



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

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Mosquito Net Company Partners with Research Institutions to Tackle Crop Pests



B. Dawson

Tanzanian company A to Z Textile Mills provided nets in field trials to find effective crop pest prevention strategies.

Bed nets are nothing new in international development, but a leading company in mosquito netting has turned its attention – and its nets – toward improving agriculture.

Under Feed the Future, a collaborative research project has brought together A to Z Textile Mills in Tanzania with agricultural researchers to test the utility of its nets for growing fruits and vegetables.

The project is funded through the Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Collaborative Research on Horticulture, with researchers from Michigan State University, [CIRAD](#) of France, Egerton University in Kenya, Abomey-Calavi University in Benin, the Kenya Agricultural Research Institute and the National Agricultural Research Institute in Benin (INRAB).

Through field trials, this team is fine-tuning how smallholder farmers can use the nets to mitigate damage from insect pests and improve micro-climates in vegetable plots. Similar to its long-lasting insecticidal bed nets, A to Z's "AgroNets" were developed both with and without chemical treatments to evaluate which kinds of nets best protect different crops. The nets can also be re-used for multiple growing seasons.

"This technology is, for the first time, adapted to smallholder farmers and available in Africa because of the mosquito net industry," says Thibaud Martin, a CIRAD scientist based in Kenya. "This technology is truly an effective alternative to chemical use."

With the intention of eventually selling nets to farmers commercially, A to Z donated nets and supplied their transport for the purposes of the research project, delivering 1.5 tons of netting to Benin, Kenya and CIRAD partners in just the first six months.

"Partnership with A to Z was critical to the success of this project," says Mathieu Ngouajio, professor at Michigan State University and a leader of the Horticulture Innovation Lab project. "They have made all the fine-tuning that we needed on the nets and supplied our team with the material for field studies. Without that type of support, it would have been impossible to achieve our project goals."

After two years of research, results in Kenya show the nets can indeed reduce pests and increase yields in tomato, cabbage, kale, onion, French bean, melon and carrot crops. Farmers have also tried the nets with other crops such as sweet peppers,

amaranth, spider plant and strawberries.

“Use of AgroNets on cabbages, tomatoes (both field and nursery), French beans and melons is not only efficacious against pests, but also offers great business potential for A to Z,” says Hubert Coffi, agronomist with A to Z’s research unit, the Africa Technical Research Center.

In Benin, adoption of the nets by farmers has been particularly high. More than 75 percent of farmers who participated in the trials adopted the nets for use with nursery production.

Since the project started, the team has received additional funding from CIRAD, INRAB, Ecohort, Katarina University, SupAgro Foundation and the French embassies in Benin and Kenya.

“Moving toward agriculture is for us a key strategic pillar for the coming years because it will help us to expand and diversify our operations and revenue stream while creating more jobs,” says Dr. Johnson Odera, director of the Africa Technical Research Center. “We still believe in the future of agriculture in Africa, and we want to be part of this success story.”

[Watch this video](#) on the project to learn more. The [Horticulture Innovation Lab](#), funded by USAID under Feed the Future and led by the University of California, Davis, builds international partnerships for fruit and vegetable research to improve livelihoods in developing countries.