



## SUCCESS STORY

# Two Million Tea Trees

Five hundred smallholder families in the foothills of Mount Kenya are the latest beneficiaries of an agribusiness alliance between Earthoil Kenya, a global supplier of plant extracts, agribusiness consultants Fintrac Inc., and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Growers around the small town of Naro Moro are learning how to supplement their food crops with organic tea-tree production for the international market. Earthoil introduced tea tree (*melaleuca alternifolia*) to the farmers in 2007 through the Kenya Organic Oil Farmers Association (KOOFA). Since then, they planted 1.4 million trees and are well on the way to reaching their target of two million. Many families in Naro Moro survive on less than two dollars a day. Intercropping tea tree with traditional crops such as maize, beans, and vegetables will provide extra cash for food security, school fees, medicine, and fuel oil.

Earthoil, a subsidiary of Treatt PLC, is a commercial processing and export company based in Kenya that supplies the global market with oil extracts from moringa, macadamia, passion fruit and papaya seeds produced by thousands of small-scale farmers in East Africa. A key customer for Kenyan tea-tree oil will be Body Shop International, who contracted the KOOFA farmers as long-term community trade suppliers. Market security is essential for these low income families. The project is expected to generate more than 10 metric tons of tea tree oil from two million trees by the end of 2008.

Earthoil selected the Mount Kenya region as its production site for environmental reasons since other *Melaleuca* species already grow wild in the area. De-forestation for fuel wood is also a problem that tea-tree planting will help mitigate. It requires few inputs, mainly labor and natural composted fertilizers, and has few problems with pests and disease. Under local conditions trees have a lifespan of up to 25 years, can be harvested less than twelve months after planting and provide a new crop every eight to ten months. The target is for each farmer to earn an average of \$1,300 per year from tea-tree production.

Technical assistance to the farmers to produce tea-tree and other crops is co-funded by USAID and provided by Fintrac, who manages USAID's Kenya Horticulture Development Program (KHDP). The program provides support to more than 80,000 Kenyan smallholders producing fruits, vegetables, flowers, nuts and other horticultural crops and products. By introducing new cash crops that supplement food crop production and help conserve the local environment, the Fintrac/Earthoil partnership is transforming the livelihoods of thousands of rural families in Kenya.



**The project is expected to generate more than 10 metric tons of tea tree oil from two million trees by the end of 2008.**