Kisumu, Rift Valley and Coastal regions. Farmers at the Coast harvested over 100,000 kilograms of ABE in August-September, valued at more than Ksh 600,000. Seed multiplication sites in Homa Bay, Malindi and Kwale are doing well and will be assessed by Moi University next month to determine the seed quality and quantity available to growers next season.

Mangoes

At the Coast, the mango season was short and ended in August. The next season should start in late October, going through to January. In Malindi, Kilifi and Kwale the mango trees have started flowering and yields are expected to be good.

Moringa

Moringa trees grow all across Kenya but generally are not regarded as a farm crop. Now farmers at the Coast are producing Moringa powder, which is made from dried leaves and sells at Kshs 50 per packet. The powder is reputed to settle the stomach. Demand for whole mature Moringa seeds is also increasing. Following training by KHDP partners, more Moringa



Photos by Fintrac Inc.

Sweet potatoes and vegetables are important food security crops that can be rotated and grown permanently on small plots.

trees are being planted to be used as a live support for passion fruit. Apart from the cash value of the seeds, Moringa leaves are good feed for cattle and poultry and are an excellent mulch or compost constituent.

Cashews

Cashew trees have started flowering in the Coast. A good harvest is expected with production in excess of 10,000 tons if extreme rains do not damage flowers. At the moment there is a shortage of the raw cashews needed by village processors for the local market.

Smallholder flowers and foliage

New growing areas in Meru and Kitale produced good quality Mobydick and Tuberose flowers during September. Although overall supply was down due to dry weather, KHDP partners purchased more than 500,000 stems from assisted smallholders, with a farm gate value of Kshs 1.75 million.

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