



“Keeping Smallholders in Business”

The HDC is a USAID-funded programme, managed by the agribusiness firm Fintrac Inc. Our mission is to increase and sustain smallholder sales and incomes through crop diversification, improvements in production and postharvest technologies, and market linkages.



HDC figures show that 300 tonnes of *Eryngium* was exported in 2003, most of it from small-scale outgrowers



This month

June was a good month for HDC and our partners because some growers started to harvest the first crops of vegetables and melon from demonstration plots. In most cases, yields and quality are excellent. On the export market front, training of growers on traceability and Eurepgap protocols gathered momentum with many activities taking place. Our colleagues at the Ministry of Agriculture and HCDA are taking a leading role in sensitizing and training many small growers. This type of public-private sector initiative is essential for Kenya since we have more smallholders depending on export horticulture than any other comparable country. In addition to HDC activities funded by USAID, at least three other donors are contributing to these efforts (JICA, DFID, and EU). Interest in HDC target products is extremely high, and we are inundated with enquiries, particularly for vanilla and passion fruit plants. Unfortunately the availability of good quality plants is a limiting factor in the development of these and other horticultural products. *Steve New, Director, HDC*

IPM Training

Knowledge of integrated pest management (IPM), or integrated crop management (ICM) as is now often called, is an essential ingredient in modern horticulture. This month we worked with the International Centre for Insect Physiology and Entomology (ICIPE), to conduct a five-day IPM training course for nine lead farmers drawn from Western, Coastal and Eldoret areas. Dr Abdurabi Seif and Dr Ana Varela of ICIPE, focused on IPM for tomatoes, okra, French beans and brassicas. The training comprised one day of classroom sessions followed by four days of practical field visits in Kirinyaga, Thika and Naivasha. As a follow up to the training, the participants will set up demonstration plots in their home areas to reach a large number of farmers with the IPM message. The participants were: Timothy Mwangi, Irene Ngugi, Fred Ochieng’ (HDC agronomists), Ramadhan Mwamwero, Johnstone Mwangome, Samuel Wainaina, Joseph Okado, Richard Randa, Enoch Odindo, Phillip Matetai, Yator and Henry Chengwony.

Passion Fruit

The huge demand for clean grafted seedlings testifies to the sustained interest that promotion of this crop has generated. The shortage of good quality, grafted plants remains a major constraint to expansion of the industry. To counter this, HDC and KARI are providing technical assistance to commercial nurseries and growers in the propagation of clean grafted seedlings. Demand for passion fruit, both fresh and as processed juice, is increasing in all of Kenya’s export markets. HDC estimates that current demand for fresh passion in Europe is at least 60 tonnes/week and could grow to 100 tonnes over the next three years. This is covered in greater detail in the June issue of HDC’s Horticulture Marketing News.



Passion fruit planting with Gatanga Horticultural Farmers Self-help Group in Thika District



Possibly the best-yielding cashew tree on the coast, courtesy of KARI!

Chilli Products

The birds eye chilli programme has intensified with HDC and Mace agronomists working with new farmer associations every week, in an attempt to generate 20 tonnes per month by the end of the year. Interest in paprika has also increased as supplies run down in Zimbabwe. Ongoing Hygrotech trials in Naivasha suggest that the main southern African varieties can also do well in Kenya, so we hope to start promoting commercial production next month.

Vanilla and Spices

In addition to the success achieved at JKUAT, reported in previous issues, Suresh Patel at Genetic Technologies has now confirmed similar results in the tissue culture of vanilla plants. This is good news for growers, since it will double the availability of planting material available to them later this year. In the meantime, farmers have continued to plant the "mukungugu", whose use as live support has truly caught on!

Smallholder Flowers

Our "baseline survey" continues to produce interesting findings. The smallholder production of summer flowers has extended to Machakos and Solai, areas traditionally considered too dry for flower growing. In both areas Moby Dick and Euphorbia have done extremely well while *Ammi* species are being grown in Machakos. HDC estimates that small-scale outgrowers produced at least 2,000 tonnes comprising 15 different varieties of flowers for export in 2003 – much more than we had previously anticipated. As Martin Mulandi reports, "...this shows that there is a great need for the exporters to foster the smallholders to ensure that they have access to market information and technical assistance for them to achieve strong market presence through regularity, quantity and quality of supply."

Tree Crops

Field work by Real IPM, HDC and KARI has started to provide some useful information on the cashew situation on the coast:

- although there are different views on the value of coppicing and pollarding to increase yield, the best-yielding cashew tree which we could find at the Coast turns out to be one that was coppiced by KARI 3 years ago!
- although sulphur is used as a cheap and safe fungicide for powdery mildew control in all other cashew producing countries, it is not approved for use on cashews in Kenya
- although everyone focuses on disease control, the potential of fertilizer application in increasing yields could be high on the predominantly sandy and nutrient-deficient soils of the coast.

Local Market Vegetables

The first crops harvested from HDC and Regina Seeds trials in Western Kenya show that farmers could soon unlock their potential for producing and marketing tomatoes, cabbages and squash. The varieties "Green Challenger" and "Victoria" (cabbage) and "Eden F1" (tomato) are performing especially well in terms of yield and quality. Butternut squash, a new product for Western Kenya is also doing well, and fetching very



Mulching is a good way to increase the yield of birds eye chilli, when no irrigation is available



Cabbage trials at Mbari ya Mboce Self-help Group in Maragua District

Horticulture Development Centre
MPPS Building
Mombasa Road
P.O. Box 3074-00506
Nyayo Stadium, Nairobi

Phone: 20-556728/556807
Fax: 20-556804
Email: hdc@fintrac.com

Field Offices:
Thika, Kisumu, Eldoret, Mombasa

competitive prices, at a yield of over 30 tonnes/ha. "This 'pumpkin' tastes much better than our traditional variety. We now target to supply exporters in Nairobi and local supermarkets," says Joseph Okado, Chairman, Ngura Rangwena Focal Area Farmers Group, in Homabay.

Watermelon and sweet melon are understandably popular fruits in the tourist areas around Mombasa. Farmers successfully harvested their first crop of sweet melon from HDC-supported demonstrations at the end of June. "Asterix" sweet melon is proving to be a very popular variety with growers and consumers because of its superior shape, colour, aroma and flavour. Yields of water melon also look good so far, but foliar feeding has been necessary to combat fruit yellowing caused by nutrient deficiencies in the sandy soils.

Market information highlights

- This has not been a good year for avocado exporters. Prices for Kenyan Fuerte variety in Europe reached an all-time low towards the end of the season, with some exporters being forced to dump whole container loads. The underlying problem is that supermarkets will not take Fuerte when Hass, their preferred variety, is available from other sources.
- Prices and demand for macadamia nuts, predominantly a smallholder crop in Kenya, were strong in June and a new market report predicts strong market growth.
- Demand for raw cashew nuts from Indian processors was also high. The international trade press reported that Kenya had banned the export of raw nuts to protect the processing industry, but HDC could not confirm this with official sources in Kenya.

Please let us know if you would like to receive HDC's monthly publication, Horticulture Marketing News.

EUREPGAP

The MOA and HCDA have intensified their efforts to sensitize and train smallholders in traceability and MRL issues, and Eurepgap requirements. Other projects funded by the EU, JICA, DFID and IFAD are also active in this area. Consequently, HDC is concentrating on pilot projects to take selected outgrowers through the entire chain from sensitization to full Eurepgap certification. If this is successful, we shall produce real data on problems which smallholders face with specific Eurepgap control points, and the actual costs of certification, both direct and indirect. So far, HDC partners Millenium Management Consultants and East African Growers, have carried out site visits, soil sampling, needs assessment and training of 101 farmers and are currently establishing the necessary monitoring and internal audit systems for food safety and traceability. Target growers are located in Machakos, Kiserian/Isinya, Nyahururu/Rumuruti and Tetu/Subukia. We also continue to exchange information with our public and private sector partners to ensure that the Eurepgap Committee and EU supermarkets in general are well aware of the major efforts being made in Kenya to meet their requirements and ensure the safety of consumers.