



Passion Fruit Farming Greatly Improves Gatanga Horticultural Farmers' Group's Livelihoods

This group comprises 20 women and 40 men. They applied to HDC for technical assistance and training in passion fruit agronomy, EUREPGAP implementation and certification, market information and linkages in January 2004. Lydia Njuguna, Thika-based HDC agronomist, visited the group and agreed a work plan with them covering a range of technical activities, including passion fruit agronomy, integrated pest management (IPM) techniques, safe use of pesticides, record keeping and post harvest handling of the fruits. As the members of the group were keen to increase their productivity, they enthusiastically adopted the demonstrated improved production technologies that included grafted seedlings, drip irrigation system and IPM techniques (yellow sticky traps, trap crops, bio-pesticides, border crops, cover crops and field hygiene).



Lydia Njuguna, HDC Thika agronomist providing passion fruit postharvest training to Gatanga farmers

During the December 2004 – May 2005 season, the farmers increased their acreage under grafted seedlings from 11 – 17 hectares, with 30 of the farmers making record sales, representing a hundred-fold increase over previous opportunistic sales. Through HDC-assisted market linkages, the farmers have made KSh 412, 500 by selling 5.5 tonnes of their Grade 1 fruit to Myner Exporters, a leading Kenyan firm. At the same time, the group sold 2.5 tonnes of their Grade 2 fruit to local market fruit processor Catherine Nyagah of FIPS, one of their main fruit buyers, making KSh 75, 000.

Achieving EUREPGAP compliance is a major goal of the group and as such they have been working with both HDC and Myner Exporters, with members receiving training and field visits. Additionally, all the groups' members have adopted record-keeping for traceability, while 50% have constructed chemical stores, bought protective clothing and regularly calibrate knapsack sprayers. Additionally, with better understanding of safe use of chemicals, IPM and good agricultural practices (GAP), there has been a 30% reduction in pesticide use.



Farmers from Gatanga Horticulture Group installing their passion fruit drip irrigation kit.

Through training in postharvest handling of fruits, there has been a marked improvement in the quality of the fresh fruit, with more farmers using plastic crates instead of gunny bags and jointly constructing a group grading shed with required facilities for hygiene and food safety.

According to Elijah Njoroge, the group's secretary and market liaison, "Thanks to HDC's assistance we have increased our production tremendously and have been able to sell all our fruit, making more than twice what we made before. This has not only enabled us to send our children to school, but also improve our production practices to become more competitive." As a result of this group's success, farmers from neighboring areas, too, have formed groups and have been linked to Myner Exporters and FIPS, through HDC-assistance.