



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

Online Version: <https://www.feedthefuture.gov/article/plant-plate-kenya%E2%80%99s-national-horticulture-traceability-system>

From Plant to Plate: Kenya's National Horticulture Traceability System



USAID/Kenya

Farmer Joseline Ntinyari grows snow peas on her small plot of land, and thanks to her partnership with Vegpro, she now has a secure market for her produce. Also pictured: Joseline's daughter and James Gichuru, a Vegpro technical assistant.

Kenya's horticulture industry faced a challenge in 2013—one that led to company shutdowns, a sharp decline in exports and lost livelihoods for more than 5,000 agricultural workers.

In July of that year, the European Union (EU) began mandatory pesticide inspections. These inspections applied to 10 percent of the beans and peas that arrive to EU ports from countries, including Kenya, whose produce is considered to have high amounts of pesticide residue. As a result, a high number of Kenyan beans and peas were intercepted, and because a significant share of them are sent to the EU, these produce rejections had a serious impact on the country's \$930 million export horticulture industry. The sector saw a 50 percent decline in total exports. Smallholder farmers were disproportionately affected, as they produce 80 percent of these exports.

To address this problem, Feed the Future supported the development and institutionalization of a national Horticulture Traceability System (HTS). Use of this system resulted in a 2015 decision by EU authorities to remove Kenyan beans from the list of produce subject to the mandatory 10 percent inspection. Total exports of Kenyan horticulture have since rebounded from their precipitous decline.

The HTS is designed to ensure the transparent and accurate collection, analysis and exchange of critical supply chain data from production to distribution. The system includes three components: a mobile application to capture and upload information at the farm (including farm inputs used, agronomic practices applied and produce harvested and delivered for export); a web reporting portal for central data storage and sharing; and a labeling system that produces quick reference (QR) codes that can be read using a mobile phone with a QR reader.

The system's database includes 1,446 farms; 50 field produce collection centers; and 12 warehouses that provide real-time updates on growers and input suppliers, share farm activity data between exporting companies and field workers, and provide relevant information between government regulatory agencies about HTS sources of non-compliance. This reduces the time needed for investigation and for applying necessary corrective measures, and because the system is fully visible to importers, exporters and the government, it helps strengthen food control systems and enhance the sector's competitiveness.

Smallholders in Kenya are using the system to meet market and regulatory requirements for food safety and traceability. "This initiative allows farmers and government agencies to adopt innovative technologies and traceability best practices while enhancing the profile of Kenya as a source of safe, high-quality produce," said Dr. Steve New, director of the Kenya Agricultural Value Chain Enterprises project.

Farmers like Joseline Ntinyari and Douglas Kiriimi from Meru County are eagerly working to produce clean produce for the export market. "With technical assistance providing QR codes that identify my produce before packaging and export, I can now sell my produce to Vegpro [Kenyan exporter of fruits and vegetables] and the income I receive helps pay my children's school fees," said Ntinyari. She added, "I have learned how to prepare my farm and ensure my produce is clean and free from pesticides."

Kiriimi, a 28-year-old smallholder who, for the past 5 years, has been contracted to produce for Vegpro, is confident greater things will come in the future. "So far, I have been able to venture into dairy farming and even built a house for my family," he said. "I hope to buy land in the next 3 years and venture into new businesses."