

A high yield and a ready market brings the sweet taste of success



Elizabeth Muia

MANGO FARMER

It is the week before Christmas and Elizabeth Muia is getting ready to receive visitors at her home in Kyumu village of Machakos County in Kenya's Eastern Region. Two of her three adult daughters are busy preparing fresh vegetables from their farm. The youngest is making tea with milk from Elizabeth's cows.

In all directions beyond the neat hedge surrounding the house, trees labor under the weight of mangoes, their branches bent over with the juicy heaviness of the fruit. It will soon be time to harvest, and Elizabeth is expecting a bumper crop.

Elizabeth began growing mangoes in 2008, starting with 15 trees that she has gradually increased to 200. For years, the profit she made helped her to meet her household expenses, but that was about all. Because of fruit flies, mango weevils and red rust, her mangoes would go bad and fall to the ground before ripening. "It was a big loss. I felt helpless because I didn't know what to do about it. Then in 2017, I met TechnoServe through my co-operative society and they taught us how to look after our trees, how to trap the fruit flies, and how to use pesticides so that the insects would not damage the fruit."

"I benefited greatly from that training. Now my mangoes are really different and my harvest has increased, a lot. Before the training I used to get about 20,000 pieces from my trees, but now I get up to 50,000 pieces per season. The increased profit has helped me to educate my children.



Simple and effective: Using fruit fly traps ensures that mangoes are free of infestation, reducing spoilage and loss of fruit. The traps are easily accessible to farmers in many mango-growing areas.



The yield from Elizabeth's mango trees has greatly increased since 2017, when she learnt how to take proper care of her trees and to manage insect infestation using fruit fly traps and pesticides.

Now I have planted oranges and started an agrochemicals shop. I also bought three cows and I make additional income from selling milk. All this is from mangoes."

Even with a bumper harvest coming, Elizabeth is confident that she will be able to sell all her produce. This was not always the case, though. Lack of market has been one of the biggest challenges faced by mango farmers. She recalls a bumper harvest early in 2016 when a lot of her mangoes went to waste. "I lost many mangoes. There were no buyers. But now I do not suffer such losses."

Elizabeth is one of the 80-member Masii Horticultural Farmers' Co-operative Society, which has set up an aggregation center where farmers can take their mangoes for storage and collective marketing. "The mangoes are kept in cold rooms and buyers go there instead of coming to the farms. This arrangement has helped me greatly because I would not have been able to keep all my mangoes until I got a buyer. We are also able to get better prices when we sell together. I am no longer afraid because no matter how much I produce, as long as they are of good quality, I know my mangoes will be bought. In fact, after this season, I want to plant 15 more trees."



The Aggregation Centre of the Masii Horticultural Farmers' Co-operative Society enables its 80 members to keep their mangoes in cold storage, and to sell collectively at competitive prices.

Rockefeller Foundation's YieldWise initiative was launched in 2016 with the goal of reducing post-harvest loss in select countries and value chains by up to 50 percent. More than 40 percent of fruits and vegetables in developing regions spoil before they can be consumed.

Using a multi-pronged strategy, YieldWise sought to improve millions of rural lives by increasing incomes, increasing the availability of food and protecting finite environmental resources.

The initiative, targeted tomato and cassava production in Nigeria, mangoes in Kenya and maize in Tanzania.

YieldWise Initiative in the mango value chain in Kenya is implemented by Technoserve; an international nonprofit that promotes business solutions to poverty in the developing world by linking people to information, capital and markets.