

UPDATE ON KENYAN HORTICULTURE

Brought to you by the Kenya Horticultural Development Program (KHDP) — a USAID-funded project to increase incomes and employment through smallholder production 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 trade associations, exporters, processors and input suppliers

Highlights

- **Horticulture thrives at the Coast**
- **US Ambassador visits KHDP sites**
- **Kenya at EurepGAP conference**
- **Vanilla trials blooming**

In the March 2004 issue of *Update* we mentioned that horticulture was not a major subsector in coastal districts but that the potential was large. Since then, things have changed significantly and the massive potential of the coast for certain crops is starting to be realized. From Kwale to Mpeketoni, growers, many of them receiving KHDP assistance, are now pruning and spraying to commercialize their cashew trees; selling African Bird's Eye chilli (ABE chilli) for export; and eating their first crops of orange-fleshed sweet potato and leafy vegetables. This month, in response to popular demand from coast growers, KHDP will also start a series of on-farm tomato trials and demonstrations. In selected areas vanilla is also doing well and we are pleased to report below that the first flowers are being produced by KARI in their greenhouse at Thika. This is a small trial under controlled conditions, but it is encouraging to get such positive results. Field trials have shown that coastal districts and the Lake Victoria region are probably the only areas where vanilla can be commercialized.

The rapid growth of sweet potato and butternut squash production as food crops is also encouraging since it is a direct result of growers adopting improved horticultural techniques for bed-making, transplanting and mulching.

The KHDP is always trying to make *Update* as interesting and informative as possible. Please contact Update Editor Anne Wangalachi for comments and suggestions at anne@fintrac.com.

— Steve New, KHDP Director

First flower



One of the first vanilla flowers from greenhouse trials at KARI, Thika.

National Task Force on Horticulture

In September, the Task Force focused on various activities all aimed at coordinating the industry. One of the key issues requiring action is reducing export product interceptions, to ensure that the country remains competitive in relation to SPS regulations and trade expectations. Stakeholders, too, are working on a strategy to market Kenya's horticulture as a national brand through public and private sector cooperation. The KEPHIS Analytical Chemistry Laboratory confirmed an independent survey, which was carried out by a British University for the Lake Naivasha Growers Group, that concluded that pesticide residues in the Lake Naivasha do not exceed internationally accepted levels. For the time being, this should allay the concerns of growers, buyers, consumers and environmental lobbyists.

For more details on the work of the Task Force, contact the MD, KEPHIS through: kephis@nbnnet.co.ke

Local Market Fruit and Vegetables

Many tomato, watermelon, butternut squash and cabbage growers in Nyanza have moved to commercial production after successful demonstrations by KHDP and its partners' agronomists. Homa Bay farmer Joshua Bonga made more than KSh 150,000 from cabbage, with buyers coming from as far as Kisii. In the neighboring Western region, growers of tomatoes, kale, onion and African indigenous vegetables (AIVs) enjoyed great prices because of supply shortages caused by heavy rain and hailstorms. At the Coast, the orange-fleshed sweet potato (OFSP) harvest has coincided with the

month of Ramadan, certainly good news for local consumers as OFSP is a popular delicacy in this season. Now that the planting of butternut squash and sweet potato is on the rise for the local market, various exporters and processors have started to carry out export trials for both fresh and frozen products.

Chilli Products

With increased appreciation for the commercial potential of ABE chilli, more areas are coming under production. A total of 5.3 MTs of dried ABE chilli, with a farm-gate value of KSh 530,000, were delivered this month to Mace Foods by growers in Western, Nyanza, Rift Valley and Coast areas. More ABE chilli is in the field, soon to be harvested. Mace Foods Director, Margaret Komen was so impressed by the excellent quality of the ABE chilli when she met with growers in Malindi and Kwale districts that she appointed a full-time manager for the Coast region. As well as the superb quality of the coastal chilli, buyers like the idea of the spice being dried slowly in the shade, on hand-woven mats under the swaying palm trees. Fresh produce buyers, always quick to grab an opportunity, have now started to buy the fresh chilli for local and export sales.

Vanilla and Spices

Vanilla trials in the western and coastal areas continue to do particularly well, with KHDP partners Trees and Bees and the Vanilla Development Foundation providing technical assistance. The demand for vines is strong, with some groups at the coast having as many as 500 vines. On September 26, the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) and KHDP held a very successful field day with the Vitendo farmers' association in Malindi. It was attended by more than 200 farmers, representing 26 production groups. They were trained by KHDP Director Steve New in various vanilla production techniques and received advice directly from the Vitendo growers posted at various field demonstrations of chilli, passion fruit, sweet potato and leafy vegetables. In Thika, at the Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI), vanilla is thriving in greenhouse trials. Success came in September with the first successful flowering and pollination, less than three years after planting.

Passion Fruit

KHDP-assisted growers have planted more than 200,000 improved passion fruit vines since the start of the program. In September, growers in Labkeiyet and Kutsi Vision groups, in the Rift Valley, delivered 24 MTs to Kasarani Fresh, earning KSh 720,000 and Migori farmers sold 5.3 MTs. Countrywide, technical assistance continues to be provided by KHDP and its partners to improve quality and raise yields as more and more orchards are established. Growers are responding well to meet the demand of local processors, brokers, exporters and buyers from Uganda. With superb processing qualities and disease resistance, yellow passion fruit has generated significant interest, especially at the Coast, where it

Red hot



Mace Foods Director Margaret Komen provides Msabaha Neem growers in Malindi with tips for drying ABE chillis.



Drying on natural surfaces such as palm-frond mats is recommended.

grows well under hot tropical conditions. KHDP is currently establishing commercial trials with a local processor in the region.

Tree Crops

The highlight of the month was the visit by the US Ambassador, Mr Michael Rannerberger, to the Nuts of Africa cashew factory at Msambweni, in Coast Province. Thanks to a joint cashew marketing initiative, cottage processors, who are predominantly women, are earning 1.4 times more on average from the final product. The USAID-funded joint venture with KHDP, the Coastal Development Authority (CDA), and Farm Concern International is building the processors' commercial capacity for producing high quality nuts. In September alone, the group sold 180 kg of first class nuts at KSh 400 per kg and 52 kg of splits at KSh 325 per kg.

Smallholder Flowers

As part of its smallholder floriculture initiative, KHDP is developing draft guidelines on field cut flower production for smallholders in conjunction with commercial growers and exporters. The guidelines

include advice on low-cost technologies, production systems and postharvest management for 21 varieties including agapanthus, alstromeria, ammi, eryngium, mobyduck, molucella, ornis, and zinnia.

EurepGAP/SPS

The recent EurepGAP Global Conference in Prague brought together nearly 300 delegates, representing 41 diverse nationalities to review the revised EurepGAP standard and share insights in shaping its future. Kenya was represented by FPEAK and Africert. This was part of the effort of EurepGAP's Technical and Standards Committee to make the standard as global and harmonized as possible in its application. For more information and to access the draft documents visit www.eurepgap.org.

On September 28, Bayer launched their "Green World" concept in Meru. "Green World" seeks to promote safe, effective use of pesticides and environmental awareness among growers through the good practices of trained and certified stockists. More than 900 growers attended and listened to technical presentations from various distinguished speakers, including the KHDP Director Steve New.

The proposed USDA/APHIS phytosanitary evaluation of Kenyan farms and packhouses, scheduled for November, has been postponed to early 2007.

Industry News and Views

MOA

KARI-Mtwapa played host to a colorful and successful agricultural field day, organized by the MOA. The theme was "Agribusiness," and it was presided over by the minister, Hon. Kipruto Arap Kirwa. The field day brought together thousands of growers, MOA officers, and representatives from universities and the private sector. Technical agencies including KHDP set up booths to demonstrate crop management and value adding techniques for fruit and nut trees, moringa, vanilla, OFSP and ABE chilli. At the same function, the minister launched the Cashew Credit Scheme, a joint initiative of Bayer EA, K-Rep Bank and USAID-KHDP with support from all members of the Cashew National Technical Committee. The minister also distributed planting material to growers as part of the government's relief program.

FPEAK

As part of the final preparations toward benchmarking KenyaGAP to EurepGAP, FPEAK is carrying out members' farm appraisals to assist in their compliance efforts. FPEAK's *Horticultural Insight* has evolved into an authoritative source of information on the industry. To make it even more useful, there are plans to devote a section to donor projects and financial services available to growers. As part of FPEAK's 30th anniversary activities, *Insight* will carry a special

Season's special



Fatuma Bakari of the Mazao Bora Group in Kwale, harvests orange-fleshed sweet potatoes – a sought-after delicacy during Ramadan.

supplement and invites stakeholders to send in their contributions.

We warmly congratulate new FPEAK CEO Dr. Stephen Mbithi and wish him well at his new post. Previously, Dr. Mbithi headed the Fish Processors Association of Kenya.

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