

Monthly Update – May 2012

## Tanzania Agriculture Productivity Program (TAPP)

### OVERVIEW

USAID-TAPP is **increasing incomes for smallholder farmers, improving nutrition, and expanding markets** through agricultural innovation and commercialization. The program is part of Feed the Future, the US government's global hunger and food security initiative to break the cycle of hunger and poverty in the developing world. Feed the Future is focusing on the Southern Agricultural Growth Corridor (SAGCOT), a region the Tanzanian government has identified as the most conducive for agricultural growth. Working with our partners and the Government of Tanzania, USAID-TAPP is concentrating our efforts on selected crops and regions, especially SAGCOT, to help transform the country's food security.

### YOUTH REAP BIG SWEET PEPPER HARVEST

In the last two weeks of May, youth from the Ujamaa Mkwapa Farmer Group of Bwage village in Morogoro region recorded an impressive sweet pepper harvest, thanks to the good agricultural practices (GAPs) and new technologies they learned from USAID-TAPP. The hybrid sweet pepper seeds were transplanted to a field of 1.25 acres on raised beds in April. A total of 2.5 tons of sweet peppers were harvested in May and sold to a Dar es Salaam market for Tshs. 2,500,000 (\$2,200). This first harvest already exceeds the entire annual harvest from previous seasons, when the group had only been able to harvest a total of 2 tons of low quality sweet pepper. The group expects to continue harvesting sweet peppers at least once every week for the next four months with a projected total profit of Tshs. 20 million (\$16,000) by the end of the season.

"We thank USAID-TAPP for their support to smallholder farmers. We're looking forward to expanding our plot and making sure that every member of the group owns a small plot with drip system kit installed, and to train our neighbors on best agricultural practices," said the group chairman Mr. Elliud Gabriel. The Ujamaa Mkwapa Farmer Group was formed in early 2011 by seven energetic young farmers, including one female farmer. They first started growing tomatoes, but with little knowledge of GAPs and they faced of challenges, including poor irrigation, pests, and diseases. After two seasons of poor harvests on their half acre plot, they were approached by USAID-TAPP and received **training on horticulture** practices and prepared a 1.25 acre plot with a drip irrigation system worth Tshs.1,500,000 (\$1,200). The young farmers were trained on **the importance of using raised beds, placing seedlings in trays, setting up live barriers, applying fertigation, and understanding correct spacing**. "We've experienced a great difference since we started practicing these best agricultural practices in terms of harvesting compare to our previous farming," said the group secretary, Cosmas Gabriel.

Thanks to USAID-TAPP's interventions, the farmer group recorded their first improved harvest in February 2012 of 2.5 tons of watermelons worth Tshs. 3,000,000 (\$2,600), beating the Morogoro regional average of 800 kilograms from a one acre plot. The group spent some of the income from that harvest to expand their plot to prepare for sweet peppers. The Ujamaa Mkwapa Farmer Group understands that **proper use of spacing** gives plants enough room to grow, **raised beds** enables plants' roots to develop, **live barriers** keeps out pests and **drenching fertilizers** increases productivity.



Photo by Fintrac Inc.

Ujamaa Mkwapa Farmer Group chairman Elliud Gabriel proudly holds up sweet peppers he harvested from their plot.



Photo by Fintrac Inc.

A section of the Ujamaa Mkwapa Farmer Group's sweet pepper plot showing raised beds with correct spacing.

### FARMERS' FIELD DAY TRAINING FOCUSES ON TOMATOTRELLISING METHODS FOR BETTER YIELDS

USAID-TAPP organized a one-day field training on the second week of May for five smallholder farmers, each representing their respective farmer groups in Arusha region. The training included a visit to RijkZwaan Afrisem, a company that deals with breeding and supplying of hybrid vegetable seeds in Arusha. The group also learned about different agricultural techniques, such as using the **trellising method on tomato plants**. Trellising on certain types of tomatoes improves yields by keeping the plant away from the soil to **avoid possible contamination from pests or diseases**. If practiced properly, the trellising method allows a tomato plant to grow up to 4 meters high.

The five farmers representing Oitera (29 members), Sambasha (23 members), and Majengo (13 members) Farmer Groups visited the institution's plots to learn about one of the newly researched trellising methods known as the Wall Type Trellising System whereby four string lines are tied across a bed to support tomato plant clusters. The new **trellising system** also requires a farmer to practice a **double stem pruning method** on young tomato plants by removing all except the first sucker immediately below the first flower cluster. The method will enable a plant to produce more tomato clusters for more yields. A single plant is capable of producing 16 clusters of which a farmer will be able to harvest a total of 15 kg per plant per harvest.

"We're used to a single stringed trellising method on our farming, but with this new method, I'm confident we'll be able to increase our production," said Augustino Olturia, representing Majengo farmer Group.

According to USAID-TAPP agronomist, Simon Loto, USAID-TAPP will continue to send smallholder farmers for practical field visits to increase farmers' understanding and adoption of GAPs. "Most farmers prefer field visits for their quick understanding of GAPs; so far six individual farmers and one farmer group of 10 members have started using a drip irrigation system as a result of these visits," said Loto.



Photo by Fintrac Inc.

Members of the Isukamahela Farmer Group sowing hybrid tomato seeds on trays, which helps ensure the right amounts of soil and water are used when germinating plants.

### USAID-TAPP SUPPORTS SAGCOT TO BOOST AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY

This year the program expanded its reach to Iringa, Mbeya, and Njombe as part of the increased focus on SAGCOT – a region identified by the Government of Tanzania, private companies, and Feed the Future to boost agricultural productivity in Tanzania. Eleven newly registered farmer groups in the Mbeya and Njombe regions are **adopting GAPs and technologies and increasing their income** after they have received extensive training from USAID-TAPP. They are now preparing production plots to grow hybrid tomatoes, onions, Irish potatoes, garlic, carrots, banana, and carrots. The farmer groups had been growing avocado in past; they will continue growing this crop, but will now be using better practices and be linked to new markets, thanks to USAID-TAPP.

"We're ready to adopt and experience USAID-TAPP **horticulture technologies** in order to improve our yields and income because we have been growing banana using poor farming methods and harvest was very low," said a member of Jitegemee Group from Mbeya region.

### Tanzania Agriculture Productivity Program

*"Increased food security through enhanced productivity"*

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USAID-TAPP will introduce new **varieties of banana by tissue culture** to replace the farmers' old banana plantations to farmer groups in Rungwe district in Mbeya region. Tissue culture is a process of creating a new banana planting material which is **free from pests and diseases**. Farmers were previously planting traditional banana varieties with excessive space between plants, resulting in low plant density. The two regions, Mbeya and Njombe, have the advantage of **reliable river water sources for irrigation** throughout the year, which will **improve their agricultural productivity**.