

SUCCESS STORY

Ethiopian horticulture producers enjoy new export

With good agronomic and climatic conditions, Ethiopia has the potential to produce fruit and vegetables throughout the year. To make the most of this potential, The USAID Agribusiness and Trade Expansion Program (USAID-ATEP) introduces growers to new export fruit and vegetable products in high demand at international markets.

According to the latest report from the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MoTI), Ethiopia's export value of fruit and vegetables is on the rise, with average annual growth over the last six years of 24 percent. In 2008, the country earned more than \$18 million from its fruit and vegetable exports, a figure which is on the rise.

For nearly a decade, JJ Kothari Farm in the Upper Awash area has produced onions, tomatoes, green peppers and other crops for the local market on its 100 hectares. Following a new arrangement with marketing company Aurora Fresh, the farm started exporting for the first time to the UK.

"After many years, getting the export market by itself is a dream come true," said Vital Dighe, JJ Kothari Farm's Manager.

Aurora Fresh is an international marketing organization that received help from USAID-ATEP in contracting with local growers to supply Ethiopian produce to its UK customers.

Since late 2008, JJ Kothari has been shipping green beans, sugar snap peas, snow peas and baby corn to the UK three times per week.

"Currently, we are exporting 4.5 tons on a weekly basis to the UK market, and prioritizing on building our market share," Dighe said.

To enable the farm to add value to its produce and meet the demanding requirements of the UK market, USAID-ATEP is providing technical assistance in pre-packing operations. In the near future, the farm is planning to grow chilies and courgette flowers to further diversify exports. Target buyers for these products are Wellpak UK and Special Fruit of Holland, both of which supply major supermarket chains.

Entering the lucrative export market required a number of on-farm investments, including new drying, packing and grading rooms, and a fully restored drip irrigation system that covers more than 100 hectares. The benefits are shared with the community as the farm has, thus far, created new employment for more than 300 farm workers in Upper Awash.

"As our sales have increased from the new exports, we now provide food, accommodation, and health facilities for our employees," said Dighe.

USAID-ATEP is a five-year initiative supporting four major agricultural sectors: Horticulture; Coffee; Hides, Skins and Leather; and Oilseeds and Pulses. Activities in the Horticulture sector focus on the provision of intensive training and technical assistance to expand and diversify the fruit, vegetables and processed foods industries.



Photos by Fintrac Inc.

USAID-ATEP Horticulture Agronomist Eskinder Kebede, left, and JJ Kothari Farm Agronomists Fuad and Bisolo, provide technical assistance at JJ Kothari Farm in Upper Awash.



Farm workers removing the sheath of baby corn prior to delivery to the packhouse

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