



# UPDATE ON KENYAN HORTICULTURE

## “MAPATO ZAIDI KWA KUPITIA KILIMO BORA”

Brought to you by the Kenya Horticultural Development Program (KHDP) — a USAID-funded project aimed at increasing incomes through smallholder production and employment 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 grower associations, input suppliers, processors, exporters, research institutions and trade associations.

- **Industry recovers quickly from post-election chaos**
- **Industry team travels to US to meet USDA/APHIS inspectors**
- **MOA issues 2006 horticulture figures**
- **Passion fruit sales picking up**
- **Sales booming for export bouquets and smallholder flowers**
- **Cashew growers have solid season; production and prices up from last year**
- **Coast Province growers pollinate vanilla for the first time**

Fears that the export industry would suffer major damage from the post-election transport and labour crises proved to be unfounded. Flower sales for Valentine’s Day were actually higher than in 2007. To the relief of Europe’s supermarkets, which depend heavily on Kenyan flowers and fresh vegetables, all product deliveries were back to normal by the end of February. Local market growers continue to suffer from high input costs, caused by delays in clearance and trucking from Mombasa port, but market demand is gradually coming back to normal in most areas. There was also good news from the coast, where promising results are being achieved by smallholders producing cashew, moringa and vanilla. They are not yet in the mainstream of horticultural production, but all the signs are that coastal Kenya will become a major supplier of tree crops, chilli, vanilla and sweet potatoes in the future. We even hear that some flower exporters are looking to the coast to grow tropical bouquet fillers.

### NATIONAL TASKFORCE ON HORTICULTURE

In its role as public/private coordinator, the National Taskforce on Horticulture has been following the horticulture sector’s post-election operations very closely. Despite labour and road transport disruptions, the Taskforce confirmed to the Government that the industry has not suffered major losses during the post-election chaos. The Taskforce also pointed out that

### KHDP Update on Kenyan Horticulture

## Worth the Wait

### KHDP farmers’ vanilla flowers finally bloom



Photos by Fintrac Inc.



The wait is over for KHDP vanilla farmers and now pollination is set to begin. Farmers in Malindi planted vanilla in 2005 and the vines started flowering in February. KHDP’s vanilla expert, Umrans Kaggwa, of Uganda, immediately went to the Coast Province to demonstrate pollination. The first beans will be harvested later this year.

some media reports exaggerated the affects of some issues and were taken out of context in the international press. This negative publicity undoubtedly created anxiety among buyers and some were reportedly looking for alternative suppliers in Ethiopia, Malawi, Egypt, and Zambia. The Taskforce will work with Government and industry to allay their fears and keep them buying from Kenyan producers.

Another major concern was the amount of import cargo still tied up at Mombasa port at the end of February. This

has caused fertiliser and other input prices to rise by more than 50 percent in some areas. Unavailability of some agrochemicals has resulted in more interceptions at EU entry ports. Airfreight prices have stabilized at \$1.8-1.9/kg after the high rates in January.

Analysis of recent EU Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) visits to Kenya (see January Monthly Update) highlighted that exporters should operate self-control systems for pesticide residues, and co-operate intensively with the competent authorities. Official controls are in place for the marketing of plant protection products. These are supported by clear legal provisions and procedures but since the implementation is restricted because of limited staffs, the private sector must play a big part. It was also noted that Kenya has revised the Agricultural Produce (Export) Act CAP 319, which will address issues of pesticide residues. The Food, Drugs and Chemical Substances Act CAP 254 has components that deal with pesticide residues and was presented during the FVO visit, however, an official policy and export control system related to pesticide residues is urgently needed.

### **KENYA HORTICULTURE COUNCIL – KHC**

Following the success of emergency measures taken in January, exporters had a good Valentine's Day with sales up from 2007. The Council is busy reassuring overseas markets that business is back to normal in Kenya.

Representatives from flower and fresh produce export companies traveled to the US at the invitation of US Department of Agriculture (USDA) to meet officials from the Animal and Plant Health Inspectorate Service (APHIS) and discuss entry inspections. Let's hope this will speed the approval of Kenyan fine beans and other vegetables for entry into the US market. The team went on to Florida to prepare for the Miami Global flower show where Kenyan and other East African flowers were star performers (more on this in the next issue).

### **MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE**

The Ministry of Agriculture finalized the first draft of its horticulture data validation report. The report reviews and improves data on production volumes and marketed value of horticultural crops in the country for 2004-06. Data sources utilized for the first time in this report include: seed industry reports, farmer interviews, export documents, trade association records and KHDP analyses. The final report, including 2007 data will be published by the end of March 2008

### **USAID KHDP NEWS**

#### **Smallholder flowers**

It is peak season for smallholder flowers. In February growers working with KHDP in Central Kenya delivered 104,000 flower and foliage stems to various export companies. The increase follows intensive floriculture commercialization by several companies and technical



Moringa trees thrive in Nanyuki where USAID-KHDP has been promoting the crop. Moringa is eaten as a vegetable, its roots are medicinal, its seeds are used for biofuel and cosmetics and it is an excellent crop to provide shade for other crops when intercropping. USAID-KHDP is promoting moringa as a valuable cash and food security crop in ASAL areas.

assistance by USAID-KHDP, KARI and the MOA (more on this in the next issue)

#### **Local market fruit and vegetables**

Kabiyanga Agricultural Training College in Kericho has earned more than KSh 600,000 during the last five months from greenhouse tomatoes. The college tested the technology last year as a demonstration, following promotions by USAID-KHDP and Seminis EA. The 240-meters-squared-structure houses 1,000 plants. The college supplies its tomatoes mainly to Ukwala supermarkets in Kericho. In Nyanza KHDP is working with the Christian Women Partners (CWP) to create agribusiness opportunities for families affected by HIV/AIDS around the Lake Victoria region communities. Decline in fish catches has caused many fishermen to try horticulture. KHDP and CWP have set up demonstration farms for vegetables which provide both nutritious food and cash from local market sales.

#### **Passion fruit**

Rift Valley passion fruit growers were hit hard in January after the elections, when urban markets closed and exporter buyers could not reach them. When prices dropped to a disastrous Ksh5/kg, Geoffrey Nyamota, KHDP's Eldoret manager for the Rift valley area, contacted Ugandan buyers and persuaded them to return. The farmers organized guides to pick up the buyers in Eldoret town centre and ferry them to their

farms and back. By the end of February prices had returned to a respectable Ksh25/kg.

### Tree crops

The moringa season has started. Eight farmer groups in Taita delivered 2.5 tonnes of seeds to export buyers in February. The groups have planted 8,420 moringa trees. With better pruning and management they can produce three times their current yields. KHDP consultant Jim Vernon is training the farmers on production techniques that will increase yields and incomes. KHDP manager Mbili Mbebe and partner Earthoil are also working to raise moringa production with smallholders in Nyanza, Rift Valley, Laikipia, Kwale and Malindi.

Cashew growers at the coast saw their crop devastated by rain in 2006. The 2007/08 season has been much better with total production back to pre-2006 levels. KHDP-assisted growers have achieved improved yields, supported with field training by KARI, MOA and Bayer. World market prices are also strong.

### ABE chilli

In February, KHDP partner Mace Foods shipped two containers (14 tonnes) of ABE chilli to their customers in Europe. KHDP-assisted growers in Nyanza supplied the company with 9.1 tonnes. The balance came from growers in Western, Rift Valley and Coast areas. At the coast, many new nurseries of ABE chilli were planted this month to replace old crops and growers are expecting to harvest up to 20 tonnes in 2008.

### Sweet potatoes

Smallholders in Kirinyaga planted two hectares of sweet potatoes, equivalent to 60,000 vine splits. The crop will be used primarily for European market trials. KHDP is promoting sweet potatoes because they are transportable by sea and have local and export market potential. Environmental and cost pressures are forcing exporters to look more closely at sea freight options.

We are hoping that growers will produce at least 20 tonnes of sweet potatoes per hectare of exportable products. The first shipment is expected in May 2008.

At the coast, KHDP is promoting sweet potato mainly as a food security crop in Kwale, Malindi and Kilifi. Coastal production areas also have export potential but more research is needed. Water and nematodes are likely to be the main constraints.

### Vanilla and spices

After 3 years of carefully tending their vanilla vines, growers in Malindi were rewarded with their first flowers in February. To obtain vanilla beans, each flower has to be pollinated individually by hand, using a needle or thorn. Fintrac consultant Umran Kaggwa jetted in from Entebbe to show growers how they do it in Uganda. The pollinated flowers will produce mature vanilla beans by November 2008. The beans will be processed locally in Malindi and sold to local hotels and specialty food



KHDP's Timothy Mwangi discusses GLOBALGAP for local market cabbage production with Peter Ruhi at Ruhi's farm in Juja. Food safety and quality standards are becoming important issues for Kenyan consumers.

companies. Vanilla appears to have long-term potential, particularly in higher rainfall areas of the coast, but it will take several more years before quantities reach exportable levels. The current world market price for good quality vanilla is \$23/kg.

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