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TANZANIA

SUCCESS STORY

Farmers Market Produce for a Profit

Farmers work together to find new buyers for high quality produce



Photo: USAID/Kim Wylie

Modesta Philipo tends to her cabbage crop, which her family hopes to sell at a good rate through new farmers' associations in Mgeta, Tanzania.

“We’ve laid the foundation and learned how to tackle the problems, not just wait for help,” Vanesta Kibua, vice chairman of the Twighutze Farmers Association.

Telling Our Story
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Five thousand feet above sea level in Tanzania’s Uluguru Mountains — and miles beyond the last power line — lies Mgeta, a place that produces some of Tanzania’s the best fruits and vegetables. Inhabited mostly by the Christian Luguru tribe, Mgeta is one hour up a winding dirt road from Morogoro town and four hours from Dar es Salaam. There is no indoor plumbing, electricity, or public transportation, and crops are hoed by hand. Yet through the persistent efforts of its farmers, high value produce is being grown in abundance. Fruits and vegetables wind their way down to urban areas and onto the tables of Tanzania’s most discerning consumers.

Since 2004, USAID has helped Mgeta’s farmers learn how to capitalize on their horticultural strengths. They have learned to think of agriculture as a business, not just a means of survival. With increasing competition for high quality produce, these farmers have a chance to turn their traditional way of life into an income. They are determined to make their way into Tanzania’s most discerning produce markets.

USAID is assisting them by helping them organize into farmers’ associations. About 500 farmers have joined together to create four different groups. The associations learn about improved seed varieties, new cropping techniques, and how to prevent bruising during shipping. They also pool their resources into “credit circles” that lend cash to members, and farmers work together to locate new and more profitable markets. One new market is the South African chain store Shoprite, the largest and only international supermarket in Tanzania. Shoprite’s fresh produce buyer recently visited Mgeta and the farmer’s vegetable marketing committee. The visit was beneficial for the buyer and sellers, as the buyer was impressed with the quality and variety of vegetables such as leeks and beets, snow peas and parsley. The farmers learned about the need for timely deliveries and consistent supply, and the importance of meeting minimum size standards. As a result, one association has already negotiated sales worth \$850 — almost as much as what some farmers earn all year. The farmers are optimistic. Most recently, they have learned that Shoprite needs 1,200 pieces of baby corn per week and expects demand for white onions to rise. This is welcome news, and brings hope to the farmers of Mgeta.