

# GROW KENYA MONTHLY

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## SUMMARY

The Kenya Horticulture Competitiveness Project (KHCP), funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), is transforming the lives of smallholder farmers through enhanced productivity, crop diversification, and improved market access. This month's highlights include:

- Youth integration into the horticultural value chain
- Farmers in Bomet County reaping the benefits from potato investment
- Village commercialization increases chili exports
- Exporters vie for passion fruits from farmers.

## LOCAL MARKET VEGETABLES

**Youth take an active role in the horticultural value chain.** USAID-KHCP prioritizes youth participation as an important driver of sustainability and competitiveness, empowering them as entrepreneurs through capacity building activities such as trainings in leadership, commercial production, and marketing. Sukuma Wiki Youth Group, located in Migori County, is a good example of how youth are being integrated into the horticultural value chain. The group, consisting of 25 members aged 25-30 years, is working with USAID-KHCP partner Community Mobilization against Desertification (C-MAD) in close collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture. The two organizations have introduced the group to commercial kale production, hybrid seeds, nursery management, and safe use of pesticides, and linked the group to a range of local markets. As a result, Sukuma Wiki Youth group has established just over 10 hectares under commercial kale production, with individual plot sizes averaging 0.40 hectares. In July, the group sold a total of 158 metric tons (MT) of kale to markets in Rongo, Migori, and Kisumu earning them Ksh 2.4 million (\$29,268), three times what they earned during previous months. The group also sells its produce to local schools, hotels and hospitals, and with the increased income has invested in a posho mill (a mechanized mill that grinds wheat and maize into flour). They also plan to buy land to diversify into other horticultural crops.



*Photo by Fintrac Inc.*

Peter Odhiambo Oburu, a member of Sukuma Wiki Youth Group, harvesting kales for sale to the local market.

## FOOD CROPS

**Potatoes proving a hit in Bomet County.** The public-private partnership facilitated by USAID-KHCP between the Kenya National Federation of Agricultural Producers (KENFAP), the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA), and the Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI) continues to provide solid benefits to farmers as production of potato seedling and table potatoes has increased dramatically in the past three months. KARI has been instrumental in providing farmers with clean planting material, while the MOA is working side-by-side with KENFAP to train farmers in good agricultural practices. For instance, Mwangaza Farmers Group from Bomet County, a 23-member group working with KENFAP, was able to access high quality seedlings, and has since been bulking seed potatoes, ultimately enabling more farmers to access clean planting material. Through a market linkage made by USAID-KHCP partner Farm Concern International Ltd (FCI), the farmers are now supplying potatoes to Deepa Industries, a processor who will use the potatoes to make crisps. This month, 200 farmers including members of Mwangaza Farmers Group supplied Deepa Industries with 700 bags of potatoes weighing 77 MT valued at Ksh 2.8 million (\$34,146).

**“I have always thought that white collar jobs in big offices were the only way to earn a decent living. But this project (USAID-KHCP) has shown me that just like other professions, farming is my business. It is my office, bank, and livelihood.”**

*- Peter Odhiambo Oburu  
 Member, Sukuma Wiki Youth Group, Migori County*

## SMALLHOLDER EXPORT MARKET PRODUCE

**Chili volumes are on the rise.** USAID-KHCP commercial partner Mace Foods Ltd purchased 5.86 MT of chili this month, valued at Ksh 468,735 (\$5,716), from 189 farmers in Rift Valley and Western regions. Annual chili export demand is expected to reach 150 MT, an amount that would provide Ksh 18 million (\$220,000) in sales for smallholder farmers. In response to the demand, the company has established a system for villages to operate commercially, recruiting community farmers as leaders to facilitate the production and collection of African Bird's Eye chili in remote areas of Teso, Migori, Homa Bay, and Busia counties. By adopting the village commercialization model, Mace Foods is able to reach more farmers and reduce operational costs, ultimately passing the benefits on to farmers by increasing prices for their produce by 20 percent.



Photo by Fintrac Inc.

Long Cayenne chili undergoing the dehydration process at Mace Foods' processing plant in Eldoret, Rift Valley region.

## Sustainable partnerships mean higher incomes for French bean farmers.

French beans are a major horticultural export crop in Kenya and a potential income earner for smallholder farmers. However, the sub-sector faces many challenges including seed shortages, uncoordinated plantings, and poor weather. This has led to major imbalances in supply and demand for quality produce and significant fluctuations in farm gate prices. USAID-KHCP is intervening at a national level, providing innovative technical solutions to recover production volumes in order to meet market requirements, minimize the usage of agrochemicals, and ensure full compliance with recognized international standards. Through technical assistance offered by USAID-KHCP partner Good Neighbours Community Programme (GNCP), farmers in Rift Valley and Western regions have adopted French beans as a product to diversify their crop base. The farmers have been trained in good agricultural practices and postharvest handling of French beans to generate export quality produce. In addition, they were linked to a secure buyer - USAID-KHCP commercial partner Canken International Ltd. The combined effort by GNCP and Canken is proving to be a success in terms of improving farmers' productivity, backed by a steady market. As a result, 38 farmers supported by GNCP sold 5,480 kg of French beans valued at Ksh 274,000 (\$3,300) to Canken International for export this month. Through Canken, farmers are accessing new seed varieties, receiving advanced technical trainings in pest and disease control and agrochemical management, with the added bonus of having a ready buyer for their crop. GNCP is providing complimentary basic skills training in good agricultural practices and nursery management. The collaboration has resulted in French beans prices firming up at 50 Ksh/kg (\$0.61/kg) and the expansion of Canken's production base to Bungoma and Trans-Nzoia counties.

## TROPICAL FRUITS

**More exporters seek passion fruit from leading farmers.** This month Equatorial Horti Fresh signed an agreement to supply East African Growers with 6 MT of high quality passion fruits per week from Rift Valley, Nyanza and Western regions. Equatorial Horti Fresh is the region's largest exporter of passion fruit to Uganda. They recently began sourcing the produce from more than 500 contracted smallholder farmers supported by USAID-KHCP partner, Good Neighbours Community Programme (GNCP) at a fixed price of Ksh 80/kg (\$0.97/kg). In July, Wamu Investments Ltd, an exporter of passion fruit and continental vegetables to the UK, also began sourcing passion fruit from farmers in the three regions. The connection is providing farmers with a diversified and year round market at competitive prices. Consequently, more farmers in the regions are embracing passion fruit farming. This month, a total of 40 MT of purple passion fruit sourced from more than 1,000 farmers in Rift Valley and Western regions were sold to exporters and local traders; the sales, valued at Ksh 2.9 million (\$35,366), represent an increase of more than 50 percent from the previous month.

### Kenya Horticulture Competitiveness Project

USAID-KHCP is a five-year project designed to increase smallholder farmer incomes through enhanced productivity, crop diversification, and improved market access.

Visit [www.GrowKenya.org](http://www.GrowKenya.org) for more information on upcoming activities and to read our monthly bulletins and success stories.

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