



SUCCESS STORY

Better Techniques Boost Farmer's Sales

Simple improvements dramatically impact a woman's farm and life



Photo: Fintrec Inc.

Rodah Kibuchi, left, learns about drip irrigation from USAID expert Harrigan Mukhongo, right, and a consultant.

"I am very happy because with the increased income, I have been able to buy a dairy cow for the family's milk, educate my grandchildren and build a better house. Now, I don't struggle to buy the farm inputs needed to maintain the high yields: seeds, fertilizer, and chemicals," said Rodah Kibuchi, a Kenyan farmer who improved her farming techniques thanks to USAID's program.

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Rodah Kibuchi's crops were so spoiled by pests and diseases that she had to uproot them. The 66-year-old widow, and mother of 10, had minimal skills in crop management, and her farm was water scarce. Her future in farming looked bleak.

Then Rodah learned that a USAID program was assisting her farming cooperative in central Kenya by training farmers in advanced horticultural production techniques. The program helped set up three joint demonstration sites in collaboration with a private sector seed supplier, where Rodah and over 470 other cooperative farmers learned about land preparation, nursery management, transplanting, crop rotation, field hygiene and pest and disease identification and control. Upon carrying out soil analysis, the program identified potassium deficiency among its nutrients. Experts taught farmers how to apply fertilizer and manure to improve soil;

introduced high-yielding hybrid varieties of tomatoes, cabbages and onions; and trained extension service providers on better horticulture crop management. To reduce moisture stress and improve plant growth and productivity, the program set up drip irrigation demonstration sites. Farmers have since adopted and installed the technology on their farms. The program also trained farmers in business management, including record-keeping, cost analysis and market linkages.

Rodah used to grow sweet potatoes and coffee. When coffee prices plummeted and production problems increased, she struggled. But now, like others in her cooperative, she has diversified into growing beans, bananas, cabbages, tomatoes and onions. Crop diversification has provided new sources of income. With her \$280 investment for drip irrigation, new crops and improved production practices, Rodah's revenue in 2006 averages \$200 a month — 30 percent higher than in 2004.

Today, Rodah's crops are thriving, and so is her income.