

KENYA: Farmers benefits from a Government programme NALEP initiatives

Report — [Government of Kenya](#)

A number of Farmers in Eastern Province have benefited from extension services and capacity building offered to them by the Government of Kenya in collaboration with the Government of Sweden through the ministries of Agriculture and Livestock Development under the National Agriculture and Livestock Extension Programme (NALEP).

Through training and linking them to markets, Farmers in the region are practicing tissue culture banana, dairy sisal farming among other agricultural and livestock keeping practices. These practices have changed their livelihoods, improved their financial status, lowered the level of poverty and reduced the overdependence of food aid in the region.

Ntherene tissue culture banana growers group, a Common Interest Group (CIG) is one such example of a group which has started earning Ksh. 200,000 monthly from growing the tissue culture bananas since its introduction in 2005. The produce is sold to the local markets and to buyers from the city centre. An average farmer produces 25-30kilogrammes of bananas per week which they sell at Kshs. 13 per kg earning Kshs. 390 per week.

The group has been supported by a Non-governmental organization Techno serve through the construction of a banana selling shade at the local market and this has helped the farmers to market and store their produce easily. Africa harvest has also helped the group in offering them quality seedlings.

K-rep bank is another stakeholder which has been brought on board to provide credit facilities for drip irrigation and water storage tanks. With the availability of water, this has tremendously improved production and has resulted to many farmers diversifying in other agricultural practices such as passion fruit farming, dairy keeping, fish farming and biogas production.

Mrs. Julia Kathure the group's secretary said that the project has benefited and lifted her to the level she had never thought of being and she vowed not to leave banana farming but instead said that she is extending her farming for more production.

“This project of growing bananas has raised me to a level I never expected to be”, she said, adding that this has created an employment opportunity to her and she earns better than those who are employed in other sectors.

In Ngutani division Mwingi district the Wendo Wa aka Sisal women group are all smiles from the extension service training they received from Nalep. Speaking on behalf of the group, the group's chairperson Lucia Masila said

that before Naleps training initiative sisal fiber was not well utilized and was going to waste because the community lacked skills and knowledge on how to make use of it. She said that due to this there was no employment and the community had been ridden with high poverty levels.

The group received a sisal fiber machine in September 2010 from the ministry of Arid and Semi-arid lands through a proposal written by the ministry of agriculture to help them in sisal production. The group also received 1,260 sisal seedlings in April 2011 from the Sisal Board of Kenya to boost their production.

The chairperson observed that from September 2010 when the group received the machine, they have made 2,000 ropes which were sold at Kithioko, Wenzyei and Mwingi markets at Ksh. 30 each. They have also started to weave sisal baskets (Kiondo) and table mats.

The group appreciated the training and continuous support they received from Nalep organized by the ministries of Agriculture and Livestock Development and requested them to aid in finding another sisal machine to enhance production. They also requested to be trained in value addition skills and knowledge in order to improve on their basket weaving techniques.

“We only sell our Kiondo baskets to the locals because we don’t have the skills to add more value on them”, said the chair person adding that their dreams are to sell their produce to international markets competing with people from other regions.

The programme’s coordinator Mr. Tom Bonyo said that the Swedish government sponsored the programme to the tune of Ksh. 3.3 billion for the last four years, which has been used to offer capacity building and technical skills to farmers. The government spent Ksh. 281 million for capacity building of the staff.

Mr.Bonyo observed that the government of Kenya is negotiating with the Sweden government to support another project in the sector building on experiences build through the National Agriculture and Livestock Extension Programme (NALEP).

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