



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

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South Sudan Farmers Boost Harvests and Help with Emergency Response



Jessica Scranton/Abt Associates

Michael Kalisto, chair of the Mapuso farmers cooperative group, whose yields have more than doubled using improved Longe 5 maize seed.

The civil war that erupted in South Sudan in December 2013 has greatly exacerbated food insecurity, with 2.8 million people—approximately a quarter of the population—facing acute food insecurity. Throughout this crisis, Feed the Future has continued working with farmers in the Equatoria region, which has overall been less affected by the conflict than some parts of South Sudan.

For 14,000 smallholders in the country, a USAID-funded Feed the Future project has been a much-needed source of skills training in modern farming practices, market linkages and organizational development.

In South Sudan's Equatoria region—the country's breadbasket—USAID-supported farmers have seen dramatic improvements in their yields and farm size. In 2011, farmer groups began to learn about certified Longe 5 maize seed and other improved planting material. The Longe 5 variety, one of several developed in East Africa, is highly productive and matures quickly, making it less vulnerable to a wide range of climatic conditions while taking advantage of South Sudan's two growing seasons.

Average maize yields grew from 800 kilograms per hectare using traditional seed to 3,000 kilograms per hectare—a 375 percent increase between 2011 and 2016.

In Western Equatoria, the seed—with training and help from a project-supported extension agent—made a huge difference for the five women and 17 men of the Mapuso farmers' cooperative society. When this group started working with the project in 2013, its members were harvesting about 1,400 kilograms of maize on a communal plot of less than one hectare. The harvest barely met the group's needs and left no surplus to sell.

But after farming with Longe 5, yields more than doubled, said Michael Kalisto, chair of the Mapuso group. They then sold enough surplus to purchase processing equipment and expanded the size of their farm.

"Our local variety used to grow tiny and not well-seeded," Kalisto said. "The Longe 5 has changed my farming and encouraged me to increase my cultivation."

Many of the farmers have found regular buyers for their surpluses as they move beyond subsistence farming toward “one to eat, one to sell.” In line with the U.S. Government’s climate-smart agriculture approach, the farmers have also learned about new agricultural technologies that help their households weather uncertain climatic conditions such as irregular rainy seasons.

To reach these smallholders, Feed the Future worked through 731 farmer groups. Their members had long relied on traditional farming methods to compensate for local seeds’ low germination rates and productivity. Through project trainings and demonstration plots, these farmers learned modern principles of Good Agricultural Practices, post-harvest handling and storage, and crop conditioning—with advice specific to each crop.

Many are selling aggregated surpluses through their farmer groups to regular buyers including the World Food Program, which partners with USAID and other donors to deliver food assistance to people in need in South Sudan.

Longe 5 helps farmers in other ways too. As an open-pollinated variety, it can maintain productivity for three generations before new certified seed must replace it. This allows the farmers to keep and expand seed supplies, reducing their expenses. Longe 5 is also a quality protein maize, containing high levels of vital amino acids like lysine, making it more nutritious for children.

“We really appreciate the higher productivity of the new maize that helps us meet our home needs,” said Jeris Meli of the Mesikin farmer-based organization in Central Equatoria, another group that worked with USAID.

Demand for the new variety has been strong, and USAID continues to distribute it to new participants. As a first step toward a sustainable South Sudanese source for this vital technology, USAID supported a local seed company that identified and trained 131 farmers to serve as seed multipliers. After receiving certified Longe 5 seed, these farmers will retain part of their harvest and sell it back to the local company, increasing the amount of climate-smart nutritious seed available through South Sudanese channels.

“We need this seed,” Kalisto said. “This is what we missed for a long time.”