Agric value chain centre of excellence opens in Rwanda

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65,000 Printed Copies

The East African Agrinews Magazine is distributed to professionals who are involved in the agriculture industry, international business, and investment in East Africa and around the world. These professionals are always looking for new ideas, products and services. With a print run of 65,000 copies per issue, the East African Agrinews Magazine’s estimated readership per issue is over 180,000. The East African Agrinews Magazine is printed quarterly and is distributed in both hard copy and electronic version (E-Magazine). 40% distribution is done through corporate and individual subscription, 20% through retail outlets, the rest through agriculture expos, shows and events as well as through strategic agriculture unions and associations.

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The readership profile of the East African AgriNews Magazine is key decision makers such as CEOs, Directors, Farm owners, Government departments, Procurement Managers, Farm managers, Agronomists, Small scale farmers, Commercial farmers as well as many other professionals within the agricultural sector in the East African region.

The publication has strategic alliances and partnerships with a number of regional and international agricultural and business organisations.
More solutions for agri-sector a must

Food security has become a buzzword the world over and most economies are fighting hard to get sustainable solutions for their agriculture value chains.

With the advent of technology a lot has changed in the agriculture industry, even subsistence farmers’ way of doing things is drifting towards achieving more with less. Urban dwellers with their backyard gardens are also looking at being part of the food value chain with their excess produce, meaning an extra income for them.

The development of a new African Centre of Excellence for sustainable cooling and cold chain in Rwanda to help get farmers’ produce to market quickly and efficiently – reducing food waste, boosting profits and creating jobs is most welcome.

Revival of the agriculture sector on the bloc should bring more yields including value addition and exporting potential, all emanating from well oiled linkages of farmers, logistics providers and agri-food businesses with a range of experts and investors.

Yes, investors love putting their money where the systems are in place and functioning well, simple because their eyes are on return on investment (ROI). No one want to throw their money to throw their money into a dark hole, despite how deep their pockets could be and also the bloc desires so much to be self sufficient in food production, despite the perennial challenges the agriculture sector face.

We also hope the Centre will not only create a sustainable food chain but answers to some of the challenges affecting the bloc’s agriculture sector through solutions created by engaging all the stakeholders.

Stakeholders should rally behind the Centre of Excellence as sustainable cooling can improve our food security, reduce food waste, protect vital vaccines, and reduce emissions of climate-damaging refrigerant gases.

Without getting the support it deserves the Centre will become another white elephant, yet the mission is to promote sustainable development on the bloc.

Please remember to share your comments, views and letters with us.

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Agric value chain centre of excellence opens in Rwanda

ew African Centre of Excellence for sustainable cooling and cold chain has opened in Rwanda to help get farmers’ produce to market quickly and efficiently – reducing food waste, boosting profits and creating jobs.

The Centre aims to link the country’s farmers, logistics providers and agri-food businesses with a range of experts and investors.

Rwanda’s Cooling Initiative (RCOOL), supported by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) through its United for Efficiency (U4E) programme, provides the foundation for the new Centre, which is part of the country’s National Cooling Strategy, launched in 2019.

“The new Centre will allow us to expand, building on the existing efforts of the University of Rwanda; we look forward to collaboration with partners on the African continent and beyond,” said Professor Etienne Ntagwirumugara, the Director of the Centre for The African Centre of Excellence in Energy for Sustainable Development.

Researchers from the University of Birmingham and Edinburgh’s Heriot Watt University are joining RCOOL to apply their expertise with rural cooling and that can be used for food and medicines.

In addition, the Centre will build upon the Universities’ work in India with non-profit, commercial and academic partners investigating cold chain opportunities, while the UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) is funding these efforts.

“Sustainable cooling can improve our food security, reduce food waste, protect vital vaccines, and reduce emissions of climate-damaging refrigerant gases. It underpins our mission to promote sustainable development around the world. The UK is a pioneer of innovative, climate friendly cooling solutions and we look forward to working with others to advance this important work,” said the Lord Goldsmith, UK Minister of State for Pacific and the Environment.

Research indicates that farmers often lack effective ways to manage the distribution of produce after harvest and getting it to market, with ineffective delivery systems limiting farmers’ ability to sell goods beyond a local area.

For example, tomatoes are widely produced and consumed in Rwanda, but because of their high perishability and short shelf life, 25 percent of the production is lost post-harvest. This is due to lack of temperature management, as tomatoes are stored on the ground covered by canvas instead of modern cooled stores, and transported in poor quality containers.

Project co-developer and technical lead Toby Peters, Professor of Cold Economy at the University of Birmingham, said: “Cold chain itself is about ensuring an integrated, optimised and managed network of temperature-controlled pack houses, pre-cooling operations, vehicles, cold stores, and distribution hubs which seamlessly maintains the safety, quality and quantity of food, delivering it swiftly from farms to consumption centres across geographies.

“Farmers need robust means of getting perishable produce to urban markets. But we must ensure that cold chain logistics are sustainable. We need local and global “field-to-fork” connectivity to nutritiously feed 10 billion people from hundreds of millions of small-scale farmers, all without using fossil fuels.”

Data is required to make this investment economically sustainable. As countries face the economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, maintaining economic activity, creating jobs and supporting the most vulnerable becomes an urgent priority. Cooling and cold chains support these economic necessities.

Specifically, the Centre will be a boost for Rwanda, where farming accounts for some 30% of national GDP and 73% of the workforce is directly employed in agriculture. Professor Phil Greening from Heriot Watt University commented:

“Most post-harvest losses occur close to the farm gate, where facilities to process perishable produce are lacking, because farmers can’t afford to invest and lack financial expertise and technical knowledge.

“However, these processes are energy-intensive, often relying on fossil fuel-based power generation and use refrigerants with a high climate impact. The Centre will help Rwanda’s policymakers shape a sustainable cold-chain blueprint for the country and the continent.”

The project supports Rwanda’s National Agricultural Export Development Board’s (NAEB) five-year strategy to double agricultural exports by 2024-25 and significantly increase exports of aqua-culture, beef and other temperature sensitive products.

“Efficient, affordable cooling is an important element in efforts to curb climate change. Without action to address energy efficiency, energy demand for space cooling is projected to more than triple by 2050,” said Inger Andersen, Executive Director of UNEP.

“The new Centre of Excellence in Rwanda will be a boon for sustainable cold chains that are essential to respond to the COVID-19 global pandemic. As we seek to build back better, sustainable cooling can help deliver vaccines, ensure food supply, and reboot the economy by generating employment and investment opportunities. Ultimately, with the support of the Centre of Excellence, farmers can benefit from best practices on business models, training facilities, and ‘Living Labs’ where the latest technology is demonstrated and proven with those intended to use it. The Centre will help Rwanda’s policymakers shape a sustainable cold chain blueprint for the country and the continent.”
improved access to veterinary diagnostics, training and the availability of medicine is proving to be life changing for small-holder farmers in sub-Saharan Africa, who are reporting increasing improvements to their livelihoods.

In its third year, Zoetis’ African Livestock Productivity and Health Advancement (A.L.P.H.A.) initiative, funded by a $14 million grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, has been improving livestock health while positively impacting farmers’ livelihoods through increased access to veterinary medicines and diagnostic networks, animal health training and infrastructure.

Poultry Veterinarian Consultant, Johnathan Arul, says as a result of the program, farmers are now being provided with access to products and advice they weren’t getting before.

“This had to do with distance, cost and accessibility. With a professionally trained team of individuals, we can get the farmer the product they need, the service they require, and help them administer that product efficiently,” he says.

“What this does is improve animal health at the farmer level, improves it at the district level, and eventually at the wider country level as more farmers join the program.” The initiative has vastly improved productivity on his farm, says farmer and Assistant Chairman of the Tanzanian Broiler Farmers Association, Aloyce Makoye, who has almost eliminated all unnecessary deaths.

“This means that during the selling season, I sell around 99 per cent of the chickens. So, when I do my balance sheet, I make profit. So far, I've used the profits I've accumulated over the years since I started receiving this service to expand my farm. Right now, I am building a poultry yard to hold an additional 3,500 chickens, which means I am growing.”

One of the most rapidly developing regions in the world, sub-Saharan Africa is home to some of the largest livestock populations, and the highest density of livestock keepers with the lowest productivity per animal. With the COVID-19 pandemic, livestock is more essential than ever to rural communities and the health of that livestock is critical to achieving food security in areas of exceptionally high animal and human disease incidence.

With 74 product submissions in Nigeria, Uganda, Ethiopia and Tanzania since 2018, the initiative has increased access to veterinary medicines with nine fully registered vaccines and 14 diagnostic products in Ethiopia. These products are now commercially available. It has also helped develop the necessary diagnostic laboratory network to better diagnose and prevent diseases in animals and, in the past year, developed nine diagnostic laboratories across the markets.

One aspect of the initiative is providing training on animal nutrition, disease detection and other animal health issues. With the COVID-19 pandemic, Zoetis trainers adapted and have replaced traditional face-to-face training interactions with online training and webinars, while a new service called ‘Lab Cards’ supports the infrastructure of veterinary labs in facilitating the collection and sharing of data.

To help extend vaccination which prevents disease and increases the overall health of animals, the A.L.P.H.A. team launched a pilot in Tanzania where vet paraprofessionals help manage vaccine education, storage and administration for farmers in communities. This new entrepreneurial program helps not only enhance biosecurity measures on farms in facilitating access to quality medicines and technical experience, and it also supports employment of young people. More than 100 farms in Tanzania have benefitted so far, and the model will be rolled out to other countries in 2020.

Silvansim Selengia, S&J Animal Tech, says his job as an extension officer involves providing professional vaccination services to farmers.

“In situations where farmers are faced with vaccination challenges, I make it easy for the farmer to get the best vaccines. The value of the services I provide to farmers is that, first, there is assurance of the quality of the product as well as the storage of our products, the cold storage chain. Also, it’s of value to the farmer that they become more aware of animal health. When I talk about animal health, I am referring to the challenges brought about by diseases.”

Farmer Theopista Joseph says before the initiative, farmers in her village used to output the service themselves, and training was difficult to access.

“We had to look for experts when we went to the veterinary store to buy drugs. We used this opportunity to ask about the problems we were facing with our chickens. That was the only way we would get answers,” she says.

“The A.L.P.H.A. initiative is beneficial because we are trained at home through visits. The expert trains us in our own farms, for instance, on how to do quality farming, to prepare yards, clean yards, and even how to vaccinate the chickens until they are mature. I know this service can give me good results as I continue using it.”

The initiative has joined forces with The Veterinary Health Innovation Engine (vHive) – an innovation hub situated at the University of Surrey’s School of Veterinary Medicine, in England – on a series of projects to help improve productivity for sub-Saharan African farmers and reduce disease prevalence across Ethiopia, Nigeria, Tanzania and Uganda.

“The livestock sector in sub-Saharan Africa is faced with complex challenges, including the limited availability of well-trained and skilled animal health professionals, who are one of the most critical requirements for optimal veterinary service delivery,” said Gabriel Varga, commercial director for Africa at Zoetis.

“We know we can’t solve all those challenges on our own and over the past three years, we have worked with several partners to deliver different aspects of the A.L.P.H.A. initiative.”

Through the partnership, several joint projects are under way that will help develop the livestock sector. Among these is one to identify and prioritise areas for training of veterinarians, initially in Ethiopia, with the goal of addressing the skills gaps among practicing animal health professionals and enhancing the delivery and governance of veterinary services.

The joint initiative has also involved assessing the antibiotic prescription habits of veterinarians and para-veterinarians in Nigeria with the aim of identifying and reducing any overuse or misuse of antibiotics in animal health. The University of Surrey has also been involved in early stage field tests of portable animal disease devices.

“We are now into the fourth year of the initiative and are always keen to expand the partners we work with – including integrators, agents, governments and the private sector – as we continue to drive the initiative forward,” added Varga.
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Twiga Foods, Liquid Telcom to spur Kenya’s food production

As part of efforts to making food security a reality in Kenya, international telecommunication company Liquid Telecom has signed a significant partnership deal with Twiga Foods.

The pact will initiate deployment of innovative internet of things (IoT) solutions in Twiga’s Takuwa farm,

According to Liquid Telecom, the deal is set to increase agricultural productivity through precision farming in a partnership aimed to open up a new world of opportunities.

“Increasing business efficiency through digital solutions is one of the main reasons we partnered with Liquid Telecom.

“By using smart devices, we have automated multiple processes across the farm’s production cycle,” said Peter Njonjo, Twiga Foods Chief Executive Officer.

Njonjo said Liquid Telecom has deployed a complete precision agriculture IoT system to improve farm productivity at Twiga’s Takuwa farm.

He said the system includes four different types of agriculture sensors: a comprehensive weather station, soil moisture, and temperature probes, borehole water meters, and sensors for measuring irrigation water acidity and salinity.

Njonjo further highlighted that the system takes advantage of Liquid Telecom’s extensive low-power wide-area IoT network using 0G Sigfox technology, covering 85 per cent of the population in Kenya at lower costs than other technologies.

Meanwhile, the soil probes installed at Twiga’s Takuwa farm measures moisture levels and temperature at six different depths into the soil, giving precise information of soil quality and irrigation needs at the roots of specific crops.

“This is set to increase yield and productivity directly and will benefit Twiga’s food security efforts during and beyond COVID-19.”

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Farming on poor soil with little rainfall in Kenya’s drought-prone areas

Despite poor soil fertility and water scarcity, thousands of farmers in Kenya have increased their crop yields by 17 to 20 percent and saved 20 percent of their fertilizer costs thanks to climate-smart agricultural techniques.

The techniques, introduced with the support of the IAEA, in partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), help improve soil fertility and enable farmers to better manage the crops’ water requirements.

Isotopic techniques play a crucial role in assessing nutrient qualities of soil and water resources. A group of scientists from the Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization (KALRO) used nuclear and isotopic techniques to measure changes in soil’s water and nutrients.

This effort supports farming practices that keep the soil healthy, improve water and nutrient strategic use, optimize crop yields and increase soil resilience.

These techniques were used in the Kajiado-Central and Tharaka sub counties to assess crop nitrogen use efficiency and to calculate nutrient and water requirements using the stable isotope nitrogen-15 (N-15) and soil moisture sensors. N-15 isotopes, which have the same amount of proton and electron as “normal” nitrogen atoms, but with an extra neutron, are effective tracers that can be employed to understand the movement of nutrients between soil and plants. They also help to provide quantitative data on the efficiency of nutrients use by crops and this data enables experts to improve water and fertilizer application strategies.

The nitrogen-15 tracing technique is also used to quantify the amount of nitrogen captured from the atmosphere through biological nitrogen fixation by leguminous crops — a natural process in which these crops capture nitrogen from the air and accumulate it in their roots. The nitrogen is released into the soil through the decay of plant roots after harvest, enhancing soil fertility.

This technique reduces the need for expensive chemical fertilizers. Intercropping and crop rotations of pearl millet and maize, the main crops in this region, with cowpea, beans, green gram, pigeon peas and other legumes not only saves the expense of nitrogen fertilizers, it also increased average yields by 20 percent for the cereals and by 17 percent for the legumes.

“This was a win-win for farmers: reducing costs and achieving higher yields,” said Joseph Adu-Gyamfi, Integrated Soil Fertility Management Specialist at the Joint FAO/IAEA Division of Nuclear Techniques in Food and Agriculture.

Apart from the nutrients, farmers also need to ensure that the crops receive suitable soil moisture through supplementary irrigation when the rains fail. Scientists have installed soil sensors in selected farmers’ fields in several counties to measure real-time soil moisture, temperature and salinity. Once the soil moisture and related data collected is processed, the crop’s water requirements can be estimated, and farmers can be advised on irrigation strategies regarding quantity and frequency of watering. The real-time soil moisture measurements data is transmitted to farmers’ mobile phones, allowing them to determine when and how much to irrigate.

“KALRO scientists are now helping the farmers to source the seed, which they pay for by themselves,” said Isaya Sijali, Irrigation Specialist at the Food Crop Research Institute, KALRO-Kabete. This underscores the sustainability of the project: higher yield provides higher income, which enables farmers to pay for the improved seeds.

The IAEA, through its technical cooperation programme, has also supported the upgrade of KALRO’s analytical laboratory for agricultural water and nutrient management with the operationalization of an existing Isotope Ratio Mass Spectrometer (IRMS) to meet the capacity for stable isotope analysis for nitrogen-15, the installation and training for a vacuum extraction of water from soil and plant samples for water isotopes analysis and the provision of a laser analyser for stable water isotope analysis of water.

“The IAEA’s assistance in upgrading equipment has strengthened KALRO’s capability to hold national and regional trainings on water management and conduct stable isotope analysis of water and nutrients for neighbouring countries in the future,” said Valentina Varbanova, the IAEA Project Management Officer working with Kenya.
COVID-19 badly hits informal livelihoods dependent on agriculture

Tanzania’s agriculture’s value chain suffered a fair share of challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic, media reports have highlighted.

Several individuals reliant on agriculture for their livelihood have narrated depressing anecdotes attributed to the respiratory disease’s attack.

Donald Mwasyoge of banana farming Rungwe district said he felt the sharp gloom, as he watched his fruit ripen without access to buyers.

Julius Mwendipembe, a lorry driver who delivers agricultural produce from rural areas to urban wholesale markets, cancelled his trips in fear of the novel coronavirus.

As the entire supply chain felt the pain, Nurudin Makinya who makes money by unloading banana trucks at a commercial market, in Dar es Salaam, the country’s biggest city with about six million inhabitants, had very little work for him. The same applied to Amina Rashid, a hawker who buys bananas at the wholesale market and then sells them on to consumers.

The COVID-19 pandemic saw many people losing their source of income, especially informal sector which accounts for about 75 percent of all jobs in Dar es Salaam. Meanwhile in early July, only a bit more than 500 infections were reported by officialdom, and the death toll was only 21. For the vast majority of people, the economic pain thus outweighs the health problems. The government decided to reopen schools at the end of June, but imposed strict hygiene rules, including hand washing.

Health experts, however, worry that the decision may yet prove premature. After all, the disease may yet start to suddenly spread as has been the case elsewhere.

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Dexion Speedlock pallet racking has doubled capacity in a warehouse facility in Kenya and improved product and personnel safety.

Stodec Trading Ltd has designed and installed high strength, galvanised pallet racking to fit into existing warehouses where only limited block stacking had previously been possible.

The packing and storage of tea after picking results in very heavy unit loads with 20 sacks each weighing 68kg being stacked onto a single pallet to provide a market sale unit weighing 1360kg.

If stored in bulk the pallets can only be stacked two high as the loads are relatively unstable and risk toppling over with damage to the product and risk to the staff.

Headroom in the warehouses provided space for up to four pallet units but they could not be safely stacked and the combined weight would risk crushing the lowest pallet. Maneuvering and lifting with a fork lift in such an overloaded store would be unacceptably dangerous.

Working with the customers’ Engineers and Project Team, Stodec Trading were able to design an adjustable pallet racking installation with the following features:-

- High racking frames so that beam levels could provide storage up to the full height of the warehouse.
- Heavy duty beams supporting two pallets side by side to a combined load of 2720kg per level.
- Beam spacing to fit with the unusual load height of 2.2m whilst providing lifting and positioning space.
- Individual access to every pallet load without needing to move any others.
- Aisle and gangway sizes to allow for safe and fast access with improvements in picking and goods movement times.

All beam levels are fully adjustable so that any future change in the loads can be dealt with.
No space is wasted as extra wide 3.3m beams are positioned over the main transfer aisles to store more pallets above whilst still allowing fork lift travel underneath.

All the warehouses can now utilise the full height for storing four pallets high, only two pallets high was previously possible, so capacity has more than doubled with significantly increased safety and faster goods movement.

This installation was shipped in ready to install pre-finished, component form from the UK.

A qualified Stodec Trading Installation Engineer supervised the installation working with a team of local Kenyan installers.

This installation now provides storage capacity for 3944 pallets, a total of 5,363,840kgs of tea (or enough for 214.5 million cups of tea). It includes over 5 miles of pallet rack beams and 5.63 miles of rack uprights.

The existing installation has been so successful that a completely new major warehouse complex has been constructed and Stodec Trading are now supplying new Dexion Speed-lock Pallet Racking which will store a further 16,684 pallet loads.

Racking and barrier rails for the three new warehouses have been shipped in 29 containers from the UK and the ready to install materials includes 22 miles (35km) of Dexion pallet racking beams and 12 miles (19km) of racking uprights with all associated bracing, bolts and floor fixings.

This major installation in Mombasa will be completed later this year and case study notes will be issued for what will be the largest tea storage facility in Kenya.

Stodec Trading website www.stodec.com has further detail on all Dexion storage products.
Regional News

Mixed fortunes for farmers in Rwanda

Farmers in Rwanda have bemoaned lack of access to inputs coupled with several disasters, as the major challenges to the country’s farming activities, this year. Though farming activities were not halted by COVID-19 lockdown, access to inputs was minimized.

“We sold about 350 tons to 500 tons of agro products to farmers compared to 700 tons in the same season last year because many farmers couldn’t come out to buy inputs as usual, which ultimately affected the season,” said KOPABINYA Cooperative’s Donatille Mukakomeza, attributing the issue to COVID-19.

Farmers have also attributed their misfortunes to erosion, which has worsened the situation.

“Heavy rain disasters did more damage than coronavirus. For example I have sold 2.5 tons of the three tons of beans expected this season,” said Marta Mukashema, one of the farmers attributing the shortage to heavy rains.

Meanwhile the National Institute of Statistics’ latest report indicates that in the first quarter, the agriculture sector was the hardest hit by the coronavirus making a fall in growth of minus one percent with food crops dropping to minus two percent and export crops by minus 16 percent.

Meanwhile KOPABINYA Cooperative has secured donor funding to set up a farmers’ input center expected to solve the problem of access and also prepare them for 2021 season, which started this July. The center worth Rwf62m will be completed in the next three months and will contain an agro pharmacy, a soil testing laboratory. It will also hire ten vet experts who will help in treating animals, and provide model farmer training.

“This is our recovery plan which will be a way of bridging the access gap to inputs and vet services which affect farmers,” Mukakomeza said.

KOPABINYA is one of the beneficiaries of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), through its Feed the Future Rwanda-Hinga Weze project grants worth Rwf114 million awarded this week to private sector actors to improve the supply of inputs of three value chains - maize, high iron beans and Irish potatoes.

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Regional News

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Orchard-Rite, Ltd. is headquartered in the heart of the agriculture country in Yakima, Washington, in the Northwest part of the United States. Being surrounded by farms, orchards, and vineyards, we are close to the issues that affect crop health and harvest.

At our 104,000 square-foot, state-of-the-art manufacturing and assembly plant, we set the standards for producing the highest quality and most innovative tree shakers and wind machines worldwide. Your crops are your livelihood, and your livelihood deserves the industry’s best.

Our products are built by employees who take pride in their work. They are honored to be trusted with the crops that support your families and ensure your future. We build each machine with skilled engineers and precision robotics. From the wires in our Auto-Start boxes, to the doors on our tree shakers, from the bright red paint on our gear boxes to our shaker heads, we never let a part leave our facility without careful inspection for quality. We take pride in the details, because that's what makes the difference between a good and a great harvest season.

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Since 1990, we have hand-crafted our tree shakers with precision technology. Orchard-Rite® tree shakers are engineered, assembled and serviced by people who have a vested interest in your success.

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Tanzania mulls plans to revive sisal production

Low value addition on sisal has become evident, as authorities in Tanzania mulls plans to revive cultivation of the cash crop.

The Tanzania Sisal Board (TSB) revealed that only four percent of the cash crop has been utilised.

Frederick Sospeter, TSB Planning and Research Officer made the remarks during the virtual Business to Business meeting at the on-going 44th Dar es Salaam International Trade Fair (DITF). Sospeter bemoaned that lack of modern technologies to make more products was the reason behind 96 percent of the crop not being utilised.

“At the moment we are making very few products, but the crop can be used in areas such as automobile, autocraft, agriculture and medicine industry. The interior parts of cars, aeroplanes and ships are made by sisal fibre, the sisal residues are used for animal feed and fertilizer, just to mention a few,” Sospeter said.

Sospeter implored government to acquire state-of-the-art machinery for processing sisal into various products such as carpets and decorations.

He said TSB also plans to revive sisal production from the current 36,000 tons of the crop annually to 120,000 tons annually by 2025.

Sospeter further revealed that TSB also is in the process of acquiring 20,000 hectares of sisal farms that had been abandoned by investors for quite a long time, and that the land will be distributed to smallholder farmers.

Best Quality feed with Bale Silage

The use of bale silage is an indispensable part of modern feed distribution. Each bale forms a small unit that can be fed to the animals in a quick and simple fashion. Especially in warmer countries bales of silage are an excellent choice as they keep the quality of the feed exceptionally high by protecting it against secondary fermentation or post-heating after the feed was pressed into bales.

Other benefits that speak for themselves:
• Simple and cost-efficient storage of the bales
• Easy and economic transport of the bales
• Straightforward production of mixed feed (TMR)

Numerous factors have to be taken into account in order to achieve premium silage quality. Chief among these factors is, aside from a quick exclusion of air and a clean production process, a high degree of feed compression. The GÖWEIL baler-wrapper combinations LT-Master and VARIO-Master have been especially designed to fulfill these requirements.

These machines can turn almost any chopped material into perfectly pressed and wrapped round bales. Common used materials are maize, corn, hemp and CCM. Immediately after the compressing process the bale is wrapped airtight.

The LT-Master works with a fixed and the VARIO-Master with a variable bale chamber. The bale-size is selectable between 0.60 and 1.4 meters, depending if you use LT-Master or VARIO-Master.

GÖWEIL’s machines have become a popular choice to press even more finely chopped materials, such as alfalfa, grain, sugar beet cossettes and even garbage or wood chips into round bales.

For more information visit the website: www.goeweil.com

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One machine - countless materials.
Capacity growth involves the replacement of manual labor

The move to automatic evisceration

Any poultry processor anywhere in the world whose business is growing will one day face the decision to move from manual to automatic evisceration. When this day comes, what are the options?

Once a poultry processor has started processing industrially, he will have installed a scalding, plucker and overhead conveyor systems for the killing, defeathering and evisceration processes. Growth in hourly capacities will involve installing additional equipment. In the case of the killing and defeathering department, this is straightforward and will largely involve adding sections to the scald tank and installing more plucking capacity.

Hand tools
Capacity increases will affect the evisceration department differently. At very low hourly throughputs all evisceration operations will be done manually using specialized hand tools. As capacities increase, technology will begin to creep in. Initially, this will be limited to the use of hand-held vent and lung guns to drill out the vent and to vacuum any residual lungs from the inside of the hand-eviscerated carcass.

At a given moment, however, processing plant management will have think about automating the evisceration process itself. This will depend on a number of factors such as the cost of labor and space available. As capacities increase, more people will be needed for each manual process and these people will need space in which to work.

Increasing line speeds
The need for more capacity will also mean that a processor is becoming established in his market and is increasing his customer base, thanks no doubt to a reputation for good quality and service. He will of course want to keep this. As line speeds increase, certain manual evisceration operations become more problematical. This is particularly true of removing the viscera pack from the carcass. A poorly eviscerated carcass will spoil quickly and, if edible giblets are damaged during the evisceration process, they will be unsaleable and revenue will be lost.

Automatic evisceration
At this stage, the installation of an automatic eviscerator makes excellent commercial sense. It will save people and space and will ensure that all carcasses are cleanly and accurately eviscerated to a consistent standard. The Nuova CoreTech eviscerator from Marel has been designed for processors making the switch from manual to automatic evisceration. CoreTech offers all the features and benefits of Marel’s well-known, globally established Nuova eviscerator. For many years Nuova has been in operation in plants across the globe and is able to handle all current broiler weights at all hourly throughputs right up to today’s highest. Where CoreTech differs from Nuova is that it does not transfer the drawn viscera pack to a separate pack shackle but deposits it over the back of the carcass.

The pack is then suitably presented for efficient veterinary inspection, after which edible giblets can be conveniently harvested by hand.

Grow with needs
CoreTech will handle up to 6,000 broilers per hour. As users approach this throughput, they have the option of upgrading their CoreTech machine. Having started the initial automation using 10 units, they can easily double this to 20 units. Furthermore, they have the ability to transfer the drawn viscera pack to a separate pack shackle just like a standard Nuova eviscerator. Giblets can then be harvested manually or a start made with automatic giblet harvesting equipment.

CoreTech is an eviscerator, which can grow in line with its user’s needs.

Replacing other operations
Once hourly capacities have increased and evisceration has been automated, thought can be given to replacing hand-held vent and lung guns. Marel offers its combined venting and opening machine VOC, which drills out the vent and applies an opening cut. This machine deposits each drilled vent neatly over the back of the carcass and opens carcasses without damaging the underlying viscera pack. The risk of any cross-contamination by faecal material has therefore been reduced to an absolute minimum.

Lung guns can be replaced by an automatic vacuum-assisted carrousel final inspection machine, whose units descend into the carcass cavity to suck out any loose debris. Kidneys are left in the carcass. Once the final inspection machine has done its job, all carcasses can be thoroughly washed both inside and out by an Inside/Outside Washer.

Necks
Automation of the evisceration process can be rounded off with mechanisation of neck flap inspection and neck cracking and removal. A neck flap inspection machine will remove any residual pieces of crop, oesophagus and windpipe leaving a clean neck flap. If product is to be sold fresh, a clean neck flap is important in ensuring good shelf. The necks themselves can be cracked and removed automatically in a carrousel neck cracking machine.

Consistently high standard
The move to an automated evisceration process will always be dictated by local conditions and requirements. As explained above, it does not have to be done all at once but can be done gradually. A fully automatic evisceration system will, however, more than pay back its investment. Not only will it save space and labor, it will help ensure a hygienic end product processed to a consistently high standard. This in turn will help the further expansion of its user’s business.

“At one point, hiring more workers for evisceration isn’t the solution to growing capacity anymore”
Over 3,000 farmers in Kenya are to benefit from Turkish donation that aims at boosting food security. Part of the donation is a modern silage harvester slicing rows of wet grass to be used as fodder in Lessos village located in the North Rift Valley.

“We have received the equipment from Turkey which will help our farmers conserve feeds especially during the dry spell, we shall be more privileged especially in terms of volume annually, this will help us overcome milk fluctuations which happen twice in a year.

“The silage machines will help our farmers to conserve feeds because in our region we have maize plantations, we also have the feed mill machine, as a cooperative, we will be able to provide cheap feeds for the farmers, on behalf of Lessos farmers we are very grateful for what we received as it will change livelihoods of our farmers throughout the county,” Ezekiel Kipseng, a dairy manager of a farmers’ cooperative.

The Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA) project which aims to end hunger by helping communities to achieve food security, the locals in Lessos received a donation of farm equipment worth $86,000.

Among the items, the community received to boost animal feed production is feed grinders and mixers, silage choppers, a forage harvester, a silage trailer and a silage packing machine among other equipment.

“We have supported the farmers with animal feed production and the best practices to use nutritious silage methodology, we have donated the machinery to support the farmers to enable them to access cheaper animal feed,” said TIKA’s Nairobi coordinator Emre Yuksek.

TIKA noted that fodder production is increasingly being adopted as a way of building the resilience of livestock-dominated pastoral and agropastoral livelihoods in the dry-lands of Kenya.
Two wheel tractors assist Zim, Ethiopia farmers grow yields

Smallholder farmers in Zimbabwe and Ethiopia have embraced small-scale mechanization thanks to an innovative CIMMYT-led project, which is now drawing to a close.

Since 2013, the Farm Mechanization and Conservation Agriculture for Sustainable Intensification (FACASI) project has helped farmers access and use two-wheel tractors that significantly reduce the time and labor needed to grow, harvest and process their crops.

To ensure long-term sustainability, the project and its partners helped support and develop local enterprises which could supply service and operate the machines, and encouraged the development of supportive government policies. The project was funded by the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR), as well as the CGIAR Research Programs on Maize and Wheat.

From its inception, FACASI went beyond simply providing machinery to farmers, and instead envisioned mechanization as a way out of poverty.

“Mechanization is a system, not only a technology,” said Bisrat Getnet, the project’s national coordinator in Ethiopia and director of the Agricultural Engineering Research Department at the Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research.

“Mechanization needs infrastructure such as roads, fuel stations, spare part dealerships, maintenance centers, training centers and appropriate policies. This project assessed which measures are needed to sustain a new technology and addressed these with direct interventions,” he explained.

The FACASI project worked to introduce and develop new small-scale machines, including two-wheel tractors, small shellers and threshers, and small pumps, in African rural settings, collaborating with local engineers, farmers and manufacturers.

This included adapting a range of attachments that could be used to mechanize on-farm tasks such as planting, harvesting, transporting and processing. In parallel, the project developed local business opportunities around the supply, maintenance and use of the machines, to ensure that users could access affordable services and equipment in their communities.

The project initially worked in four countries: Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania and Zimbabwe. Researchers saw significant potential for mechanization to reduce the labor intensity associated with smallholder farming, while encouraging application of conservation agriculture techniques and developing rural service provision businesses. In its second phase, which began in 2017, the project focused on strengthening its efforts in Zimbabwe and Ethiopia.

“In my view the most innovative aspect enabling FACASI’s success was the concept of combining engineering and business modelling, with an understanding of the political, legislative and policy situations in the four countries,” said Professor John Blackwell, an Adjunct Professor at Charles Sturt University who reviewed FACASI and also invented and helped commercialize several successful machines in South Asia, including the famous Happy Seeder.

“FACASI has proven that small mechanization is viable in smallholder settings,” said CIMMYT scientist and project coordinator Frédéric Baudron. “It has shown smallholders that they don’t have to consolidate their farms to benefit from conventional machines, but that machines can instead be adapted to their farm conditions. This, to me, defines the concept of ‘appropriate mechanization’,” he said.

During its course, the project improved the efficiency and productivity of smallholder farming, reducing labor requirements and creating new pathways for rural women and youth.

The reduction in the labor and drudgery of farming tasks has opened many doors. Farmers can save the costs of hiring additional labor and reinvest that money into their enterprises or households. With a small double-cob shelter producing one ton of kernels in an hour compared to up to 12 days by hand, women can do something else valuable with their time and energy. Entrepreneurs offering mechanization services — often young people who embrace new technologies — can earn a good income while boosting the productivity of local farms.

Mechanization has shown to sustainably improve yields. In Ethiopia, farmers using two-wheel tractors were able to reduce the time needed to establish a wheat crop from about 100 hours per hectare to fewer than 10 hours. In trials, maize and wheat respectively yielded 29% and 22% more on average, compared with using conventional crop establishment methods.

According to its national partners, FACASI has laid the groundwork for cheap and practical two-wheel tractors to proliferate. In Ethiopia, there are currently 88 service providers whose skills has been directly developed through FACASI project interventions.

“This has been a flagship project,” said Ethiopia national coordinator Bisrat Getnet. “It tested and validated the potential for small-scale mechanization and conservation agriculture, it proved that new business models could be profitable, and it opened new pathways for Ethiopian agriculture policy,” he said.

In Zimbabwe, the project has also set the wheels of change in motion. “FACASI demonstrated an opportunity for creating employment and business opportunities through small-scale mechanization,” said Tirivangani Koza, of Zimbabwe’s Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Water and Rural Resettlement.

“With the right funding and policies, there is a very wide and promising scope to scale-up this initiative,” he said.
Seed demand to outstrip supply in the coming seasons...as COVID-19’s several impacts unravel

By CHRISTOPHER OCHIENG OJIEWO, ROHIT PILLANDI*

Sub-Saharan Africa is facing one of its biggest farming crises in living memory. Floods, drought, devastating diseases such as maize lethal necrosis, and pests such as fall armyworm and desert locusts weakened its food supply even before the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown measures. An even bigger problem is looming on the horizon. All these disastrous factors are not only hurting the current crop, but disrupting the supply of quality seed for future harvests. As a result, seed demand is expected to outstrip supply by nearly twice in the coming seasons, based on expert opinions from seven African countries compiled by the AVISA research project.

The challenge for relief organizations and governments will be to ensure availability and access to high-quality seed for the most nutritious crops, so farmers can feed themselves and their nations. Failure to do so could result in a vicious cycle of meagre harvests, malnutrition and poverty.

Supplying certified, high-quality seed is one of the cheapest and most effective ways of achieving future food security. Such quality seed has been selected, bred and treated for drought and disease resistance, high yields, and a short growing period from sowing to harvest. It can double the yield of legumes and cereals, all other things being equal.

In a crisis like the one we are facing right now, seed assistance programmes suddenly face a sharp rise in demand. However, it takes at least a season to produce and supply the required seed, once stocks are exhausted - meaning 3-9 months, depending on the crop. Meanwhile, farmers are likely to resort to sowing ordinary grain that was originally intended as food, not seed. To the naked eye, grain for consumption and high-quality seed for next year’s harvest look the same. A farmer will only know the difference days or weeks after planting, and sometimes not until it’s harvest time.

Many African farmers struggled to obtain quality seed even before the pandemic. There were instances where seed consignments of rice in Mali, sorghum in Burkina Faso and maize in Uganda had lower germination capacity, vigor and genetic purity than expected of quality seed.

One estimate suggests that more than 95% of legume and dryland cereal seeds in Africa are from sources of unknown quality. Such low-quality seed can lead to persistent food insecurity, as harvest after harvest yields disappointing results. The coronavirus crisis is likely to exacerbate this problem. Farm production in the upcoming crop season will probably be low across Africa owing to lockdowns and floods in East Africa.

Relief organizations and governments have recognized that they must step in to prevent a farming crisis that could result in famines, and are preparing to fill a massive seed shortage. They are currently the biggest procurers of seed in Africa, say partners working with the AVISA research project. Seed-producing organizations and agriculture research institutes across Africa have been asked to reserve their seed for relief orders after the pandemic.

In Nigeria, the government and ICRISAT (International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics) are distributing seed to 10,000 farmers to shield them from the impact of COVID-19 and lockdown measures.

One solution is better cooperation between development agencies, seed institutions – private, public and community – and agricultural research organizations at the national and international level. Such linkages exist, albeit in a limited way, and predate COVID-19. Governments and relief agencies could step in to strengthen these links, and facilitate seamless cooperation.

Cooperation with research organizations and seed institutions can help relief agencies access high-quality seed sources. It can also tackle another challenge: helping farmers plant the most suitable crops for long-term food security.

In the present crisis, the most suitable
crops are nutrient-dense cereals and legumes. African cereals such as sorghum, finger millet and pearl millet, and legumes such as groundnut, chickpea, common bean, cowpea and pigeonpea, can help tackle any threat to food and nutrition security in one go. Chickpeas for example are high in iron, zinc and magnesium, and a portion of only 100-200g can meet an adult's daily requirements of those nutrients. They are also high in protein and fiber. Varieties exist that can be sown and harvested within 90 days from sowing.

These nutritious crops are treasured in many African diets, and are part of food systems that have sustained the continent generation after generation.

Chickpea, for instance, is commonly eaten in Ethiopia in the form of shiro, a stew paired with sourdough flatbread. Groundnut soup in Uganda is the main accompaniment of matoke (banana and plantain) staples. Chickpea, pigeonpea, common bean, cowpea and groundnuts are mixed in various proportions with maize to form githeri, a delicacy in many rural homes.

Growing such legumes alongside or in between cereals offers a whole range of benefits to farmers. Legumes help with crop rotation, fix nitrogen in the soil, cover and protect the soil and break the cycle of pest, disease and weed that affects monocultures. Cultivated mostly by women, legumes are typically consumed at home, balancing cereals with proteins, vitamins and micronutrients. Surplus is sold at high prices.

Producing and supplying seed to grow nutritious, suitable and vigorous crops requires agricultural research and development. Agriculture research institutions can help relief agencies promote the right crop and the right variety in the right place, all the way to supporting the best post-harvest management practices such as conditioning, cleaning, drying, storing, and processing the crops.

CGIAR, a global research partnership for a food-secure future, has worked with African governments through its centres, such as the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA) and ICRISAT, to support crisis-hit seed systems. In Ethiopia, a collaboration with the Ethiopian Institute of Agriculture Research ensured access to quality chickpea seed after a drought. In Northern Uganda, post-war relief efforts focused on distributing quality groundnut seed.

If it endures beyond COVID-19, the region-wide cooperation described here could assume early warning capabilities to anticipate spikes in demand for high-quality seeds in certain areas. It would also build links with markets, which are necessary to create resilient supply chains after emergency relief.

A cooperative, connected system would be well-poised to stimulate demand for nutritious foods and promote nourishing diets based on people’s traditional preferences. Ultimately, a solid and well-considered seed system could not just help us respond to this pandemic. It could also help Africa reach its Sustainable Development Goals, and work towards a prosperous future.

*Christopher Ochieng Ojiewo, Principal Scientist, ICRISAT (International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics) in Nairobi, Kenya, while Rohit Pillandi, Senior Communication Officer, ICRISAT (International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics) in Hyderabad, India.*
AfDB appoints new VC for agric projects

The African Development Bank Group AfDB has appointed Wambui Gichuri as Acting Vice President- Agriculture, Human and Social Development.

Wambui joined the AfDB Group in 2018 as Director, Water Development and Sanitation. She currently oversees the Bank’s water sector program of over $4.5 billion covering 44 countries and multinational projects.

She supervises two divisions: the Water Development, Coordination and Partnerships, and Water Security and Sanitation divisions, as well as the African Water Facility divisions, a project preparation facility.

Wambui also leads the development and coordination of the technical program, manages the department’s human resources and budget and the development of extensive partnership activities. Her leadership role includes water sector policy dialogue, strategy and business development, and spearheading innovations.

“The Vice Presidency Complex on Agriculture, Human and Social Development has some of our largest programs and flagship initiatives. With her extensive experience, leadership, people management skills, and strong execution capacity, I am confident that she will help strengthen the team and accelerate execution on critical programs and initiatives,” said President of the African Development Bank Group, Akinwumi Adesina.

Before joining the African Development Bank, she worked for the World Bank where she served in various capacities for twenty-years, including 17 years in water resources management, supply, sanitation, irrigation and drainage, with vast experience in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean.

Wambui holds a Master’s Degree in Economics from the University of Nairobi, Kenya (1988); a Bachelor of Philosophy degree in Economics (1986) and a Bachelor’s degree in Economics and Sociology from (1983) from the same university.
New selective breeding of tilapia strains on the cards

Scotland-based genetics firm Xelect has completed an initial project to pave the way for modern selective breeding of tilapia strains farmed in East Africa.

Following a detailed analysis of the region’s farmed strains, the genetic tools were developed. Xelect undertook the project with funding from Msingi East Africa – an industry development organization that supports the transformation of high potential industries in East Africa to provide genetic analysis and consultancy to the breeders of Nile tilapia around Lake Victoria in Kenya and Uganda.

“Msingi aims to develop competitive, inclusive and resilient industries over the long term and has identified aquaculture and textiles as their two initial priority industries,” said Tom Ashton, Operations Director at Xelect.

According to the company, the project helps local hatcheries lay the foundation for potential long term cutting-edge selective breeding programmes in the region.

Currently there are four producers involved who are all engaged in breeding native strains of tilapia.

“For the smaller farmers, in particular, genetic analysis and updating their breeding programmes is a huge investment. However, this is something that partners like Msingi can assist with and better performing genetic strains would greatly spur growth and competitiveness of the regional industry,” Ashton said.

Tilapia farming in the region has been slow to take off on a commercial basis. The first phase of the project involved Xelect conducting site visits to participating farms, and providing training in DNA sampling to local farmers.
Meyn helps aspiring Poultry Processors in Africa

The global COVID-19 pandemic has had a tremendous impact on human health and the economy worldwide. Poultry processing specialist Meyn is eager to help recover human health and global economy by supporting aspiring poultry processors and farmers in Africa to professionalize their business to achieve higher levels of hygiene, efficiency AND increase their profit.

“Whether it concerns farmers willing to take the first steps into processing, expansion of existing processing plants or exploring the opportunities of increasing yield, we are more than happy to help achieve their ambitions. Small and big. From establishing a facility capable of processing 1,000 birds per hour to expanding towards an astonishing 15,000 birds per hour. Our strength is treating each ambition individually, look for customized solutions, match opportunities in the local market with business potentials and continuously develop concepts and solutions to help and improve this industry.” – Milan van de Beek, area sales manager at Meyn.

One of the most recently launched concepts of Meyn is their LEAP concept: Low investment, Expandable, (semi) Automatic Processing allows poultry processors to professionalize poultry processing with a (semi) Automatic concept. At the start, only minimal investment is needed, after which processors can grow along with their market and expand their plant accordingly. The concept has already proven to be highly successful in Asia.

LEAP allows both independent professionals as well as small businesses to step into the untapped market of (semi) automated processing. Especially now COVID-19 has put the existence of the already contentious wet markets under increased pressure. The main theory that the beginning of COVID-19 could be traced back to a wet market in Wuhan, China, started a global discussion. Especially after earlier outbreaks of SARS and Influenza, which found their roots on similar wet markets. Global health organizations are putting more and more pressure on local authorities around the world to regulate these so-called wet markets.

Close contact between humans and animals demands for further professionalization, improved ratios of health and safety and manageability of the poultry, meat and fish trade.

Meyn wants to simplify taking these necessary steps towards automation. Aspects involved in automation such as logistics, electricity, water usage and filtration, all might be a little overwhelming at the start. Together with various partners such as Chore-Time for livestock handling and Nijhuis for water treatment, Meyn offers a complete package of knowledge, experience and solutions to guide the way.

“At Meyn we think beyond the steel. We stand side by side with processors to identify their potentials and help them develop their plant accordingly. Our support does not stop once a concept is realized. We will continue support a processor by providing necessary spare parts, service, training of staff and providing valuable business advice. We see ourselves more as consultants, as advisors. Only then we can help poultry processors reach their highest potential.” – Milan van de Beek, area sales manager at Meyn.

Interested in starting or scaling up your poultry business? The poultry professionals of Meyn are more than happy to be at your service.

Feel free to read more about the LEAP concept on:

https://www.meyn.com/products/meyn-leap-concept or contact your nearest Meyn Poultry Professional
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