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KENYA

SUCCESS STORY

EurepGAP an opportunity, not threat for Kenyan small farmers



Photos: Fintrac Inc.

Beth Muchiri, of the Nyakima group in Central Province Kenya, now has a steady income from French beans. Before USAID assistance in EurepGAP certification, Muchiri said she couldn't break even.

At the start of the USAID-funded KHDP program in late 2003, many in the horticulture industry as well as the Kenyan press were issuing warnings of tens of thousands of small farmers losing access to the European market because of their inability to achieve EurepGAP certification and meet new European Union traceability regulations. Some large exporters were talking of shifting their outgrower production to centrally managed farms in order to meet stringent traceability, recordkeeping, and infrastructural requirements. This domestic pessimism was also picked up by the European trade sector which itself became concerned whether Kenyan suppliers would be able to maintain production levels.

In response to the challenge, KHDP developed unique partnership alliances with many of the larger Kenyan exporters that sourced the majority of their product from smallholders. Through shared resources and agronomist staff, thousands of small farmers were able to quickly begin implementing EurepGAP standards and start the process toward full certification. Through shared experiences, innovative lower-cost alternatives for smallholders were designed and implemented.

KHDP has been actively involved in nationwide EurepGAP initiatives through its participation in the National Task Force for Horticulture, chaired by the Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS) and comprising public sector agencies, the Fresh Produce Exporters Association of Kenya (FPEAK), the Kenya Flower Council (KFC), and major export companies. KHDP has supported training of trainers and internal auditors for EurepGAP, promoted Kenya's EurepGAP progress to the European produce trade, and partnered with local certification auditors to reduce costs.

As a direct result of KHDP interventions, in association with its Kenyan partners, the reality has proven much different than once feared. More than 1,500 small farmers in 45 groups have already been EurepGAP certified and thousands more are in the pipeline for certification. EU importers now acknowledge that Kenya is at the forefront of EurepGAP certification for small farmers and as a result are increasing imports from Kenya.

The 28 men and 6 women comprising the Nyakima Self Help Group, in Mwera, Central Province, became EurepGAP certified in August 2005 and signed a production contract with Woni Veg-Fru, a KHDP alliance partner, which assigned one of its agronomists, Sylvester Safari, to work with the group. The group's production of French



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Manases Muthike, of the EurepGAP-certified Nyakima Self Help Group, suits up for safe chemical spraying.



Workers use a simple hand washer for hygiene.



A chemical storage facility is padlocked and clearly marked "danger."

beans has more than tripled to 3.4 tons per week. "EurepGAP certification ensures farmers' competitiveness in the market. If you don't do this, there's no market for your produce," Safari said. "Organizing these farmers into small groups helps meet the critical mass required by the exporter, which could not be met by individual smallholders."

The Karikoini Green Growers, a group of 9 women and 24 men, also in Mwera, is one of the latest groups receiving KHDP assistance to become EurepGAP certified. KHDP agronomists started training the group in 2004 to meet EurepGAP's food safety requirements, environmentally friendly production practices and farm worker standards. With time, employment in the group increased from 15 to 264, produce quality improved, and in 2005, the group signed a production contract to grow French beans with Kenya Horticultural Exporters (KHE), a major exporter to the European market and a KHDP private sector alliance partner. The group's income skyrocketed from \$7,143 in 2004 to \$177,143 in 2006.

The Kenyan horticultural sector aims to stay at the forefront of EurepGAP certification for its small farmers. At the request of the EU-based Eurep Committee, FPEAK hopes to be one of the first developing country industry associations to have a national protocol benchmarked with EurepGAP. The first draft of KenyaGAP has been completed with inputs from KHDP and has been customized for smallholder compliance. KHDP and its partners are continuing to develop low-cost methods to make EurepGAP certification even more affordable for small farmers, and are working closely with European produce importers and the Eurep Committee in ensuring that Kenyan smallholders remain an important part of the supply chain.

"Small-scale farmers are here to stay and can play in the big leagues as equal partners with the same standards as the big boys," said Apollo Owuor, head agronomist at KHE. And incorporating the good agricultural practices that these standards promote has not only kept small players in the export market, it has increased opportunities for new producers and markets because of resultant increases in yields, better environmental stewardship, improved product quality, and farm safety.