



A farmer makes gold out of snow peas

Gold is scarce; though it is in every place; few find it and it always the go daring. At the edge of Kereita forest near Kimende, in a place fondly called Carbacid meet Mr. John Njoroge Mwaniki who is growing snow peas with dissimilarity. In this place renown for sukuma wiki growing he has beaten all odds and ventured into snow peas growing and he is smiling all the way to the bank. Since 2006 John started growing snow peas and has not turned back but has increased his acreage to the current 8 hectares. He has won various awards, for instance Global G.A.P as he has conformed to

good growing practices, world food day 2011, 2012 and to the area he is a mentor. Farming to him is a business which should bring in returns; it is not for pleasure and this has made him be dedicated, investing in it fully. With farming he has earned some millions and this gives him passion to do it all the more.

Asked why he decided

to venture into snow peas growing unlike the norm of the area. John said snow peas farming is expensive and require a lot of experience that's why many people in the area shun it. On the other hand, him he saw it is an opportunity since it is an export crop; the demand is high and there is always a ready market. Passion and commitment has brought him this far.

To take advantage of the dry season John constructed a dam which he has since added another two, he would pump water with a Lister diesel pump but has now upgraded to electricity pump. His farm is networked with drip systems and overhead sprinklers. He is also connected to a second source of water that is from Kiriita forest which he collects into a tank and



is channeled to drips. Mr. Njoroge's Mahungu Farm is divided into various blocks which have snow peas in different stages.

This has made it possible for him to supply all year round. A kilo of snow peas is going for kshs.120 and in a year he sells several tonnes. This has enabled him to expand and has bought and leased several shambas in the neighborhood which he has planted snow peas. The process of growing snow peas starts with first preparation of the ground by digging and applying of compost mature. Holes are dug on the ground at least one inch, single seeds are dropped into each hole and covered with top soil. Snow peas require a large amount of water during growth thus watering after every picking is recommended to improve quality.

They are supported using bamboo and strings. String should be tied to the base of the plants and then to the wire above it. As the plants grow another string is tied 10 cm above the previous one to ensure the plant grows through loops. Snow peas major diseases during growth include powdery mildews manifesting as white powder, leaf spots, downy mildews and rust. To control John uses certified seeds



from syngenta, Amiran Kenya and sprays with recommended fungicides which he says syngenta is the main supplier.

He practices crop rotation and use of resistant or tolerant varieties. Major pests to snow peas include thrips, aphids, bollworms, red spider mites' bean fly and nematodes. Control is by using recommended insecticides. Heavy rains are also a challenge especially to germinating snow peas. Harvesting of snow peas starts after 8 weeks after sowing and continues for 1-2 months. Young tender ponds are harvested before they become fibrous. Ponds are twisted from the plants leaving a short stalk. Snow peas are ordinarily picked thrice a week and five times a week during

warm and hot weather to keep the vines bearing. Post harvest handling of snow peas includes placing the produce in plastic containers and covering with moist clean cloths preferably white in colour to maintain low temperatures. Sorting is done to remove diseased, damaged ponds and over grown one before packing.

Dirty ponds should be washed in clean water to remove soil and dried with a soft cloth. High standards of hygiene should be maintained during growth and handling. Apart from Snow peas John has planted cabbages, beans, baby corns, potatoes but he uses this to crop rotate and as wind breakers.

