

A New Regional Manager for AgriTrade in Eastern Region, Kenya

By Samwel Oranja¹

AgriTrade has extended its network to Eastern Kenya where they have a new Regional Manager, Samwel Oranja. He is working with two Market Access Companies (MACs); Penguin MAC and Kathonzweni MAC East Grain Traders. Samwel's team attended the Nakuru Trade Fair in November 2009 where he exchanged ideas for trading links with other AgriTrade network members. Samwel will be one of the 'champion' network members who will be participating in the Traidcraft Training in 2010.



Jonathan Wambua, Pauline Nyamai, Samwel Oranja, Cecilia Mbithe, Francisca Kieti; representatives of the AgriTrade team from Eastern Kenya

Introducing Samwel Oranja

My name is Samwel Oranja. I am working with Agritrade as the Regional Manager for Lower Eastern. Our area covers Machakos, Kitui, Mwingi and Makueni districts. I am based in Wote town the districts' headquarters for Makueni and that's where I will be operating from. Wote town is located along the Machakos to Makindu road and is 73 km from Machakos town and almost the same distance to Makindu on the main Mombasa to Nairobi highway.

The area is largely semi-arid, but a lot of agricultural activities are taking place. The main crops are pigeon peas, cowpeas, green grams and there is a lot interest in sunflower.

¹ Interviewed by Anne Dennig in November 2009

Maize and beans are also grown but not on a large scale. Cotton is also grown in most areas and fruits like mangoes, citrus and watermelon. There is also beekeeping in most parts of the districts.

MAC and IB Networks

In our region we have two main MACs; Penguin Market and Information Centre (PMIC) in Wote which, in addition to a board at their premises, has Information Boards (IBs) in Wote, Emali, and Matiliku markets. Our second MAC is Kathonzweni East Grain Traders (KGT), which has IBs at their premises and in Kathonzweni, and Kitise markets. Another IB at Makindu is yet to be established. We receive market information from AgriTrade for our boards and regularly send in prices from the Wote market.

Business Opportunities

We are exploring opportunities for working with BIDCO to link the sunflower farmers to the market. We have also had discussions with Equity Bank for a loan to buy pigeon peas to store and sell in bulk.

Penguin MAC and Information Centre



Cecilia Mbithe (IBM Wote) and Francisca Kieti (FFS Kithundi)

At Penguin MAC, the premises where we have one of our IBs combines computer training and services with an agrovet shop. To put an advert on our boards costs Ksh 100/ per week; at Wote market we advertise bids and offers.

Through the agrovet business we link the farmers to quality seeds of suitable varieties for this semi-arid area, which we get from the local research centre. We also act as a link to the market for the farmers. One of these links is with the Kithundi Farmer Field School where farmers are producing pigeon peas to sell both as seeds and grains. There is also a new project for cassava and new variety of sweet potato.

Kathonzweni MAC East Grain Traders



Jonathan Wambua and Pauline Nyamai of Kathonzweni East Grain Traders

Pauline Nyamai and Jonathan Wambua run KGT MAC. The main activities of the MAC are linking producers and buyers; buying and selling grains; selling baskets and traditional cakes made from local produce such as finger millet; providing training services to the beekeepers, manufacturing and supplying modern hives and equipment and marketing honey, wax and propolis. Jonathan would like to be able to get a bigger market for the beekeepers in his area through links to AgriTrade.



Jonathan and Pauline displaying honey, beekeeping equipment and finger millet cake at the Nakuru Trade Fair

Plans for Expanding the Network

We have plans to extend our network and establish MACs in Kalawa and Mumbuni in Mbooni District. We intend to be a strategic link within the network; however we feel that we need more training to get up to the level of the other regions.

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