



SUCCESS STORY

At both ends of the market, KHDP is boosting passion fruit sales

The Kenya Horticultural Development Program (KHDP) is a USAID-funded project designed to increase incomes through smallholder production and employment in the horticulture industry. KHDP works with public and private-sector agencies to provide technical and marketing assistance to growers throughout Kenya. KHDP's main agribusiness partners include grower associations, input suppliers, processors, exporters, research institutions and trade associations.

One of the products that KHDP focuses on is passion fruit. The nationwide effort is designed to reach 10,000 producers. KHDP is introducing farmers to improved planting material and agronomic techniques such as integrated pest management (IPM), pruning and fertilization to increase production and yields of passion fruit. KHDP is working with the Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI) to train commercial nurseries and grower associations to produce disease-tolerant rootstocks and select the right vines for grafting. KHDP is also working to connect small farmers to new markets.

At the end of 2006, passion fruit yields for KHDP farmers had jumped to 18.7 MTs per hectare, up from 9.7 MTs in 2003. Cost of production, meanwhile, dropped from KSh 12 to KSh 8 per kilogram.

Stephen Choge, a small farmer from the Kutsi Vision Self Help Group in Rift Valley Province, has more than doubled his average yields from 300 kilograms per week in 2005 to 769 kilograms per week in 2006. Increased production, combined with improved quality, has greatly increased his income during harvesting season, which has jumped from KSh 9,000 (\$128) to KSh 30,760 (\$439) per week.

"The money is going to pay for school fees and home improvements," Choge said.

The increase in incomes has been duplicated throughout the 20-member group, which includes 11 women. The group is growing more than 4,000 vines and plans to expand production to 16,000. The group maintains a passion fruit demonstration farm where members of the group learn KHDP growing techniques and then apply them on their own farms. The group pools resources — which lowers cost of production — to buy inputs such as fertilizer, trellises, and seedlings.



Photos: Fintrac Inc.

Passion fruit at a KHDP farm in Eldoret.



Kutsi Vision group members prune passion fruit at the group's demonstration farm in Rift Valley.

“Passion fruit has brought us together to meet market demand. We have mobilized to create a better future,” said Josphet Maiyo, the group’s secretary.

KHDP is applying the same formula to dozens of other passion fruit groups throughout Kenya.

One of the reasons the small farmers are succeeding is because KHDP is also working on the other end of the market by supporting processors and exporters and linking them to the small farmers.

One of the processors receiving KHDP assistance is Kasarani Fresh, run by Katherine Nduta. Nduta started selling fresh juice in 2000.

“I sold to neighbors and friends and we grew on word of mouth,” Nduta said.

Kasarani grew indeed, from 5 liters of fresh juice per day to 75 liters. Kasarani now employs 6 full-time workers and as many as 25 part-time workers. Kasarani’s quality caught the attention of Del Monte, which is willing to buy as much as 30 tons per month. In order to meet the demand, KHDP is working with Kasarani to increase capacity and production and connect 1,000 farmers to Kasarani. Currently, KHDP farmers contribute about 38 percent of Kasarani’s passion fruit supply. Nduta said she would like to see that percentage increase because of better quality and volume.

“KHDP passion fruit is sweeter and other farmers tend to harvest too early, but KHDP farmers pick the fruit at the right time,” Nduta said. “If they are able to produce more, then we can have more growth.”

KHDP is helping Kasarani buy more equipment such as pulpers, processing tables and juice drums. The program is also helping Kasarani find new markets to promote stability and new products to require more passion fruit from more KHDP farmers. The program’s goal is to have KHDP farmers supplying 10 tons of passion fruit per week by mid-2007.

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 52 private and public-sector alliance partners.



Kasarani Fresh owner Katherine Nduta at the company’s headquarters in Nairobi.



Passion fruits are cut before pulping.



Passion fruit pulp is scooped out of the fruit and processed in a pulper at Kasarani Fresh.



Passion fruit juice comes out of the pulper.