

Vanilla thrives in coastal region

BY STEVE MBOGO

After failing to grow successfully in smallholder farms in Central Kenya, the vanilla crop has found a new home in the coastal region.

Farmers in Malindi are expecting their first harvest from August and hope to earn between Sh2,100 to Sh3,500 for every kilogramme exported. The crop also does well around Lake Victoria. Vanilla,

which takes about three years to mature, failed in Central Kenya because of unfavourable weather.

The initial 300 farmers involved in the project in Malindi hope to harvest at least 20,000 kilogrammes, with the volume expected to reach 20 tonnes in the next three years.

“We have planted vanilla since 2005 and very soon we will be making money out of it, said Nathaniel Kubuni. He

is one of about 5,000 small-scale farmers from the Coast receiving technical assistance from United States Aid agency and the Kenya Horticultural Development Programme to grow the crop.

The sponsors introduced the crop in the Coast region three years ago to increase the incomes of small farmers who relied on maize and beans for subsistence. They are also growing sweet potatoes for export.