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ZIMBABWE

SNAPSHOT

New Technologies Transform Smallholder Farming

With new income from commercial agriculture, farm family invests in their future.



Photo by Fintrac Inc.

The new water pump John Dhlakama purchased with income from his USAID-STAMP supported potato crop will transform the way he and his family farm; translating into dramatically increased incomes and food security.

“I never thought I would have enough money to buy a water pump.”

John Dhlakama

Telling Our Story

U.S. Agency for International Development
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John Dhlakama is a smallholder farmer in Chipinge district. For many years he grew maize for household consumption and struggled to cover his family’s living expenses.

But after learning of USAID’s Smallholder Technology and Access to Markets Program (STAMP), Dhlakama decided to try his hand at commercial potato farming.

Through a partnership with Tanganda Ltd., a leading agricultural company in Zimbabwe, USAID-STAMP is working to increase the incomes of table potato growers by providing quality inputs, such as seed and fertilizer; agronomic training; and access to reliable and fair markets.

Dhlakama was one of the first farmers in his area to sign up for the program, committing 0.1 hectares to grow potatoes on contract to Tanganda. By employing the good agricultural practices he learned from USAID-STAMP, such as land preparation and postharvest handling, Dhlakama yielded the equivalent of 31.5 tons per hectare, which is much higher than anticipated in the model budget.

Dhlakama earned \$1,900 from his small plot. After repaying his input loan to Tanganda and paying off other upfront costs (\$463 total), Dhlakama bought a small water pump with his profits.

This water pump has the potential to transform the way Dhlakama farms. He had been using primitive methods to irrigate his land, which were both labor-intensive and inefficient.

“I never thought I would have enough money to buy a water pump,” he said. “Instead of putting more maize in my field, I would rather grow potatoes.”

A steady water source is critical to successful potato production. Dhlakama is now irrigating one hectare, where before he could only hope to irrigate about 0.2 hectares. He plans to continue expanding his irrigated area with investments in new pipes. Increased production plus better-quality harvests will help his family earn even more money.

In addition to the irrigation pump, he and his family have already bought inputs to expand their potato production. Dhlakama also purchased a bicycle for his employee, who lives quite a distance from the farm, as an incentive to keep up his hard work.