

Private Sector Service for Horticulture Industry

The recent expansion in the export horticulture sector in Kenya has provided smallholder farmers with exciting opportunities to boost their farm income. However, increasingly demanding requirements for produce to conform to standards in the EU market threaten to exclude many of these farmers who currently provide 75% of the fresh produce. Extension services are unable to assist the smallholder farmers in becoming compliant; this jeopardizes farmers' income and implies loss of employment opportunities in small/medium units. Therefore R8297 is working to establish private service providers for advice, input supply and plant protection through hands-on training to ensure that smallholders can comply with rules and regulations of the trade.



Extension provider trainees are encouraged to discuss issues with farmers in the field



Candidates were selected from the large number of respondents to a newspaper advertisement; and each of the collaborating export companies nominated one member of their field staff to participate. Training started in November 2003; it covers extension communication skills, working

outgrowers' groups for certification. Trainees on attachment to outgrower groups (one trainee per group) have been able to improve group organisation, linking groups with reliable exporters, preparation for EUREPGAP compliance and providing services to smallholder horticultural producers against payment. Three of the trainees found the initiative so attractive and rewarding that they resigned from their previous employment to seek a full-time position in private service provision. The support and enthusiasm of collaborating export companies has been encouraging.



Knapsack spraying is one of the topics covered in the training course

with farmer groups, integrated pest management, safe and effective use of pesticides, hygiene standards for fresh produce, business management, and EUREPGAP (Euro-Retailer Produce Working Group for Good Agricultural Practice) requirements and preparation of

This initiative, the first of its kind in East Africa, has attracted the attention of large sectors of the industry and other development agencies. The Horticulture Development Centre funded by United States Agency for International Development (USAID), for example, has shown a lot of interest. This project and R8341 are now discussing linkage modalities to add value to the initiative.

R8297: Development of private sector service providers for the horticultural industry in Kenya
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