

EMBARGOED to 0001 Hours, Wednesday 18th June

IMPROVING SMALLHOLDER FARMERS' LIVELIHOODS

The Issue

It is estimated that 8 million smallholder farmers in Africa and Asia are responsible for around 70% of global tea production. Kenya is the world's third largest tea producer and over 60% is produced by smallholders.

However, many smallholders use outdated production methods, often in poor working conditions, which result in poor returns. The challenge for the tea industry is to improve the livelihoods and working conditions of smallholder tea farmers and their workers.

The Project(s)

Kenya's largest smallholder cooperative the Kenya Tea Development Agency (KTDA), introduced Farmer Field Schools in 2008 with support of Unilever and IDH – The Sustainable Trade Initiative. They were designed to help smallholders improve production practices and so improve their livelihoods, and the programme was later combined with Rainforest Alliance certification.

By 2014 KTDA had set up over 1600 Farmer Field Schools for its 560,000 farmers and had achieved Rainforest Alliance certification for its entire production. So far 48,000 farmers have been through the programme and according to KTDA data they are achieving yields on average 36% greater than those who have not been trained and also generating more income from other sources.

IDH and the ETP are now rolling out this integrated approach of Farmer Field Schools and certification in other major African and Asian tea producing countries. Within three years they aim to reach 200,000 more farmers in Kenya, Malawi, Uganda, Rwanda, Tanzania, India and Vietnam.

The FFS approach is a unique, bottom-up, needs-based programme, which trains large numbers of farmers at relatively low-cost. Groups of 30 farmers are trained in so called 'schools without walls' over 12 months, trialing different approaches to farming and learning from experiments in their own fields and from each other. At the end of the training they share their experience with their neighbours so that improved practices are spread across the locality.

At the start of the year farmers are consulted about the key issues affecting both their tea crop and their farm so that the training can be designed around their needs. The FFS tea curriculum includes modules on integrated soil management, harvest- and post-harvest management, eco-system conservation, composting techniques, replanting and rejuvenation and agronomic management. Common additional topics cover diversification of income, HIV-Aids, kitchen gardens to improve nutrition and food security.

The Farmer Field School methodology is increasingly recognised as the most effective mechanism to generate improvements for smallholder tea farmers. Partners in rolling out the

programme include tea packers such as Tata Global Beverages (who produce Tetley), Taylors of Harrogate (who produce Yorkshire Tea) and Unilever (makers of PG Tips) as well as development partners such as the Wood Family Trust and the Gatsby Charitable Foundation.

Case study

An independent impact assessment on Kenya's Farmer Field Schools, *For all the tea in Kenya* (2014) by LEI - Wageningen University, reported that farmers who have been through the programme have:

- improved production and yield
- increased gross margins
- better farm management
- greater diversification of income
- better living standards
- improved health and safety

It found that average yields increased for all Kenyan tea farmers from 1.22 kg/bush in 2012 to 1.54 kg/bush in 2014 but that the increase was 30% higher for FFS participants.

FFS farmers have become ambassadors for improved practices. The study showed that they share more information and knowledge with others and that more FFS farmers experiment with new agricultural practices.



“In the Farmer Field School I learned when you prune and pluck tea properly you have high yields; I am now also growing crops such as tomatoes and even carrots!” Kenyan Tea Farmer

