

## HDC to Train 500 Farmers in Pilot Study

In response to the growing challenge to meet increasing export market requirements, the Horticultural Development Centre (HDC) has undertaken a collaborative pilot initiative aimed at achieving full certification of at least 500 farmers, identified by a selected number of the major fresh produce exporters.

"We believe that by working with a local consultancy, HDC will take the farmers through sensitisation, training, record-keeping, internal self-inspection, auditing and full certification, as required by Eurep-gap," said project director Steve New.

HDC's major concern is to establish what full compliance means to the smallholder in terms of costs, both direct and indirect, as well as the specific problematic control points and compliance criteria.

Consequently, HDC will collect "baseline" data on the issues. The direct costs include putting up chemical stores and the purchase of protective clothing. Management has been identified as the main indirect cost.

In addition, HDC will establish the specific Eurep-gap control points such as the need for soil sampling per field, which are difficult for smallholders to comply

with. For the first phase of this initiative, which began in May, HDC has carried out site visits, soil sampling, needs assessment and training of 200 target growers located in Machakos, Kisierian, Isinya, Nyahururu, Rumuruti, Tetu and Subukia.

Through the pilot project, HDC also seeks to estimate the cost of implementation per small-scale farmer, which can then be used in calculating what the cost to the nation will be. The necessary monitoring and internal audit systems for food safety and traceability are currently being established.

HDC hopes that these case studies and examples taken from real attempts to certify smallholders can be used eventually to persuade the Eurep-gap committee to create a more smallholder-friendly version, without compromising the safety of EU consumers.

According to Dr New, concerted and co-ordinated efforts by all the stakeholders is called for. "At policy level, HDC seeks to work with the government and various stakeholders in a public-private sector partnership to sensitise the Eurep-gap Committee and the EU supermarkets on the efforts being undertaken in Kenya to ensure full Eurep-gap compliance by the smallholders," he said.

HDC is a USAid-funded project



Sorting out French beans. HDC's major concern is to establish what full compliance means to the smallholder in terms of costs

that aims to work with horticultural exporters, agribusiness partners, the Ministry of Agriculture and other government agencies to help small-scale horticultural farmers meet export requirements.

HDC is also actively involved in identifying and promoting new products in vanilla and spices, chillies, yellow passion fruit process-

ing, tree crops such as mango and cashew nut, smallholder flowers as well as local market vegetables, including tomatoes and cabbages.

It is the second effort by USAid to get directly involved with the horticultural industry, the first being the Kenya Export Development Support (KEDS) initiative which, a decade ago, brought on

board small-scale farmers to an industry formerly dominated by giant firms. The sector's product development efforts have led to diversification and earnings have since more than doubled.

The largest beneficiary of the KEDS project was the Fresh Produce Exporters Association of Kenya.