



Core of MbogaTuu success in Chilli Production

Chillies are very hot, sometimes blended with other ingredients to sweeten them, becoming sweet hot. But nothing can tone down their hotness. Thus, permit me to say as hot as chillies. Though chillies do not consume or produce smoke, if you are not used to their

hotness you might shed tears as you struggle for voice thirsting for water to cool the throat. No wonder some say chillies are used in making tear gas.

While it is sold to consumers as food, other produces it for its medicinal value. They

believe the capsaicin chemical which makes it hot kills bacteria thus used to prevent bacterial diseases including cholera and common stomach aches. Others believe it can cure joint pains. It is used to prevent Newcastle disease in poultry and also used to keep ticks

in cattle at bay. This could be the reason why some pharmaceutical companies buy it.

Chillies though not very popular food in many households is part of seasoning you can't miss in Asian dishes. It is grown for its fleshy fruits which are used either green or ripe for





Daniel Wambua (R) and Sammy Muthomi (L) Farm managers Isinya 2 and Isinya 3 respectively

relishes and sauces.

Jim's Fresh well known by their exporting company name MbogaTuu, they have moved a notch higher by doing own seed propagation and growing chillies in mulch. Additionally to chillies Asian vegetables; Karella, Valore, Bobby beans, Dudhee, Papri, Tuwer, Chori and Okra; chillies and Egg plants (Aubergines and Ravaya) are their major crops. Since all these crops are of the same family, to crop rotate for ecological land use they are subcontracted to grow French beans in large quantities and they also grow corn maize as a wind breakers, fruits such as mangoes, yellow and purple passion fruits.

Before Mboga Tuu used to buy seedlings but

now they have invested heavily in propagation system where they are in control of seedlings produced. "We would give propagators annual program and irrespective of whether the land is ready or it is raining he would tell you, you know, we agreed we will be supplying this much and this is what we planned for. So it was very necessary to have a flexible supply where we can observe the timing and the space available" Explains Daniel Wambua the Farm manager Isinya II. With this system one is able to observe the farm and change what to put in propagation and the quantities. It takes the seeds around 4-5 weeks to grow and hardening other two weeks before they are transplanted.

For more than 40 years the company has been supplying quality vegetables to the export market and of late they are doing so using modern horticulture growing methods. In chillies they have varieties such as Bird Eye (Bandai), bullet, long chillies and thin chillies(long Cayenne) they are using polythene mulch in growing some.

They are using two types of polythene mulch, white in open field and silver under shade net; the silver which repels thrips and white which is good in cooling effect.

One thing which is spectacular with the technology is the speed the chillies are maturing. Sammy Muthomi the Farm Manager Isinya IV explains that the cost of the system versus advantages is unrivaled. "We have experienced almost ninety percent weed control and in moisture conservation we are now irrigating after four to five days, that means the mulch maintains water" says Sammy.

The bullet chillies have more market than other chillies. According to Wambua they have to maintain a delicate balancing process in order to meet the volumes in the right ratios. "Sometimes we will get an order of 2 tones of bullet while for Bandai we get 1 ton or even 500 kg daily. To maintain this supply we

have to have the crops at different stages and in the right proportions; while one is in its first flash the other one is in third flash, when one flash is going out you have another coming in, and every month we are planting new crops especially for the bullet chillies and egg plants" Daniel explains. For bullet and Bandai chillies growing in the shade house, under silver mulch Bandai has responded differently; growing taller than usual and they are yet to know how it will be in terms of the yield.

Jim's Fresh has invested heavily on irrigation with the entire 350 plus acres under drip irrigation. Their source of water is mainly bore holes and several dams (reservoirs) that harvest water and store it before being sent to the fields under pressure. Being internationally accredited grower, they adhere to Good Agricultural Practices and the Farms are both Global Gap Certified and Tesco Natures Choice Certified. They are now focusing on ETI and LEAF standards. They are moving away from chemical based farming to biological, sustainable based farming and they are the first to install green waste farm produce biogas system in the region. In future they plan to do value addition to their produce before it is exported.