



SUCCESS STORY

Small-scale Farmers Benefit from Cashew production

Cashew is one of the most popular tree nuts on the local and world markets because of its competitive price, long shelf life, relatively low fat content and excellent flavour. The global market for nuts is projected to grow at an annual rate of at least 5% over the next five years. The main reason is that nuts are regarded as a healthy source of protein and are being consumed in increasing quantities in both developed and developing countries. A market survey carried out by KHDP in 2005 also showed that the local and regional demand for Kenyan cashew is growing at an even faster rate. This provides a great income opportunity for many thousands of farming families on the Coast, who have cashew trees growing on their small farms.

However, despite the strong market demand, total production of raw nuts in 2002 was reported by the MOA and buyers to be less than 10,000 MTs - well below demand from local processors and raw nut exporters, estimated to be a minimum of 35,000 MTs. Consequently, the Cashew Technical Committee was formed by public and private sector agencies involved in the sector, to promote production, processing and marketing of cashew. It is chaired by the Kenyan Agricultural Research Institute's coastal field station on behalf of the Ministry of Agriculture, with representatives from the Coast Development Authority (CDA), growers, input supply companies, nut buyers and NGOs. In 2003, KHDP joined the committee and provided technical assistance and funding to implement the Cashew Productivity Enhancement Program.

The objective of this initiative is to raise the incomes of smallholders by increasing cashew yields and improving raw nut quality. More than 100 MOA extension workers and 5,000 cashew farmers have been trained in tree management and disease control since the program started. KARI research staff estimate that average yields have increased by at least 3kgs per tree, with some growers obtaining yields of more than 50kgs – ten times the average. Improved production practices could result in doubling of current domestic production (and a doubling of farmers' incomes) over the next two years.

A direct beneficiary of the program is Mrs Amania Wangui Njoroge and her family of Bahari Location in Lamu District. They have 160 cashew trees which Mrs Njoroge manages, with help from her husband on pruning and from the whole family on picking and weeding. They are members of the Tewe Farmers Field School, one of 215 groups which are receiving technical assistance from the KHDP program. In 2004 Mrs Njoroge harvested 3,200kgs of raw nuts which she sold at an average price of 45/- per kilo, giving a gross income of Ksh144,000. In 2005, after training and technical advice on pruning and spraying for powdery mildew disease control they sold 6,385 kgs of raw nuts. Even though the average price dropped to Ksh33/- per kilo, the gross income increased to Ksh210,000. Costs of spraying were Ksh1,600/- giving a net increased income of Ksh64,400/- (\$882). In addition they have started to grow improved varieties of sweet potato introduced by the TA team, and intend to plant ABE chilli as a cash crop in 2006. Mrs Njoroge is growing seedlings from her best yielding trees to plant 50 more trees in the next rainy season and to sell the surplus to other growers. She has paid Ksh5,000 land tax from her cashew earnings, and is also buying iron sheets for the construction of a new house. The Njoroge family is just one example from more than 5,000 farm families deriving increased income as a direct result of the USAID/KHDP initiative.



Photos by Fintrac

The 100kg cashew tree in Lamu District.



The Njoroge family with their cashew harvest.