



Peri-urban Greenhouse farming, Changing Kenyans Fortune

From the very small farmer to the medium income earners, greenhouse farming has become a way of making money. It heralds a major shift from open pollinated farming to hybrid high yielding method, becoming a leading activity towards achieving the first Millennium Development Goal of attaining food security and fighting poverty.

As you move around the country especially outskirts of major towns, the uphill shaped polythene structures are norm scenario. The high profit coupled with huge savings made on the number of chemicals used, less labour and also minimum exposure to chemicals toxin when applying are some of the gains that have lured many into the venture.

From graduates to even with the basic education, they have taken into this type of farming with a boom as a source of employment and as a financial security. It has been adopted by schools, Red Cross, NGO's and even some members of parliament have purchased for their constituencies.

It is an activity that is aiding the country in attaining food sufficiency thereby playing part in solving persistent food problems. It is bringing families together; whereby people are farming as family without subdividing their land to tiny portions. This is bringing families closer together as they work and till the ground together.

Many farmers have chosen to growing tomatoes in their greenhouses against other crops due to the ready market as well as the high yields. Open grown tomatoes in general are



susceptible to diseases requiring high application of pesticides but under greenhouse technology which comes with better hygiene most infections are kept at bay.

Various greenhouses are being used. Some have put up small greenhouses-tunnels covering a small area of a 1/4 acre and below and few have put up large greenhouses covering a quarter and above.

Based on structure, there are two main types: simple tunnels which use fabricated wood where the farmer purchases polythene bags and the metallic greenhouses manufactured by suppliers who are available locally and they even set up the structures for the farmer. The wooden structured which is a favorite for many due to its cost last for about two years after which one has to build a new one due to the wear and tear of the wooden poles. It has also to be guarded against termites thus the wood has to be treated.

Villagers Farm - Kitengela

In a peri-urban settlement, off Namanga Kajiado Road, at New Valley Estate is where you find the Village Farm Kitengela. The humble and industrious farm is only 15 months old, but it is a very inspiring venture with encouraging facts and figures.

In our exclusive interview Mr. Ibrahim Mosoba narrated how he started Village Farm. One day in the office a colleague and a friend came with Amiran's Kit leaflets. After going through the leaflets he bought the idea and shared with his wife.

Having being brought up from a farming background they visualized the idea and visited Amiran's office. They bought the Kit at KSh. 149,000 which included greenhouse structure (8m x 15m), drip irrigation system, 1000 Corazon tomatoes seeds, 600 litres tank and one person training. He hired installing technician and five assistants for putting up the structure for two days at KSh13, 000. Within three months after planting the seeds, harvesting commenced.

During their first harvest they got five medium crates which he sold at Kenyatta Market for KSh.2, 000. For six consecutive months' middlemen and traders bought from the farm every Sunday at average price of KSh.1, 500 per crate. By the end of harvesting period Ibrahim had made at least KSh.120, 000 less expenses such as paying the farm manager Mr. Oliech who works at the farm on full time basis.

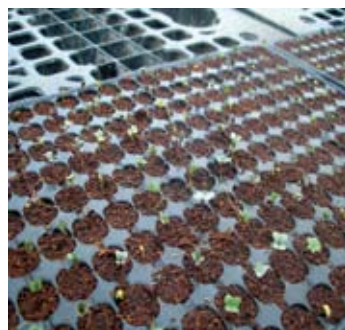
Having tasted the honey and experience, he decided to go for another greenhouse at KSh. 94,000. He also bought bigger tanks to store more water.

According to Ibrahim greenhouse farming is a good investment since the returns are rewarding and it is possible in a small piece of land. "In a quarter acre like this one of mine you can comfortably have four" Mosoba says. He has utilized every available space outside the structures where he has planted cabbages, kales, spinaches, saggaa (traditional sukumawiki), amaranths, Sweet melons, pawpaws, guavas and trees along the fence. Other plant on trial includes strawberries, chilies (pilipili hoho) and butternuts.

"Corazon tomatoes do well compared to Anna F1, seedlings mature within 3weeks, they are less prawn to diseases with good sizes and have longer shelf life but they are quite expensive, 1000 seeds go for KSh. 7,500" says Mosoba.

Village farm is mostly supplied with piped water but they sometimes experience shortages. Whenever there is water shortage, they use the water they have reserved in the storage tank.

The biggest challenge the farm experience is the price fluctuations. Importations of tomatoes from neighbouring countries like Tanzania which sells at lower price floods the market.



"Peopleshouldinvestingreenhouse since it is affordable and profitable. For those who cannot afford they should form groups and start by buying one for one of them, like that like that" Mosoba advises. He wishes that the government agricultural officers could be paying visits to the small farmers and at the same time subsidise farm inputs; "farming would be

the best option for Kenya economy".

The future plan for village farm is to go large scale and venture in other horticultural crops. The plans are at advanced stage to start selling seedlings to farmers and growing strawberries though not necessary in the greenhouse but using modern methods. Asked by Hortfresh crew what is behind his achievement, Mr. Ibrahim said" determination and seriousness is the key to success".



Tanzania Targets High in Horticulture Export

Tanzania Horticulture Association (TAHA) has unveiled a strategic plan with an eye to fast track growth of the multimillion-horticulture industry.

"In pursuit of this goal TAHA has developed a five-year strategic plan which is patterned along the lines of Kilimo Kwanza targeting \$1bn earnings by 2015," said TAHA Executive Director, Jacqueline Mkindi.

The association's strategic plan gives a clear roadmap on the areas that need to be developed. They underlined the needs and they are pushing for National Budget allocation through various task forces that review national policy as well as through Agriculture Council of Tanzania, Ministry of Finance, and Prime Minister's Office.

They are lobbying the government to espouse the packages that comprise bonded warehouse system, Horticulture in Export Processing Zone, tax exemptions and land banks for horticulture.

Tanzania is faced by large infrastructure constraints including airports, feeder roads and laboratories, while there are also difficulties with

technical capacity in terms of production, marketing, post harvests and standards compliance. The industry also experiences limited access to finance, lack of public and private awareness on horticulture and natural catastrophe.

The plan seeks government and other partners to agree to establish an agricultural development bank or more funds to be injected into the agricultural support window of Tanzania Investment Bank (TIB). Other plans include putting up a center of excellence for a practical training center (PTC), to strengthen compliance with standards at all levels.

Currently, the horticulture earns the country, second largest economy in the region; nearly \$ 340 million. It is booming to the extent of being dubbed, 'green gold'. Flowers account at least 80 per cent of horticultural exports of Tanzania. The sub-sector is based in Arusha and Kilimanjaro regions with over 20 farms majority of them opened in the last 15 years by foreign firms.