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Kenya Horticulture Development Program (KHDP)

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PRESS RELEASE: MARKET INACCESSIBILITY FRUSTRATES FARMERS, 24th JANUARY 2008

Frustrated passion fruit farmers are now desperate to reach the Nairobi market

Passion fruit farmers in Eldoret region are now losing KShs. 4 million per week following the unrest that has hit the region for the past three weeks leading to inaccessibility of the farms by buyers from Nairobi.

The farmers are desperately seeking for buyers for their produce. "I am now ready to deliver my produce to Eldoret town for collection by buyers from Nairobi" says Cheboi a farmer in the Iten region who produces 2.5 tonnes of passion fruit per week. For the past three weeks passion farmers in the region have been selling their produce to Ugandan buyers who are able to access the region.

Meanwhile, Passion fruit buyers and processors from Nairobi have ventured into the Central region to buy the fruits. This is however not able to meet their capacity requirements. Fips Ltd a fruit processor in Nairobi is one such company. "Normally, Fips gets 10 tons of passion fruit per week from Eldoret region, now we are getting none and are only able to get 9 tons from Central region which is way below our target for the season" says Wilson a buyer from Fips Ltd in Nairobi. Fips Ltd was hoping to double their purchases this season and is predicting a sharp increase in the price of passion fruit and passion fruit products in the next two months.

Currently, farmers are selling the fruits at KShs. 20 per kilo at the farm gate compared to the average price of KShs. 30 earned in January last year. Passion prices tend to hit the lowest in January but pick up in March because of the demand from the Export market. During peak season the prices can rise up to

KShs. 70 per kilo at the farm gate. Domestic buyers and processors therefore rely on the January - March season to be able to meet their capacity targets.

USAID - Kenya Horticultural Development Program has also established that apart from market inaccessibility some farmers are also unable to access pest control products from Agro vets that is leading to further losses in the farms. The Agronomists and other agricultural extension officers are also unable to reach the farms and "for now we are offering technical assistance to the farmers using the phone as a temporal measure in hope that the situation improves soon" says Geoffrey Nyamota KHDP Agronomist in the region.

Eldoret region has for the past 3 years become a major source of purple passion fruit which is processed for juice, pulp and sold as a fresh export crop.

KHDP is a USAID funded initiative being implemented in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture and partners in the private and public sector whose mission is to increase and sustain smallholder sales and employment from production of horticultural crops and products.

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For more information or to arrange an interview with affected farmers and buyers please contact Grace Nzou on 0721 761 764 or gncou@fintrac.com

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