

“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.



James Kigathi and Joseph Ondigi of USAID admire cabbages grown by the Mbari ya Mboce self-help group in Muranga



This month

Congratulations go to Africert in July, for obtaining provisional accreditation as a Eurepgap certification company. Exporters and growers now have a local company, approved by their European buyers through the Eurepgap committee, which can carry out audits more cost-effectively than bringing in European or South African-based firms. This is indicative of the many public and private sector efforts which have been directed at the need to meet new standards in Europe for Kenya’s fresh produce exports. The Ministry of Agriculture and HCDA, supported by JICA, ICIPE, EU-PIP and the DFID-funded Business Services Market Development Project have provided tremendous support to the private sector. Six months ago there seemed to be a danger that Kenya would be losing significant market share because of the inability of small-scale farmers to meet the new trade conditions and EU regulations. Now there is a new mood of optimism and encouraging progress has been made towards implementation of improved standards. Although only a small proportion of smallholders have actually gained certification so far, many have been trained and the numbers of certified growers should start to increase rapidly in future if current levels of technical assistance and private sector investment continue. *Steve New, Director, HDC*

Passion Fruit

Provisional data from exporters and HCDA suggests that passion fruit exports increased by 40% in Jan-March 2004, to a total of around 400 tonnes. MOA figures also indicate that growers are planting more passion fruit, with more than 500 ha planted in the main Rift Valley production areas and more than 700 ha in Central Province. HDC is currently providing technical support to 18 demonstration plots in different parts of the country with others in the pipeline. We are primarily interested in obtaining additional data about the yield potential of the crop for processing. To be competitive in the global market for passion fruit concentrate, Kenyan growers need to be able to produce fruit for Ksh10-12 per kilo.

Chilli Products

New transplanting of birds eye chilli has been affected by drought in some areas, but its drought-resistant value as a cash crop for smallholders has become evident in areas where plants had already been established. Progress with other chilli varieties has been slow.



Green Challenger Cabbage – more details available from Regina Seeds

Vanilla and Spices

Global vanilla prices have been too high for many buyers to afford over the past 24 months, as the Madagascan shortfall took its toll. Many major users, especially in the US, have resorted to synthetic vanillin. This depressed demand has resulted in a drop in price of Ugandan vanilla from \$400 to below \$200. This illustrates the role that diversity plays in creating a buffer against changing market conditions. Long-term success for Kenya in the spice market will require a variety of spices to be developed, including chilli, turmeric, cardamom and ginger, as well as vanilla. However, vanilla propagation continues to move forward both in the laboratory, where tissue cultured plants are doing well, and in small-scale field trials.

Smallholder Flowers

The HDC baseline survey of smallholder flower production and markets is nearing completion. We shall be providing some highlights next month.

Tree Crops

HDC is a new member of the Cashewnut Technical Training Committee, a public-private sector committee formed in 2002, chaired by KARI, to coordinate cashew development. Other members include the MOA and representatives from Action Aid, DED, Technoserve, Kenya Nut Company Millenium Management, Bayer and farmer groups. The committee allocates and coordinates activities amongst members to optimise delivery of technical assistance to cashew farmers. HDC is focusing on 3 key areas over the next year: pollarding of senescent trees; improving vigor through better agronomy and crop protection technologies. Initial activities will be centred in Kikambala District and planned activities will include:

- The use of bees for pollination and delivery of *Trichoderma* (a biological control agent) to cashew flowers – honey from the cashew trees would be a sweet bonus for the farmers
- conducting efficacy trials on a range of active substances for powdery mildew control such as sulphur and triazoles, in collaboration with KARI, PCPB and agrochemical manufacturers
- investigating the use of mycorrhizae and humic acid, in promoting the establishment of cashew tree seedling nurseries

Work on constraints which affect mango marketing is continuing, and we hope to start field work in September.

Local Market Vegetables

Demonstration plots managed by Regina Seeds for the promotion of hybrid cabbage and tomato varieties have continued to do well.

As Anna Wamache, Product Development Manager at Regina Seeds puts it, "...There is a real and expressed appreciation for high yielding varieties and knowledge on low cost water management technologies, particularly this



Eurepgap Training with Lydia Njuguna



Timothy Mwangi with well-pollarded cashew tree in Kilifi

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year when the rains have failed. The *Eden F1* tomato variety gives yields of up to 5 kg per plant, while the *Green Challenger* cabbage matures early, ensuring several crops for the farmer annually. Both have exceptional disease tolerance, thus reducing chemical application".

During May-July, 11 field days were held in Gucha, Migori, Naroosura, Molo, Mudete, Kiminini, Kaimosi, Ichina and Moloti, attended by 3418 farmers. *Eden F1* was a key attraction at both the Nakuru ASK Show and the MOA Open day in Nyeri. *Green Challenger* grown by Ngura Rangwena Group, was judged the best cabbage in the Homabay MOA Horticultural Show.

Our detailed review of the domestic market for horticultural produce is almost complete and we hope to hold a stakeholders workshop in September, to discuss possible HDC interventions.

EUREPGAP

Initiatives to ensure compliance with traceability and MRL issues, and Eurepgap requirements continue to be implemented by the various stakeholders. In July, representatives of interested donor-funded projects held a half-day meeting at the HDC, organised by BSDMP, to share experiences and chart a way forward. The participants were from JICA, MOA, HCDA, BSDMP, DFID, UNDP, IFAD, Rockefeller Foundation, the European Commission, the Royal Netherlands Embassy and HDC. Although there has been good impact from the various individual initiatives, consolidation of all the various stakeholders' efforts, through a community-public-private partnership, was proposed. Additionally, there were recommendations to conduct training for those charged with informing the public on these issues to avoid misinformation and subsequent panic. As part of the community-public-private sector partnership, FPEAK is also planning to organize a stakeholders' meeting, to facilitate consolidation of Eurepgap compliance efforts.

AfriCert is very close to becoming Kenya's first local certification body, having undergone its accreditation assessment in July. Already, AfriCert is listed on the Eurepgap website. This is a major milestone for Kenyan Eurepgap efforts as more and more smallholders will have sustainable access to affordable certification. According to Ruth Nyagah, AfriCert's Managing Director, "...this will provide international quality inspection and certification services at affordable rates by local specialists who appreciate the local context."

HDC and ICIPE jointly held five-day training workshops on Eurepgap for 31 representatives from farmer groups and associations drawn from Central and Rift Valley provinces. The trainings which comprised three-day theory sessions followed by two days of practical field visits were conducted in both Thika and Kirinyaga districts. The ICIPE trainers were Sammy Aringo, Andrew Edewa, Regina Kabiru and Anastasia Mbatia. The focus was on general regulations, control points and compliance criteria and good agricultural practices, with farmers acquiring firsthand experience on use of checklists and identification of control points on the farm.