

Rainforest Alliance Sustainable Agriculture Project: Capacity building and market access through sustainable interventions



Left to right: Lead Farmer Rahab Angila Roba, Factory worker tends to a tea tree nursery at the Iriaini Tea Factory, Small scale tea growers and the Partner Africa trainer assess the crop in central province, Lead Farmers attend a training session on safe use of agrochemicals at Nduti Tea Factory

The tea growing regions of Kenya possess the ideal climate for growing tea: tropical, volcanic red soils and good, regular rainfall alternating with long sunny days. Kenya is the fourth largest global producer and exporter of tea, with small scale farmers (< 0.5 acre) producing 60% of this volume. But many small scale tea growers have found it increasingly difficult to make a living, as the price of tea has dropped for over two decades and there are increasing demands for more sustainable practices that foster biodiversity and conserve the local environment.

Following a pilot study in 2009 by Unilever and the Kenya Tea Development Agency (KTDA), it was recognised that if small scale tea growers could achieve Rainforest Alliance certification there would be social, environmental and financial rewards and growers could attain higher prices through more efficient practices and improved product quality.

In 2010 Partner Africa helped develop a training and capacity building programme to embed sustainable agricultural practices in smallholder tea production to enable smallholder farmers to achieve Rainforest Alliance certification, which then helps them to access to global markets.

Partner Africa works to transfer skills and knowledge to producers across Africa to effect and embed sustainable change through the use of local people to offer local solutions. This programme was designed to achieve this through the selection and training of Lead Farmers, who then transferred their gained knowledge and skills from the Partner Africa training to other farmers in the region.

Training modules included: improving production efficiency, biodiversity conservation and sustainable community development through implementation of social and environment standards.

"The lessons that we've learned through the trainers from Partner Africa I believe will improve our lives today and tomorrow. I've been trained as a Lead Farmer, and am now passing on this knowledge to 150 other farmers from my area" - Rahab Angila

Key Outputs:

- **A total of 2000 Lead Farmers and 600 factory workers received training**
- **These Lead Farmers then went on to train 575,000 small scale tea farmers across Kenya**

An independent impact assessment study¹ found that following the training, farmer knowledge and implementation of good agricultural practices increased significantly. Productivity, quality and income all increased for trained farmers. Environmental benefits included improved waste management, soil conservation, water management and wildlife protection. In addition to increased income another key social benefit reported was improved health and safety for workers. 84% of trained farmers said they benefited from training.

"As a certified factory, Kanyenya-ini now operates with confidence in the tea sector locally and internationally." - Mr. Murithi - Field Services Coordinator, Kanyenya-ini Tea Factory.

Watch a video about this work here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZCtk7_mC0gI

¹ LEI Wageningen University 2012