

Sunday Times 19.3.2006



PHOTO: JAMES WAINAINA

**HERE
YOU
ARE**

Ministry of Agriculture Permanent Secretary Dr Romano Kiome (left) presents a passion fruit training manual to Central Province Director of Agriculture, J K Melli at Thika's KARI centre. The PS launched the manual prepared by scientists from the centre. He also opened a passion fruit research and production facility.

Kenya Times 18.3.2006

Kenya rakes in Sh39b from fruits, vegetables

THE COUNTRY produced nearly 6 million tones of fruits and vegetables valued at Sh 39 billion in 2004, agriculture Permanent Secretary, Dr Romano Kiome disclosed.

Speaking during the launch of a passion fruit research and seedling production facility and farmers training programme at Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI) in Thika, Dr Kiome said the year also saw 243,569 metric tons of the same exported, earning the country Sh39 billion in foreign exchange. He said the sub-sector employed over 2 million people of which small-holder farmers constituted 80 per cent.

The PS attributed the steady growth of the sub-sector to the crop's high value and returns, catalysed by a dynamic private sector.

The Kiome said despite the impressive performance of the horticulture sub-sector, it still faced

JAMES WAINAINA

many challenges.

He singled out passion fruit production, which he said, had recorded a decline in yields within the major production areas in the country, some which recorded yields as low as 8 tons per hectare.

This compares poorly with production of the fruit in other countries like South Africa, which realises yields of up to 19 tons per hectare. Dr Kiome said the low production was largely attributed to several factors, which include; inappropriate crop management practices, high costs of inputs, lack of the right implements, prevalence of pests and diseases and post harvest losses, which ranged from 30 to 50 per cent.

He said the low production was against an existing demand in both domestic and export markets, which

requires the current production levels to be raised by at least six per cent.

In particular, the ministry will endeavour to provide farmers with healthy and high yielding varieties for fresh and processing markets and dissemination of crop management packages that were affordable and environmentally safe.

He thanked development partners, USAID, the World Bank, IFAD, Farm Africa, among others, for their financial support towards the research endeavours.

The director of KARI-Thika, Dr Charles Waturu said the institution had been mandated to develop and disseminate appropriate technologies in collaboration with the stake holders for the purpose of increasing horticulture production in Kenya. He said currently, the area under passion fruit in Kenya is about 5,450 hectares with a turnover of 14,586 metric tones.