



SUCCESS STORY

New passion fruit variety building homes in Kenya

Before becoming a passion fruit demonstration farmer with the USAID-funded Kenya Horticultural Development Program (USAID-KHDP), Peter Gicheru made little income and, like many of his neighbors, was struggling to feed his family.

“We lived hand to mouth,” Gicheru said. “We were getting nothing before the project came.”

Gicheru is a member of the Mbari Ya Mboche group, a farmer cooperative in Thika, Kenya. The cooperative is growing more resilient passion fruit varieties developed by the USAID-KHDP-funded nurseries at the Kari Agricultural Research Institute. Trials at the institute have identified passion fruit vines that are high yielding and resistant to common mites. Working together with farmer groups in the region, USAID-KHDP is introducing these heartier passion fruit vines to farmer groups like Gicheru’s and is decreasing crop losses and increasing farmer incomes. Research has shown that these new varieties can yield as much as three times more than traditional varieties.

The program has trained more than 2,000 farmers to grow these new vines with modern passion fruit growing techniques and increased their access to better farm supplies.

The program taught Gicheru to grow these new varieties and also how to graft his own plantlets to earn extra income by selling them to neighboring passion fruit farmers. Other farmers in his Mbari Ya Mboche group as well as other USAID-KHDP-assisted growers are also learning to graft plantlets. Before the project Gicheru had no income. Now he earns 40 KSh per plant and recently generated 140,000KSh (\$1,890) in one month.

Gicheru has invested his new income into his farm and his homestead. In 2008, he built a modern house for his family. Gicheru is proud of his operation and is eager to integrate more USAID-KHDP technologies and also to help train his neighbors.

“My home was built with the proceeds of passion,” Gicheru said.

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



Peter Gicheru, a passion fruit farmer receiving training through USAID-KHDP, is earning higher income by selling passion fruit seedlings to other growers. He was able to build a new home with his increased income.
Photos by Fintrac Inc.

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—Peter Gicheru, passion fruit farmer, Thika, Kenya