

Monthly Update – January 2010

Tanzania Agriculture Productivity Program (TAPP)

FROM THE PROGRAM DIRECTOR

HABARI - We were delighted to launch the New Year with a special visit from US Ambassador to Tanzania Alfonso Lenhardt and USAID/Tanzania Mission Director Robert Cunnane.

TAPP signed a partnership agreement with the Tanzania Horticulture Association (TAHA), signifying a continued collaboration with the horticulture industry. A steering committee was also established to involve stakeholders in program planning. TAPP agronomists, after an intensive 12-day training program, are now busy in the field identifying partners and providing early technical assistance to farmers. Already we have conducted a successful initial intervention with a local grower having trouble with export quality. It's great to start off the year with such progress.

Jim Vernon, Program Director

US AMBASSADOR VISITS TAPP CLIENT

On January 21, Ambassador Lenhardt toured the USAID-supported Smallholder Farmer Hub at Mailer Farm, accompanied by TAPP and TAHA leadership. The ambassador met with members of Mtazamo Vegetable Growers (MVG), a women's smallholder farmer group. He presented the group with a certificate from GLOBALGAP as well as a 'Gold' certificate from TESCO Nature's Choice. The certificates are in recognition of meeting the highest standards in exporting produce to Europe.

"Women are the backbone of the Tanzanian family and of the nation. They can do anything they set their minds to as long as they are given the knowledge and the tools they need to succeed," Ambassador Lenhardt said during the visit.

TAPP continues to support MVG. The program plans to expand the Smallholder Hub model to other regions of the country. More than 25,000 rural farmers will benefit from this expansion.

TAHA PARTNERSHIP IN HIGH GEAR

TAPP signed a partnership agreement with TAHA in January to support the association's efforts to expand and strengthen the horticulture industry. Negotiations continue with TAHA Fresh Handling Ltd. and other stakeholders to help alleviate pressures on the industry from the global economic crisis. A partnership agreement with TAHA Fresh will be finalized in the next few weeks.



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Ambassador Lenhardt (left) presents MVG Chairperson Mkala and Secretary Masaki with certificates from GLOBALGAP and TESCO Nature's Choice. TAPP Director Jim Vernon (right) and USAID Mission Director Cunnane (second right) are also pictured.

Tanzania Agriculture Productivity Program

Increased incomes through enhanced productivity

TAPP is a 5-year program to increase smallholder farmer incomes through enhanced productivity and improved domestic and export marketing of agricultural products.

Visit www.tanzania-agric.org for more information on upcoming activities and to view monthly bulletins and success stories.

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TAHA INTERVENES FOR GROWERS

TAHA continues to represent its members and the wider horticulture sector. TAHA and TAPP want to ensure that the fledgling sector has the opportunity to establish itself and become profitable. The industry needs to become stronger to survive the current business climate and meet the market expectations of regional and international agribusiness standards. To that end, TAHA rapidly responded to the implementation of an 18 percent VAT on airfreight charges retroactively assessed from Dec. 1, 2009 by the Tanzanian Revenue Authority. The government's initial reception to TAHA's concerns was positive and negotiations are under way to ensure that the government can promote an enabling business environment while expanding its revenue collection base.

TAHA is also following up on another tax-related issue – that of VAT being applied to irrigation systems. While large producers may be capable of registering for VAT exemption status, this presents a challenge for smallholder growers who have to carry additional costs. The tax therefore makes the systems too expensive for many growers.

SELECTION OF PARTNERS UNDER WAY

TAPP field personnel are now assigned to their project areas and have introduced the program to the appropriate regional and district officers. They are identifying and visiting prospective clients with guidance from district officials and other local stakeholders.

TAPP visited potential partners across all program regions, including a number of women and youth groups and rural HIV/AIDS-affected groups. In an early district visit to Karatu, in the Arusha region, Project Agronomist Yassin Fulla visited five HIV/AIDS-affected farmer groups and provided them with initial technical assistance. Discussions have also started with the Youth Development Network (YDN) to identify youth groups that would most benefit from TAPP assistance.

Information on clients interested in partnering with TAPP will be submitted to a selection committee comprising TAPP field and management staff as well as TAHA members. These types of collaboration ensure that TAPP's efforts will have sustainable impact on the horticulture sector.

TAPP's monitoring and evaluation specialists have also started collecting baseline data for new farmer groups. Richard Pluke, the environmental programs specialist, is also conducting an assessment to ensure TAPP's adherence to environmental management standards. TAPP is following USAID/Tanzania's lead in establishing environmental best practices and adaptation to climate change as core values for its activities.

HOMEVEG RESUMES EUROPEAN EXPORTS

TAPP provided technical advice to Homeveg Ltd., a smallholder vegetable exporter, so that the company could resume exports to European markets. Adverse weather and difficulties with their cold store facilities resulted in rejection of several Homeveg shipments upon arrival in Europe. TAPP worked with AuroraFresh, a European marketing company acting as Homeveg's agent, to identify technical challenges and improve quality control and cold chain systems. Together they helped Homeveg resolve these issues. After assurances from the European importer of continued support, export activities resumed without further quality problems.

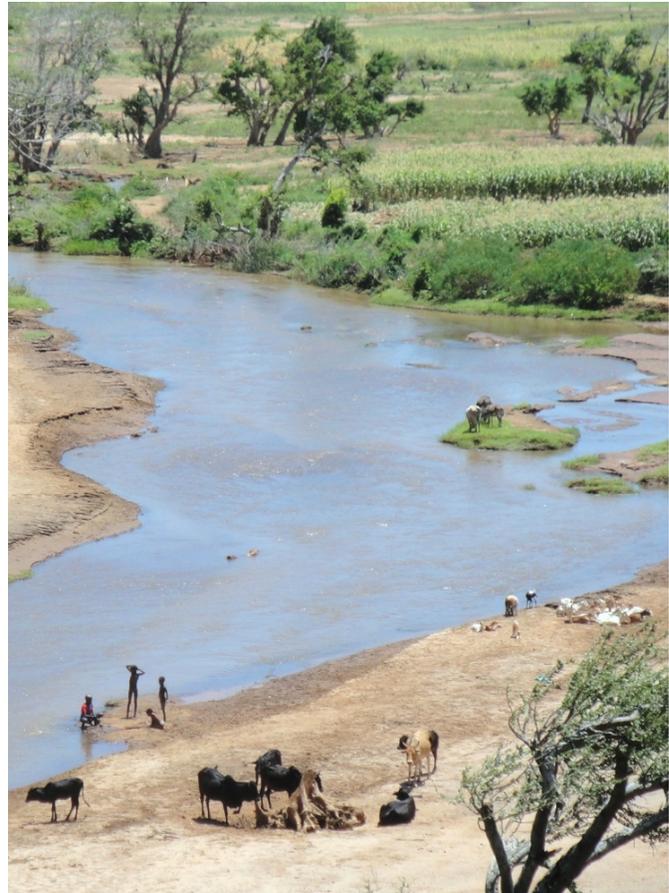


Photo by Fintrac Inc./Manfred Bitala

TAPP environmental stewardship: Qang'deng River is an important source of water for Karatu District farmers. It is also a shared resource with human health and environmental implications.