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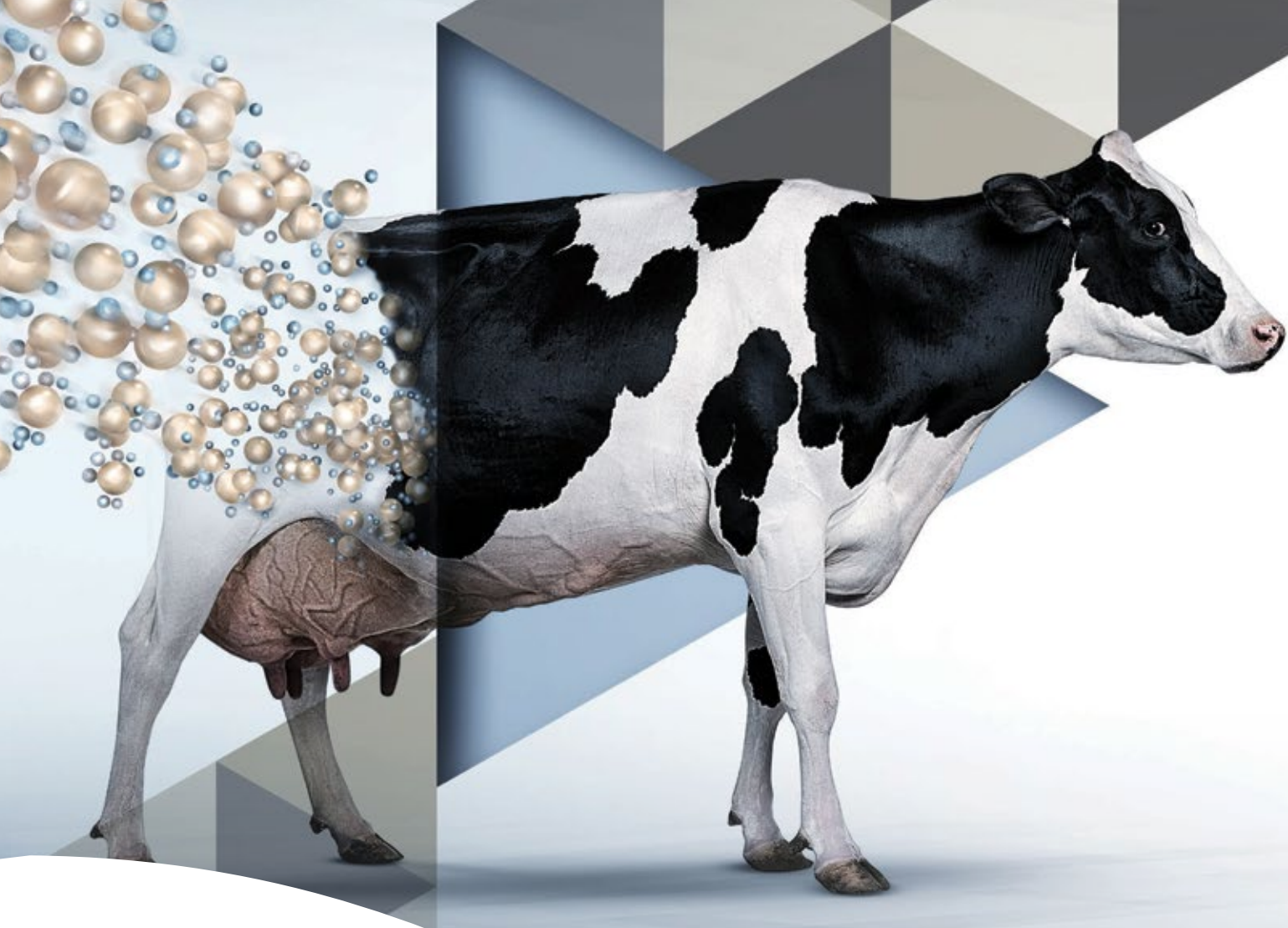
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EDITORIAL

ADDRESS BASIC PROBLEMS IN AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

Although agriculture is the backbone of Kenya's economy, it is one sector faced with numerous challenges that hinder its growth. Apart from natural calamities that hit the country once in a while, affecting production, administrative policy failures can be sighted as major hindrance to the growth.

Given the scenario, the government should and ought to implement policies that will revive the sector. Key to the failures is corruption that have permeated into the heart of the country.

Kenyan farmers need commendation for their efforts to continue production despite the many challenges they face. For instance, in the recent past, farmers across the country complained over lack of subsidized fertilizers especially in the North Rift which is the country's food basket. This delayed planting. One would have expected availability of the input long before the planting season.

Another challenge is failure by government agencies to purchase farmers produce on time. Even after delivery of stocks, it takes time before they are paid. These challenges discourage farmers from stepping up production.

Recently, rice farmers in Kirinyaga County and other rice growing areas complained bitterly for failure by Kenya National Trading Corporation (KNTC) to purchase their produce lying in their stores. Yet, the government authorised importation of rice from Pakistan and elsewhere duty free. This is contradicting its own policies. One should have expected to first exhaust local production before importation.

All along, the government policy is to make Kenya a food self-sufficient country for domestic use and export. There is also a provision for strategic food reserves to last the country for at least three years in case of natural calamities like drought or floods. These well defined policies are gathering dust in offices for lack of implementation.

It is sad that Kenya has become a net importer of staple foods like maize from our neighbouring countries. What has gone wrong that turns Kenya into a net importer of basic food? These are the concerns the government should urgently address and rectify.

Farmers for sometime have advocated reintroduction of guaranteed minimum returns (GMR) as an incentive. The GMR which was stopped some years ago guaranteed farmers safety of their produce, market and better produce prices. This is what farmers are asking for from the government.

Although agriculture is a devolved function, the two levels of government should collaborate and work together to ensure it is given the priority it deserves. A country cannot prosper if it cannot feed its own people. This is a serious concern for those in authority to address.

At least coffee farmers are happy to see President William Ruto recently launch coffee revival through cooperative societies promising to raise production from 50,000 tonnes to 150,000 tonnes by year 2027, and also increase coffee growing from current 110,000 hectares to 150,000. This is a step in the right direction as farmers will benefit

from good prices experienced in the international market.

In the same vain, the government should revive other cash crops like pyrethrum, cotton, sunflower and others that were abandoned due to lack of market. Actually, poor policies and mismanagement of the sectors were the main reason for the collapse.

On the pyrethrum sector, Kenya supplied over 60 percent of the world market and employed thousands of workers and farmers. Since the government has indicated its desire to revive the sector, it should work closely with counties to ensure we regain the lost world market.

The same incentive should also apply to cotton. There is potential to step up production to benefit farmers. The county government should take the lead to ensure farmers earn decent profits from cotton that once thrived in 1980s.

Another area to focus on is value addition to agricultural products in order to give it monetary value. Currently the country exports its agricultural produce in raw form for buyers to go and process, brand and claim originality. There should be a deliberate policy to ensure all produce are processed, branded and labelled locally before export. This will add value to our products across board.

It does not make sense that we sell our cherry coffee to international buyers who process, brand and label and then sell it back to us at a high premium. It is time to explore new grounds in value addition.

PUBLISHED BY

Farmview Media Services

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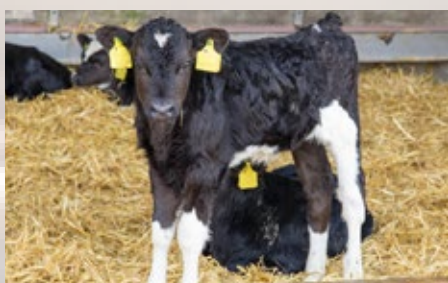
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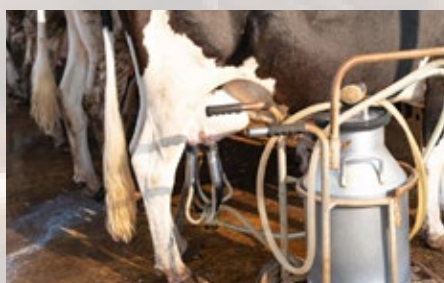


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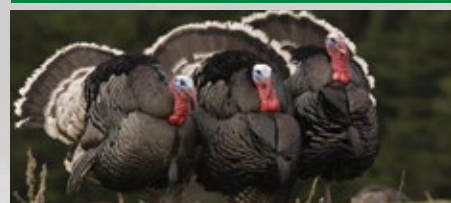
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Tap goat milk for Nutrition and high income



A kid being breast fed from the mother

In Kenya, milk is literally associated with cows, which explains why the idea of dairy goat rearing is rather hard. However, this is gradually changing precisely because goat milk is quite nutritious, making the rearing of these small animals worthwhile.

Dairy experts explain that because of its specific fat and protein structure, a goat's milk "is naturally homogenised and tends to form softer, looser curds than a cow's". This makes it easier for people to digest and it is a popular alternative for those with sensitivities to cow dairy.

Goat milk is considered more nutritious than cow milk due to its superior digestibility, higher

concentrations of certain vitamins (such as Vitamin A) and a fatty acid profile that promotes better absorption of essential minerals such as iron and calcium. While both are nutrient-dense, goat milk has a few distinct structural and nutritional advantages.

Scientific studies have shown that the minerals in goat milk (calcium, phosphorus and magnesium) are absorbed and utilised more readily and efficiently by the body than those found in cow milk. It has also been established that goat milk contains up to 46 per cent more Vitamin A than cow milk.

Consuming goat milk, the experts argue, is a reliable means of supporting vision, skin health and immune functions.

Research has also established that goat milk has up to six times more substance or prebiotics that promote healthy gut bacteria than what is found in standard cow milk

In Kenya, goat rearing thrives depending on the specific climate and the farming objective. Meat goats, especially the Galla and Boer breeds, do better in the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALs). But the dairy goats are highly profitable in the cool, high-potential agricultural highlands and peri-urban centres in the country.

Meat Goat Production

Baringo County (Mogotio/ Marigat), Kajiado County (Kisaju), Laikipia, Samburu,

Marsabit, and the Ukambani region (Kitui, Machakos, and Makueni) have the highest numbers of goats for meat production.

These areas are dominated by the Galla and Boer goats. The Galla goats are indigenous, drought-tolerant and excellent at converting dry vegetation into high-quality meat that is sought in Nairobi and other major towns, across the country.

Dairy Goat Production

Dairy goat rearing is thriving in Kiambu, Nyeri, Nyandarua, Meru, Tharaka Nithi, and Uasin Gishu counties. These are the cooler, high-altitude regions that are perfect for dairy breeds such as Saanen, Toggenburg and Alpine.

The high demand of milk, especially on the outskirts of the big towns, dairy goat farming is also expanding on a huge commercial scale in peri-urban zones around major cities of Nairobi, Kisumu and Nakuru. In Nairobi, farmers sell fresh milk, between Sh150 to Sh200 per litre. They also engage in value-addition, selling yogurt directly to village shops, restaurants, hotels and to individual health-conscious consumers.

Goat milk production is a vital and growing sub-sector, providing vital household nutrition and secondary income for farmers. The country produces about 6.3 million litres of dairy goat milk annually. A well-managed dairy goat yields between 2 and 4 litres per day, supporting both local consumption and supplying the dairy cooperative societies. High-yielding dairy goat breeds in

Kenya are typically exotic introductions that have adapted well to local highland and semi-arid conditions. The most common include: Alpine (German, British, French, and Kenyan). This one is well-known for gentle temperament, heat tolerance and great twinning ability.

Dairy goats often known as the “queen of dairy goats, is famous for its high milk yields. The Toggenburg is valued for its hardiness and adaptability to varying Kenyan climates.

Proper feeding and care are critical to maximising milk yields and maintaining herd health (preventing diseases such as pneumonia).

A standard dairy goat diet includes dairy meals/concentrates. This is given at milking time to boost energy. Roughage and silage is the harvested fodder or Napier grass. Clean water and mineral

blocks are essential for lactation.

Market & Value Addition

However, the Kenyan dairy goat rearing sub-sector is dominated by small-scale producers who face major challenges. These include inconsistent supply. However, farmers are increasingly turning to making of value-added products.

Farmers and cooperatives process raw goat milk into higher-value products to boost shelf life and profitability. These are yoghurt, cheese, body creams and soaps.

The small-scale farmers are increasingly being supported by regional bodies and cooperative societies. Farmers are encouraged to join the Dairy Goat Association of Kenya (DGAK) where they can be trained by experts the best methods to increase productivity. The local goats can also produce milk if properly coordinated and reared properly.



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Various feeding stages of Cows from birth to lactation



Calves in feedlot

A dairy cow is a significant investment for your farm. Indeed, a cow which produces significant quantities and qualities of milk will not only avail food for your family, it can also offer an extra source of income for yourself and family.

Moreover, dairy cow farming also contributes significantly to employment, within and outside the firm. For instance, farming supports a large farming service sector which offers specialized and key services in the nutrition as well as the health sectors. In addition, manure from dairy cows can also contribute significantly to improving soil fertility, more so in this era where there is rampant deforestation and deteriorating soil fertility.

Indeed, having proper feeding and management practices for your cows right from birth till lactation will contribute significantly to the health and well-being of your cow, as well as maximum output in form of higher yields of milk.

Calf Rearing

However, it is important to know that feed varieties and types differ depending on the age of the cow. For instance, for a calf, the first 24 hours are essential for development and creating the immunity of your newborn calf.

In the first hour of calving, the initial colostrum is most especially important for your calf, as it determines your calf's resistance and immunity from diseases. The first colostrum milk is packed with essential nutrients and minerals which build a strong immunity system for your calf, protecting it from any potential diseases during this sensitive phase of their lives. At this stage, the colostrum becomes a very important meal that your cow can ever have. Moreover, the absorption capacity for antibodies, minerals and essential nutrients during this hour is the highest and it gradually continues to decrease with every passing moment.

Indeed, during this time, the most important consideration during feeding is considering the quality, temperature of colostrum, speed as well as volume. As some experts recommend, you should feed your calf at least four liters of milk and the quality of your colostrum must be assessed if it contains enough antibodies as well as purity (you can do this using the colostrum meter and optical measures).

In the proceeding 24 hours of life, you can continue feeding them colostrum, albeit 2 liters of colostrum milk. Indeed, after having a good feed, your calf can rest for a while, at least 12 hours before feeding the next meal to your calf. Indeed, about 6 liters of milk a day is enough for your cow.

During the proceeding phases of your calf's life, before growing into a full cow, the transition milk and subsequent normal milk offers a good feed for your cow. Transition milk, which is essentially the milk following the colostrum, should be fed to your calf. It is important to note that normal milk

administered to a calf should have a temperature of at least 40 degrees Celsius. As some experts recommend, it is important for the calf to drink the milk much quickly, as this may have a desirable impact on the quality of the milk being produced.

Feeding your growing Heifer

This phase of a cow's life is essentially a period of continual growth, and may last considerably up to the 15th month of the calf's life. During this time, the most important aspect is maintaining its body weight, a good frame for the cow, as well as for production purposes. For a growing cow, standard weight should be between 500 and 800 g per day, for achievement of its weaning targets.

For this stage, you may consider switching to young stock supplements, most of which are available monthly. For instance, some heifers may require 1 to 2 kg of feed dependent on the state of the animal, as well as the quantity of pasture or fodder. Moreover, you should also incorporate additional supplements, such as stock lick, in addition to water,

to be provided every day to the animal all day. However, if you have good quality pasture, your heifers can still do well without the supplements. As you do this, your heifer will continue to grow. Please note that you should not over-feed your heifers, as this can reduce the conception rates of the heifer. The pasture to feed your cattle should be legumes, such as Desmodium, shrubs and young herbs.

Feeding a heifer is also a sensitive period of the calf's life, especially before calving. As a farmer, you should work to provide nutrients that meet the high demands of pregnancy. A common practice, often known as 'steaming up' is essentially the practice of feeding your cow significant amounts of dairy meal before calving.

The purpose of this is essentially preparing your cow for pregnancy, and is often done during the last six to eight weeks before calving. Moreover, feeding your animal well during this period in time also ensures the calf to be born is healthier and more resistant to diseases, ensuring it grows and develops much faster. Moreover the young heifer at this period

would also need a lot of nutrients to meet the growing demand of accommodating a new being.

Feeding a Lactating Cow

Generally, lactating cows ought to be fed fodder and forage of good quality, as well as dairy meal in proportion to the amount of milk produced. During this phase, the key target of feeding the cow should be to maximize milk output (in quantity and quality of production.) This is why dairy meal is an important aspect of feeding at this stage.

During this period, if the quality of your forage is poor, you will need to administer more dairy meal to your cow, however noting and observing the limits of daily intake, as not observing this will increase your milk production costs, in so doing reducing your profits.

If you observe all the requirements and properly feed your dairy cow, right from the calf stage to the heifer and subsequently cow stage, not only will you have a healthy and well-maintained cow, you will also have higher outputs and milk production, which will be profitable for your farm business.



A calf being fed with colostrum

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Milking tips and ways

To handle milk



Milking cows using milking machine

Milking must be carried out in shady or roofed milking place, which is clean and dry. The animal, the milker, the utensils and the surroundings must be clean. Keep your cow clean, particularly before milking.

Milking tips

Feed the cow with hay in a net rather than on the ground. The net helps to save a great deal of hay wastage. Before milking prepare the cow. Make sure the cow is calm and comfortable before starting to milk. Do not beat or shout at it.

Give it some food - put concentrates in the feed trough before bringing the cow into the milking place. If you tie your cow, do not tie it too tightly or restrict

it excessively. Have a stool to sit on and a bucket for the milk. Always sit on the same, normally placed the right, side of the cow.

Wash your hands with hot water

Wipe the udder, clean using a clean udder cloth immersed in warm water. Straw steadily, removing dung and urine. This helps to keep a comfortable temperature.

Massage and rub the whole udder gently with a clean dry towel and wipe it dry. Take hold of the base of the teat and squeeze with thumb and forefinger. Start with the 2 front quarters. After finishing these move to the back quarters.

Never do "strip milking" by pulling the teat. Close the other 3

fingers and squeeze them in turn. This will push the milk downwards and expel it. Repeat this in a rhythmic way.

Farmer's Tip:

Gently rubbing the cow's udder and teats for about half a minute before milking stimulates the production of hormones that will cause faster letdown of milk

Check for Mastitis

Milk the first drops from each teat onto the palm or back of your hand or strip cup to observe milk clots. Always discard these first drops. Do not add it to the other milk. In case you observe clots from a teat, milk that quarter last and keep that milk separate.

Establish a calm regular milking routine

Try to milk at a 12 hour interval at the same times of the day. Milk regularly but quickly and make sure you empty the udder at each milking.

Teat dipping

After milking, rinse each teat in an antiseptic teat dip, udder wash or iodine. This helps to prevent mastitis.

Milk Handling

Weigh and record the amount of milk of each cow collected. Filter the milk through a clean cloth and pour it into the milk can through a suitable strainer, like a muslin cloth or a tissue strainer, when you empty the milking pail into a milk can.

Take the milk to a separate room to filter and seal it. Keep the milk can closed and keep it in a cool place before you take it to a milk collection centre. In case, the milk has to stay overnight, milk processors advise that its temperature must be kept as low as possible by cooling. Quantities of milk under 30kg can be cooled using a cold water bath.

Immerse the can of milk in the water bath immediately after milking. Never add the milk of a cow, that you are treating for mastitis. Also never add colostrum to the milk delivered.

Cleaning the equipment

To ensure that your equipment stays clean even after continuous use, the following procedure is recommended:

- a) Start by rinsing the equipment using cold water.
- b) Wash the equipment using plenty of hot water. Always use a suitable scrubbing item, such as a nylon brush, scouring pad or makonge.
- c) Rinse the equipment again using hot water mixed with a suitable disinfectant. Your local agri-chemical dealer can advise you on the best one to use. If possible, use steam to sterilize your equipment. It is very effective. Air-dry the equipment under sunlight on a suitably aerated drying rack.

Machine Milking

Using single Milker Milking Machine

Modern milking machines are capable of milking cows quickly and efficiently, without injuring the udder, if they are properly installed, maintained in excellent operating conditions, and used properly.

The milking machine performs two basic functions; It opens the streak canal through the use of a partial vacuum, allowing the milk

to flow out of the teat cistern through a line to a receiving container.

Processing

Since milk market liberalisation in May 1992, competition in milk processing and marketing has increased significantly in the industry. Brookside Dairy started their operations in 1993 soon after the liberalization of the dairy sector in Kenya.

The company was formally registered under the co-operatives societies act on November 26, 1996. Since inception, quality has been the driving force behind the company's growth.

Brookside process and distribute a wide range of products, which include fresh pasteurized milk, cream, butter, yoghurt, lala, ghee, and long life milk products. This is coupled with overwhelming support from the farmers as well as the consumer population. In order to secure solid base in procurement of raw milk, the company has established collection centres countrywide.



A tightly tied cow being milked

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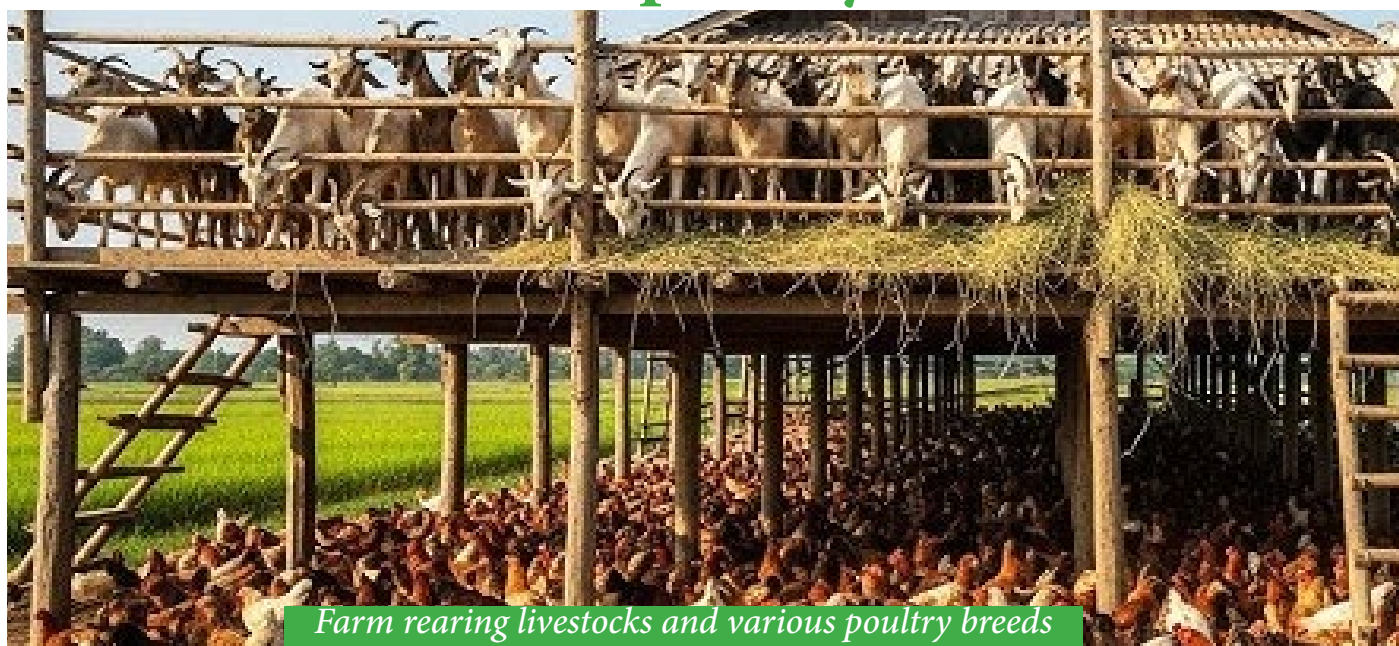


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A mixed farm with diversified Livestock, poultry breeds



Farm rearing livestock and various poultry breeds

Most farmers rarely diversify their ventures. The few we know largely concentrate on one of the farming activities. Meet John Kidula, a husband and a father of three who keeps poultry, rabbits, dairy cows and bees in his farm in Goibei, Vihiga County. His poultry comprises chickens, turkeys, geese, guinea fowls and ducks.

The former accountant does all this on his one acre piece of land, he inherited from his father. He said he started keeping poultry in 2012, where he began with seven ducks, six turkeys and 24 improved indigenous chicks after attending a training at Kwetu Poultry Farm in Maseno, Kisumu County.

"All this has thrived through sales, making me to venture into dairy, bee and rabbit farming with the little profits I used to save. I invested a total of Sh140,000 into the business being sure that I will reap more," he said.

As days went by, Kidula increased his chicken to 100, this time, testing the Kenbro breed which

costed him Sh100 each, all rising to about 250 birds.

What is unique about him is that he makes his own poultry feeds by mixing maize bran, fish meal, wheat bran from other cereals and millet. "A mature bird goes for Sh700 and Sh1,000 depending on the season and the demand. Each day, I collect three trays of eggs from 100 birds" he added.

The farmer also sells mature guinea fowl, turkey and geese. He also hatches chicks for sale. He also has however encountered several challenges mostly bird diseases which attacked and killed close to 40 birds, chicken being the most affected.

"I have lost birds to diseases. It is essential to follow the vaccination schedule. I lost 50 birds to Newcastle disease," said Kidula. He later diversified his venture by keeping rabbits as his poultry business expanded.

"I gained confidence as my poultry business continued to do well to try other livestock. I started with 30 rabbits and now I have California, New Zealand, Checkered Giant and Flemish

Giant breeds," he disclosed.

"I rear rabbits for meat. I harvest their urine and later sell kits to local farmers and schools for lab experiments. I visited the Nairobi International Trade Fair in 2012 where I met a representative from a rabbit firm and bought six rabbits which multiplied," noted Mr Kidula.

He also sells kits to secondary schools in the neighbouring Kakamega and Nandi counties for lab experiments, each varying in prices depending on their size and weight.

One mature rabbit weighs between 2.5kg to 4.5kg depending on the breed. I sell rabbit to local farmers for manure. They feed on sweet potato vines, commercial pellets and cabbages, he explained.

He also collects close to 7kg of honey from his seven beehives after every three and a-half months. "I later sell the honey to a neighbouring honey processing firm" He said.

Given that many farmers in Vihiga county practice maize farming, Kidula's small piece of land also

allows him to grow maize which after harvesting, collects the stocks, mills into flour and sells to farmers as chicken feeds. "Almost everyone in Vihiga grows maize for home consumption. I usually process the maize and sell flour made from maize stocks," he said

On the other hand, Kidula's two Friesian and Ayrshire cows produces milk each, per day which he sells. "We feed them on napier grass, natural grass and molasses. When milking I use dairy meal," he revealed.

Kidula advises fellow farmers to diversify their ventures and avoid relying on a single farming venture. "One thing I have learned as a farmer is that, we should never give up no matter how much losses we may encounter," he advised.

According to Mr Duncan Musyoka, a lecturer at Egerton University, Department of Animal Sciences, before an intended dairy farmer ventures into dairy farming, they should consider the following factors.

Capital: If you intend to start this type of farming, ask yourself how much money you need for the investment. The source and how much you can access of it. Dairy investments are capital-intensive. The structures to build on the farm and equipment you buy has no alternative. You need a good capital. Develop a plan for final farm set up considering the expected running capacity.

Land: The size, location and potential determine the type and size of investment to be set up. You need enough space to house and shelter the animals.

Market research: Do a market survey and decide on the target buyers. Also decide whether to go for milk or heifer market, or both. The business needs to be solvent

thus the need to choose options that maximise your returns.

Ecological zone: From the farm's ecological location, determine the type of fodder and animals that do well. Exotic dairy breeds will require cool environment while crosses of these breeds with local ones like Sahiwal may withstand some level of harsh conditions. In arid and semi-arid regions, look for local breeds like Sahiwal or their first cross with exotic breeds.

Production system and the level of management: Always fit the production system with resource available and management. Intensive production systems are best for efficient utilisation of resources. In such systems, animals are enclosed and the land is set aside for fodder production.

Follow regulations: Always consider the rules and regulations that govern the establishment of dairy investment. Also think of waste disposal mechanisms and environment pollution more so on water ways, sound and air.

Labour: Management and costing of labour remains a mystery to many farmers. Consider the type of work and the form of labour required. Have permanent

employees for duties that run across the year and casuals for seasonal work. Remember some services are cheap when outsourced. Proper choice of labour will increase your savings, relieving unnecessary stress.

Water: It is required for animals to drink, cleaning of equipment, the dairy unit and growing fodder. A dairy cow will drink between 40 to 80 litres of water per day.

Breed: Decide on the breed and grade of animals to start with by considering the management level to be adapted. For beginners, consider starting with second or third dairy crosses rather than the high-bred animals. Adapt a breeding programme that will improve next generation of animals.

Source of breeding stock: Select from the existing herd and upgrade with time. Outsourcing breeding stock rule of thumb is "never buy animals from herds that are managed beyond your potential, such animals will always disappoint you".

Check on the animal's pedigree, production and health records and the dam's production record if any. At times you may require a professional to inspect the animal.



A farm with goats and cows

Feeding dairy cows with Sunflower seeds increases milk production



Sunflower plantation

An incessant milk shortage in the country occasioned by lack of animals feeds has put a strain on milk supply nation wide. The North Rift region, which produces 80 percent of the country's milk for sale, has registered a percent drop in supply. The main reason has been the skyrocketing feed prices that have locked thousands of dairy farmers from access. This coupled with dwindling pasture due to prolonged drought has worsened the situation.

But oblivious to many of these farmers sunflower which has received real kudos from scientists nutritional wise remains acutely under-utilized. Numerous studies have shown that sunflower cake contains more crude protein at 12.5 percent and considerably more fat at 11 percent compared to conventional feeds and fodder. Feeding whole sunflower seeds to dairy cattle as a way to increase the energy content of the diet of high-producing dairy cows may boost milk production by 3-5 percent.

Such studies have been corroborated by ordinary farmers ahead of their peers who have realized the unrivaled

nutritional value of sunflower meal for their livestock. A retired teacher, now smallholder dairy farmer had long been buffeted by dwindling fodder and production went dismally low in quality and quantity. From producing 70 litres a day, her milk production went down to 30 litres.

“That was the biggest shock of my life. I have always relied on my cows for income and paying my kid's school fees. It took a lot of agony trying to get the solution and rescue my dairy farming before it was too late”, she said.

A scientist friend introduced her to sunflower which has made impressive turn around in her farming. In one acre of her land tens of hundreds of sunflower plants stand tall, their conspicuous yellow flowers testament to the wonder of a plant ignored and forgotten by majority of farmers.

She extracts the oil from sunflower which she uses for separate business. The remains of the sunflower seed are what she uses to obtain sunflower cake that is fed to animals. Her cow's milk production capacity has not only gone back to where it used to be, but has even surpassed that.

Cumulatively she collects 80 litres a day. It is a success story that has caught the attention of fellow farmers in Nakuru county.

The farmer have not only found solace in sunflower as an alternative feed for their livestock, but are now diversifying into pressing of the sunflower oil which also enjoys fanatical demand both locally and international. “I used to spend Shs. 6,000 on buying animal feeds in this case conventional ones and nappier grass, but even with such a huge budget, milk production was appalling and I was operating at a loss.

“Investing in sunflower production was the best thing that ever happened to me. I have cut costs by upto 60 percent” said another farmer in the farmer field school. The high oil content in the mechanically extracted oil cake provides greater energy density, which is a valuable attribute for animals with high energy requirements such as dairy cows.

Sunflower oilcake constitutes the fourth largest source of supplement protein for livestock feeding after soybean meal, cottonseed meal and canola meal.

It can be used freely in balanced diets for poultry and pigs owing to the absence of toxic compounds.

The Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Institute has approved 15 varieties of sunflower after testing them in various parts of the country. Most of these varieties of takes between 75 and 110 days to mature and are already been grown by farmers in Bungoma, Kakamega and Meru. Sunflower seeds can be found from stockists and seeds companies across the country



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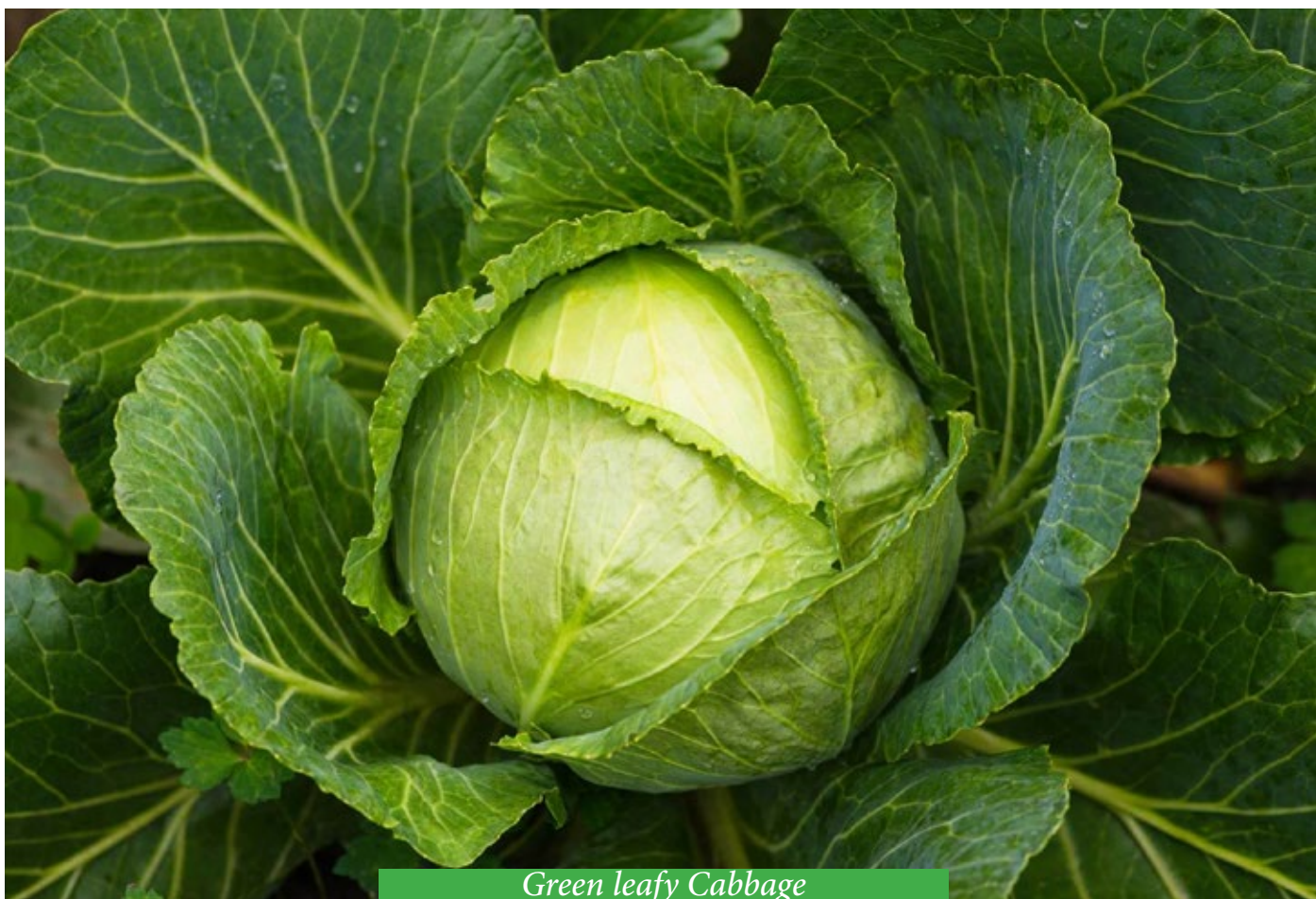


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Quality Seeds for Higher Harvest



Green leafy Cabbage

Quality of seeds is an important consideration as far as farming systems and practices go. A seed represents the growth of life. Indeed, a seed is a primary input in crop production and is a means of providing.

As any farmer would attest, the quality of seeds used determines the potential harvest from your farm. If you get it wrong during planting, you will likely not have it right during harvesting. Therefore, to get good quality produce from your farm, it is essential to get good quality and trusted seeds from reliable suppliers.

As many soil scientists attest, modern varieties and seed technologies have significantly transformed agriculture. Availability, access and use of quality seeds, as well as adaptable

crop varieties, is critical to realizing increased agricultural production.

Kenya's seed industry.

In Kenya, it has been known for a long time that Kenya's agricultural productivity is below the potential productivity the country could achieve. A significant contributor to low productivity has been the quality of seeds that farmers are planting and using. Available seeds do not contain the required germplasm, which is needed to improve the quality of seeds. Indeed, Kenya's seed industry does not embody.

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Different Types of Seed Quality. Genetic quality.

This entails the inherent genetic

qualities for better yields, better grain quality and increased tolerance to pests and diseases. For instance, when looking at lentil seeds, there are two types of lentil seeds: red lentil, and green lentils. Genetic purity is crucial for improving grain quality, and subsequently, its market value. Thereby, by mixing lentil grains with other grains may reduce grain quality, and consequently, its market value. For such grains, the best activity would be to maintain seed purity.

Physiological quality.

This is simply the potential germination and vigour, which leads to subsequent seedling growth and the growth of crops in the field. Good physiological quality means that the seed can germinate adequately, and grow healthy seedlings in the right conditions. Seeds of good quality often have an excellent physiological variety and can germinate and grow properly in normal conditions. Physical quality. Physical quality refers to seeds which are free from contamination by other seedlings, and food crops, parasites, discolouration and the seeds are of uniform size and weight. Seeds of good physical quality are more likely to yield better harvests compared to those who are not. Health quality. Health quality refers to the aspects of seeds which entail the absence of infections, infestations with pests and other diseases, as well as an excellent aesthetic appearance — seeds of good health quality, product quality, nutritious, and yields of the right size and weight.

Factors affecting Seed Quality
The production environment is a significant factor affecting seed quality.

For instance, climatic conditions can have a substantial effect on the quality of seeds, especially during pre-harvest seasons.

During harvest periods, for example, excessive rains can tamper with the maturity of the seeds, which is likely to affect the quality of seeds subsequently. High rainfall is also expected to increase vegetative growth, thus reducing crop yields, and this will eventually decrease seed quality.

Other weather conditions such as humidity can have the same effect on the quality of returns and seed quality.

Depending on the type of seed you are using, you should be careful as a farmer, and identify the specific climatic conditions which can have an impact on the quality of your seeds. Practising controlled-temperature farming techniques, such as using greenhouses to grow your crops, is one of the most effective ways of reducing the impact of climatic conditions on your seeds. For instance, lentil seeds are more sensitive to heat and drought, and therefore exposure to these conditions can reduce yields and seed quality.

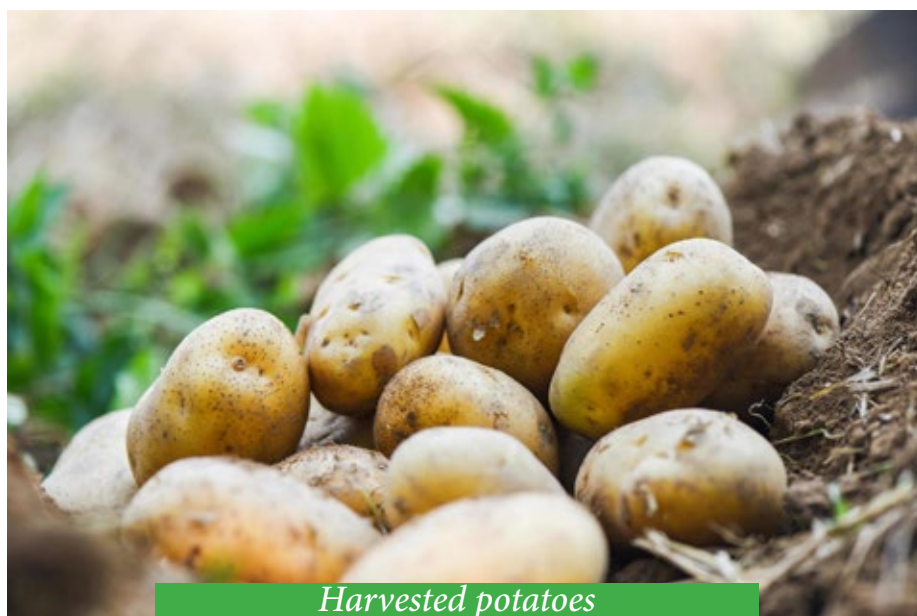
Harvesting period is another understated factor which affects seed quality. When crops are not harvested for long periods, even after ripening, it subjects the seed to deteriorative conditions and this causes more significant loss of seed quality. Moreover, delaying harvests also leads to over-maturing of the seeds, especially in terms of high heat and drought, and this may reduce seed quality excessively.

Mechanical damage is another considerable concern which affects seed quality. It entails the physical disintegration of the seed, which can happen during harvesting, cleaning or handling processes. It is important to note

that different types of seeds are more prone to mechanical damage compared to others.

For instance, grains with a convex shape are more vulnerable to damage compared to those with rounded shapes. This would mean that lentils, for example, are more prone to damage compared to Faba beans (because of their forms). The loss is even more considerable when the moisture content in the seed is low, like in periods of harvesting. Improper storage is another significant factor affecting seed quality. When seeds are not well stored, they become more prone to mechanical damage, vulnerability to pests and diseases, as well as exposure to extreme climatic conditions, all which affect seed quality significantly. For example, when maize seeds are stored in damp stores, they will be more prone to developing bacteria and infection, such as aflatoxins.

The seeds can also go bad due to poor storage, and those who don't will decrease in quality. Moreover, there is always the challenge of pests like weevils and mice, which destroy seeds and reduce their quality. While ensuring and maintaining seed quality, proper emphasis should be placed on farmer seed enterprises, which leads to the establishment of improved seeds and varieties



Harvested potatoes



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5

The Fast Maturing Climate

Tolerate tomato breed



The fast maturing tomato growing in Nakuru

I imagine a tomato variety that matures within 60 days compared to conventional ones which take between 90 and 105 days. Would you believe it that the shelf life for the variety is 15 days compared to conventional ones that last only a week?

Still imagining? Imagine no more, for a company in Nakuru has introduced a high yielding, fast maturing and disease resistant tomato variety that is set to revolutionize smallholder farming in Kenya.

Simon Andys, the founder of Premier Seeds, is a trained agronomist who left his job in a local seed company to venture into smallholder farming after a wrong seed variety devastated the farmers he was serving.

"I used to work very closely with the farmers in training them on good farm management practices and handling their grievances. A seed variety which the company imported had been bred for different climatic conditions caused devastating damage to farmers producing near zero yields. It was heart breaking to see

farmers lose resources and days' worth of toil to something that could have been avoided. I had to do something about it," Simon said. And he did.

He left the company to start his own outfit that would correct the ills that had bedevilled the farming industry. Thus marked the birth of Premier Seeds.

At the helm of the seed company, Simon has worked with breeders outside the country to breed for him the most suitable varieties that adapt to local climatic and growing conditions.

"The problem with our seeds is that we import those that have already been bred for overseas conditions which end up disappointing our farmers. So I decided to partner with seed breeders in the Netherlands. What I do is to first do a thorough analysis of the climatic and growing conditions identifying which conditions would produce the optimum yields. I then communicate the analysis to my breeders in the Netherlands and explain to them the kind of seeds I would like to work on and the process starts," said

Simon.

Through such arrangements, Simon has managed to bring to the country, the fastest maturing tomato variety dubbed Tomato Premier F1 which takes on average 60 days to mature compared to existing varieties that take between 90 and 105 days.

The variety is also accustomed to tough climatic conditions since it is bred to tolerate common tomato diseases. Its shelf life, another of its unique selling point, is 15 days compared to others whose span is between seven and ten days. "It is a variety that has been bred with the local conditions in mind. Even when it is exposed to sunlight, as it is usually done especially when it is being sold by roadside and open air markets, it still can go for days without going bad," Simon added.

Simon is working with farmers in Bahati in Nakuru county to plant high value crops for the export market. He is currently working with a group of farmers in the farming of chives, a herb belonging to the onion family, that is enjoying

Pineapple farming is

A profitable investment

Spiny on the outside, sweet on the inside, pineapples are one fantastic fruit.

Pineapples are members of the bromeliad family, and one of the few bromeliads to produce edible fruit. The fruit is made of many individual berries that fuse together around a central core and each pineapple scale is an individual berry.

Many farmers find it hard to venture into pineapple farming due to the extra work the crop needs before it matures into a succulent fruit. For Henry Boit, this is a very profitable business for him.

"I started farming pineapple since my father was the only pineapple farmer in my region before passing away seven years ago. I used to watch closely everything he used to do on the farm whenever I accompanied him, and asked him both relevant and irrelevant questions each time," Henry said.

After getting out of college, Henry searched for a job for about two and a half years without getting any. That's where something rang into his mind that he knew something little about pineapple farming from his late father.

"That day, I took a jembe and walked in my father's one acre pineapple plantation just to survey. As time went by, I got used to its piercings which I now see as nothing but pure profits," he said.

With the help of his two brothers, Henry transformed his dad's isolated pineapple plantation into a profitable investment. He now harvests at least 250 pineapples daily which he sells to different people in Burnt Forest market, others visit his home for orders.



A glass of freshly prepared pineapple juice

Pineapples help you keep standing tall and strong. It contains nearly 75 percent of the daily-recommended value of the mineral manganese, which is essential in developing strong bones and connective tissue, according to a research.

Studies suggest that manganese, along with other trace minerals, may be helpful in preventing osteoporosis in post-menopausal women.

Customers from various part of Uasin Gishu county visits my home frequently asking for more each day," Henry added

Speaking when loading some fruits to his pickup to transport them to Eldoret town, he said that he sometimes decides to sell the pineapples in Eldoret because of the high demand and better market price than in Burnt Forest.

"The biggest problem I have is rodents. Each morning, I get at least 5-7 fruits bitten by rodents. To a farmer, this is a big loss. So I have been using traps to get rid of them, and it is working," he noted. Henry plans to increase his piece of land so as to plant more pineapples.

Pineapples help to reduce the risk of macular degeneration, a disease that affects the eyes as people age, due in part to its high amount of vitamin C and the antioxidants it contains. Study says pineapples can help reduce excessive coagulation of the blood because of their bromelain levels.

This makes pineapple a good snack for frequent fliers and others at risk for blood clots. In addition to having lots of vitamin C, pineapple's bromelain may help reduce mucus in the throat and nose. People with allergies may want to consider incorporating pineapple into their diets more regularly to reduce sinus mucus long term.

Pineapples are also great meat tenderizers. Eating too much can result in tenderness of the mouth, including the lips, tongue and cheeks. Eating unripe pineapple or drinking unripe pineapple juice is dangerous.

It is toxic to humans and can lead to severe diarrhoea and vomiting. Eating a great deal of pineapple cores can also cause fibre balls to form in the digestive tract.

AMIRAN KENYA

A market leader in horticulture

Since its inception in 1963, Amiran Kenya Ltd has been a driving force behind the horticulture and floriculture industries in Kenya and throughout East Africa.

Through decades of partnership with Kenya's large and small scale growers, Amiran Kenya has become a "one stop shop" for all of agricultural needs. While playing a significant role in bringing the Kenyan floriculture industry to its place as global leader, Amiran has also remained focused on the needs of horticulture and cereal growers and of Kenya's small scale farmers, who make up 75 percent of Kenya's agricultural sector.

About Us History

Since its inception in 1963, Amiran Kenya Ltd has been a driving force behind the horticulture and floriculture industries in Kenya and throughout East Africa.

Over the years, Amiran has expanded its activities and is today a leader in telecommunications, water purification, solar energy, generators and more.

A part of the Balton CP Group of companies headquartered in the United Kingdom and spread across Africa and Israel. Amiran Kenya provides complete solutions in all of its fields of expertise. From products and services to training and capacity building, the Amiran Kenya Ltd brand has become synonymous with the highest international standards of excellence.

Through decades of partnership with Kenya's large and small scale growers, Amiran has become a "one stop shop" for all of Kenya's agricultural needs. While playing a significant role in bringing the Kenyan floriculture industry to its place as global leader, Amiran has also remained focused on the needs of horticulture and cereal growers.

Amiran Kenya's agricultural basket of products includes chemical fertilizers and seeds; large and small scale agro-projects using state-of-art technology powering modern irrigation systems, climate control and water measuring technologies.

Amiran is also responsible for building and maintaining percent of Kenya's greenhouses. Complimenting all of these is a team of professional agronomists offering the best possible yields.

Recently, as part of its Corporate Social Responsibilities, Amiran has explored ways to partner with Kenya's Donor and NGO community with the goal of utilizing Amiran's unique abilities for the betterment of the people of Kenya. A unique line of products, among them the Family Drip System (FDS), a simple irrigation system tailor-made for the small farmer, have been identified in a genuine effort to help Kenya and her partners achieve Kenya's food security and other development goals.



A farmer sprays vegetables using Knapsack sprayer supplied by Amiran that offers a comprehensive solutions

Farmers embrace profitable

Basil herb farming



A Basil herb crop in a greenhouse

Smallholder farmers in Nakuru County who traditionally grow maize and beans have found a new lifeline in a versatile aromatic herb that belongs to the mint family dubbed basil. The herb, grown for the export market, is now earning them good profit every month.

With guidance from Premier Seeds Limited, a vegetable seed company, the farmers are now net suppliers of the herb whose multiple health and nutritional benefits has made it a hit internationally. Buyers in the international market say East Africa meets only percent of their demand even as markets continue to grow. "The market has expressed insatiable appetite for the herb. With our first group of farmers, we are producing 1.6 tonnes of basil against a demand of 6 tonnes per month from the

importer we work with. The onus is on us to sell more, the market keep telling us," said Mr. Simon Andys the founder of Premier Seeds.

To get maximum output that meets international standards, the herb is grown in greenhouses. To assist farmers meet the cost of constructing the greenhouse and other inputs, Premier Seeds has entered into a financing agreement with financial institutions allowing farmers to own greenhouses. The farmers repay the loan from the earnings from the sale of the basil. The farmers grow three varieties of Premier seeds with sweet aroma, which belongs to the sweet basil variety, one of the most preferred varieties by chefs globally.

The herb has become popular among Nakuru farmers revolutionizing horticulture farming for its ease of cultivation and growth traits. A bushy annual plant, it takes an average 42 days to mature, producing light green silky leaves which taste like cloves with a strong pungent and sweet smell. Farmers harvest the leaves for sale after every ten days.

A typical greenhouse measuring 8 by 30 metres produces an average of 125 kilos of basil every week. The crop is also a pest and mosquito repellent meaning it is rarely attacked by pests.

In a bid to educate farmers to adopt farming methods that meets international standard, Premier Seeds has also trained farmers on how to adhere to good agricultural practices that meet international

certifications like Global GAP and EureGap. Such farming practices include pest management and pesticides use, use of certified propagated seeds this traceability.

“ We take time to explain to the farmers that the export market is very sensitive about the quality of the produce we sell to them. That will be determined by what they do in the farm. We are glad they have taken this seriously,” said Mr. Andys. Buyers also make impromptu visits to farms to track down the growing conditions of the herbs.

“ We take time to explain to farmers we are working with that the export markets is very particular about the quality of the produce we sell to them. That will be determined by what they do in the farm. We are glad the farmers have taken this to heart,”

said Mr.Andys.

Such training has assisted farmers in understanding the quality of the herbs required for exports. After harvesting, farmers grade and package the herbs in the farm on their own before they are taken to the export. “ The farmers know, for example, the right leaves and stems required in the international market.

So they do the sorting, grading and packing themselves. They know if they package the wrong quality their produce will be rejected. They have become so good in it that we have not had any problem with our international buyers,” Andys added.

And as the international market demand for the culinary herbs, Premier Seeds is now working

with the farmers to grow another set of herbs including coriander, oregano, lovage, dill and Melissa. “We are responding to the market demands. The demand for basil has been meteoric and when the buyer suggested that we should growing the other herbs we said why not,” said Andys

A conscious middle class is driving the growth of culinary herbs and spices in the international market which has seen rise in demand that currently stands at \$2.3 billion according to data from international Trade Centre. Key markets include the EU which in 2013 imported 302,000 tonnes of spices and herbs from developing countries like Kenya worth £1 billion.



Basil herb is a pest and mosquito repellent

Ways to feed and

Grow healthy rabbits



Feeding rabbits in a good environment

Does and bucks should be kept for 4-5 years after which their production should be assessed. If the doe is still producing decent sized litters with healthy kits, it is possible to keep her for a further year. The same applies to the buck. It has been noted that older bucks may start to produce small or weak kits, in which case they should be culled.

CARE OF THE YOUNG

A couple of days before giving, the doe will start collecting hay in her mouth to make nest. She will then pull hair from her chest and under neck to line the nest. She will pull out more hair after the birth and cover the babies. This is the time that the young have to be watched

carefully:

- Kits are born blind and naked. The first 35 days of their life are crucial. They are usually confined to the nest for at least two weeks, sometimes longer. They should not be separated from their mother before 4 weeks of age. If they are weaned early they may die of separation shock.
- For the first 20 days the only food for the kits is their mother's milk. The mother feeds her young only once in 24 hours and only for 3-5 minutes. The doe must, therefore, have access to plenty of good food water to ensure that she has enough milk for the litter.
- It is essential that the kits are not allowed to get cold, especially in the first few days after birth.

The nest needs to be checked to ensure that the babies are not carried out of the nest by the mother after feeding (check early mornings as feeding normally takes place during the night). It is quite safe to handle the young and return them to the nest.

- If they are found outside the nest and cold, (the kits will feel cold and the skin will be wrinkled and 'sticky' to the touch) it is essential to warm them up quickly or they will die.
- Once they are warm (the kits will become healthy pink colour, warm to the touch) they can be returned to the nest. Warming them can be done by wrapping them lightly in a cloth and putting this on top of a hot water bottle in a box. Make

sure that the kits are protected from the plastic cover. They should be turned a couple of times to make sure that they are properly warm.

- They will start to squeak and wriggle once they are warm enough. Remember that every dead kit is income lost.

- The kits will start coming out of the nest after 15-16 days and will start trying to chew hay and concentrate whilst still

MANAGEMENT

Housing

The rabbit unit should be located in a peaceful environment, away from the noise and bustle of human and animal noise. The unit must fulfill the following functions:

1. Protection from extreme influences of weather and noise which could interfere with the performance of the rabbits
2. Protection from predators including snakes, insects and rats.

While planning a unit, the following should be taken to consideration:

- The exterior should provide protection against heat but at the same time it should be properly ventilated.
- Avoid draughts
- There should be separate units for the does and bucks. Breeding stock should be kept in one unit and the 'meat' unit should be separate.
- Three or 4 does to one buck would be more than sufficient to keep a household supplied with meat all year round. You would therefore need:

A pen for the buck

A pen for each doe

At least 2 weaning pens for each doe

To grow healthy, rabbits must be fed properly and kept clean. It is best to house them off the ground as follows:

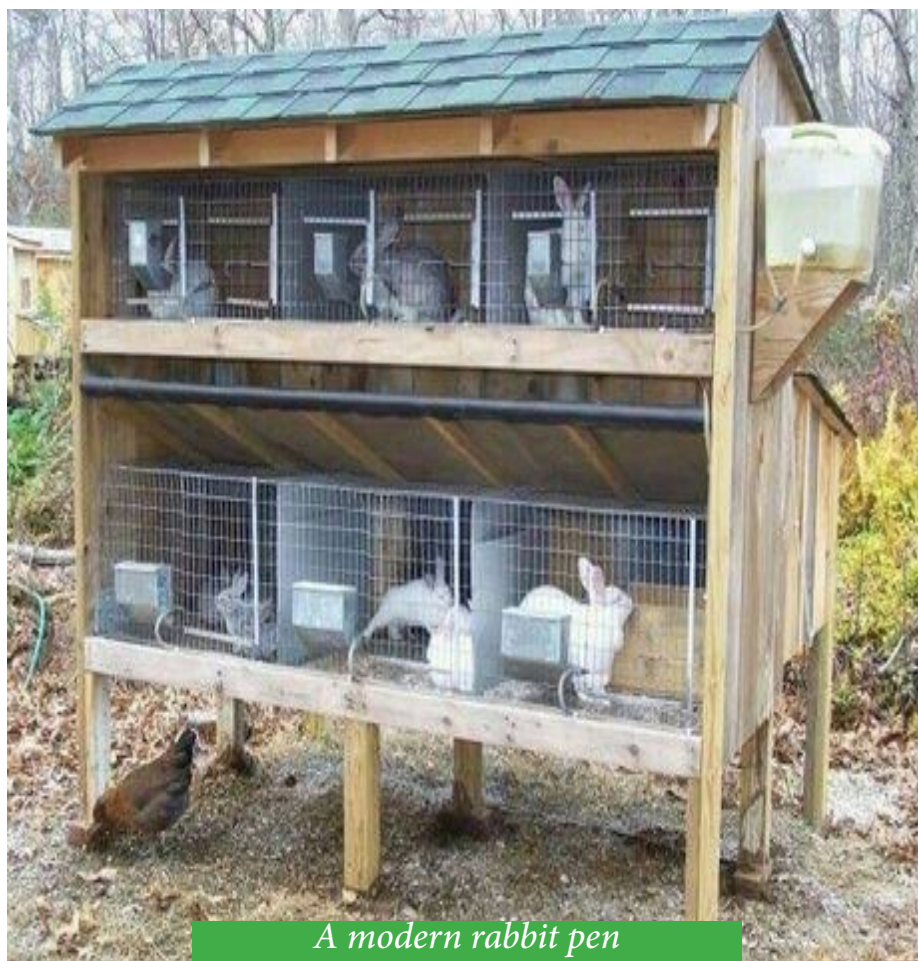
- The house should be 45 cm off the ground, should be 75cm high and 75cm wide.
- The floors should consist of half inch chicken wire (with the smallest size holes) so that droppings and urine fall through to the ground. This can then be swept up daily and used to mix with compost.
- Rabbits do not tolerate windy conditions, so houses should be placed in sheltered areas and windbreaks provided where appropriate.
- Rabbit houses should be cleaned everyday. Wet bedding should be removed and replaced with dry

material. If rabbits are left with soiled bedding, it will encourage flies and diseases to multiply.

- Dirty or wet houses will result in a very strong 'rabbit' odour which will taint the meat. A soiled pen is stressful for the rabbit and it will also mean that the pelts become soiled and 'felted' which makes them unusable.

- Mud hutches and thatched houses can also be constructed but they should be off the ground and kept clean as described above. Dirty rabbits are unhealthy rabbits.

- Lighting: exposure to light plays an important role in reproduction efficiency. Bucks exposed to light for 8/24 hours are generally, more sexually active. It also improves the productivity of the doe. It is possible to make up this light requirement using artificial light, but this is an expensive way of solving the problem.



A modern rabbit pen

Geese egg form a Noble business venture



geese

A young farmer from Kiorugari village in Mwea, Kirinyaga County has embarked on commercial rearing of geese and turkeys on his one acre farm. Muchiri who has now over 200 geese says he first heard of the geese farming through a local radio programme.

However the episode did not have enough information to make him get into the farming. "I embarked on a fact-finding mission through the internet. I was able to get information regarding rearing of different types of geese," he said.

"Most of my customers come from outside Kirinyaga and as far as Nairobi, with the most recent coming from Nakuru," he says.

Muchiri says a mature goose can comfortably provide enough meat to feed ten people and therefore a choice bird to keep both for subsistence and commercial purposes.

He rears the birds on a ranch system where they roam freely but he also feeds them with high nutrition value concentrates.

The farmer says the business is rewarding due to the increasing demand for white meat amongst Kenyans.

"The demand for white meat has outstripped supply over the years since farmers who keep such birds or rear fish are very few," Muchiri says.

He notes it will take quite a while for the market to be saturated with the supply of white meat in the country, going by the small number of the farmers who have ventured into the business so far.

"These birds fetch me between KSh5000 to KSh6000 for a female and male goose respectively while a turkey goes from Sh5,500 for a female to Sh10,000 for a male. You can see I am quite comfortable if I sell two in a day," he said. The beautiful birds have also cleared Muchiri's homestead of snakes, spiders, lizards and other harmful crawling insects which they feed on.

His homestead is well fenced to keep the birds secure since they can attack strangers and injure

them using their strong and powerful saw like beaks. He has also constructed a water pond for the geese.

"A veterinary officer regularly visits my farm to ensure the birds are free from any diseases. I manage to supply 100 birds to tourist hotels or to any other institution on demand," says the farmer.

Geese have been domesticated and bred, mainly for meat, for generations, but have resolutely resisted efforts to be kept intensively. A goose's natural inclination to utilize good grass and to forage makes it a very useful bird. These hardy birds have been useful to humans for many years, from guard birds to the modern hybrids for the table.

For a small-scale farmer or self-supporter, geese do best if they can forage on good grass. They are ideal birds for and orchard, clearing up windfalls and getting much of their nutrition from good-quality grass in summer and early fall.

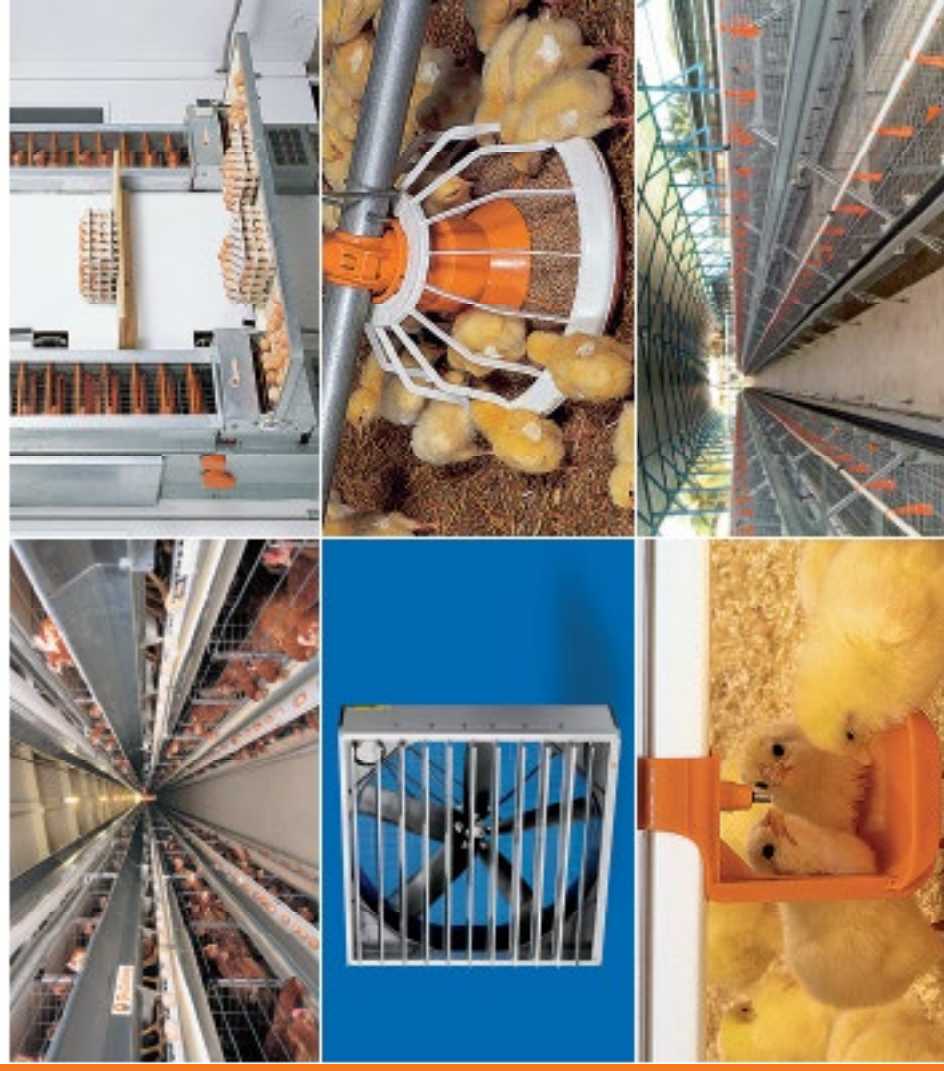
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Starting a Goose Egg Farm

Starting a goose egg farm is a noble business venture. Here are a few tips on how to be part of this noble profession. If you are living in the city and is passionate about farming a goose egg farm is a must try business, and fulfillment in this kind of business as well.

Goose Egg Farm

The only consideration that you will need is to look for a place where you can start your goose egg farm. Since you are living in the city you might as well consider looking for a good location outside the city.

You might find that there will be protesters once you try to run a goose egg farm in the city. This aspect of your business is what you call: finding a suitable location for your business. You can lease a farm or buy a property to start your goose egg farm.

Education

You will need to study all the aspects of goose egg farming if you are considering this kind of

business. Enroll in short courses about raising geese: brooding and rearing gosling, nutrition and feeding geese, breeder flock management, types and breeds, nest and perches, egg handling, poor egg production, disease, among others.

Visiting successful farmers to learn about geese farming will also be a plus to your knowledge in keeping the birds. This is way to prepare you for the rigors of the business and for you to understand better goose egg farming.

Business Planning

As usual and as always a business plan is your partner in the whole operation of your business. Hiring the services of a professional business plan maker will be a lot easier for you. It is their job to help beginners in the business industry. Discuss everything with your business plan maker and give suggestions along the way after all you are dealing with your business.

Licenses and Permits

In every business, licenses and permits are the must haves. Go the state or local licensing office of the place where you are starting your business. Inquire about the required licenses and permits that you will need to obtain for the operation of your business.

Inquire as well about the restrictions being imposed regarding goose egg farming. Renew business permits and licenses yearly to avoid issues that may arise with the authority.

Employees and Staffs

Goose egg farming will require you to hire competent people to do the odd jobs of taking care of the farm. Hire the most qualified staff/s to do the job for you. Being hands on with your business is also a must since there are people who tend to be dishonest once they observe that their employer seems to be too lax. You can stay with the administrative side of your business. It will be your job to contact all possible clients for your produce.



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Promising Times Ahead

for suffering coffee farmers



A farmer with unmilled coffee after harvest

The once vibrant coffee plantations around Kiambu county have dwindled over the years and the arable land turned into housing estates. This decline in production can be blamed on mismanagement and outright plunder of farmers earnings by cartels in the sector.

Desperate farmers ceded their land for the developers of high-rise residential blocks as the earnings from coffee substantially declined. While coffee was once the undisputed backbone of the economy, it has since dropped behind tea, horticulture and tourism.

The conversion of Kiambu County's coffee estates into residential housing highlights a major shift in land use and the agricultural economy. As the real estate and housing market booms, desperate farmers have been forced to subdivide their land to

capitalise on high property values, drastically transforming what was once a rich agricultural landscape.

Nairobi's expansion has made land quite lucrative for developers and with this, saw the decline of coffee production which for years was considered the best quality coffee in the international market. Where sprawling coffee plantations once stood, planned gated communities, modern apartments and luxury villas have proudly emerged.

Small-scale farmers have always faced fluctuating prices, delayed pay-outs and exploitation by middlemen, making coffee farming far less profitable than selling land, but this loss becomes permanent once the concrete rises on it. Erratic weather, increasing costs for inputs, including fertilisers, and various crop diseases have also hampered traditional coffee production in the central highlands, where

growing the crop once held sway.

But while the decline in the Mt Kenya region is notable, the crop is facing a nationwide transformation to restore its status as a top foreign exchange earner.

However, after many years of declining production and other challenges, the coffee sub-sector is now experiencing a major price and volume recovery. The government has introduced sweeping reforms, including a Direct Settlement System designed to ensure that farmers receive their earnings within just five days of the sale of their crop.

Through New KPCU, efforts are made to distribute millions of disease-resistant seedlings and expand coffee cultivation into 34 other counties to compensate for the lost acreage in Kiambu and other places.

The government is also pushing for local processing, branding, and increased domestic consumption to ensure more profits to boost primary producers' incomes. Some sh2 billion has been set aside to clear the debt arrears of cooperative societies and farmers. Some sh 2 billion has also been allocated for a fertiliser subsidy to enhance production and returns.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has forecast strong coffee earnings and export revenues for East African producers in the current marketing year, driven by sustained high global prices. Export volumes are growing due to favourable weather and expanded production, even as high cherry prices squeeze local trader margins.

Production is expected to rise by 12 per cent to 950,000 bags with exports reaching 940,000 bags. This recovery is being attributed

to improved crop care following a two-year period of high prices, bolstered by new regulatory oversight from the Coffee Board of Kenya.

Globally, the USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service expects a more comfortable supply balance. The turnaround has been partly attributed to favourable rains and increased investment by smallholders, with two years of high global prices driving the rebound.

The future

President William Ruto in June launched the 'Coffee Revival Through Cooperative Societies Programme to revitalise the sector, eliminate exploitative middlemen, and increase farmers' earnings to between Sh250 and Sh300 per kilogramme. The reforms mandate payment within five days of produce delivery and the progressive clearance of sh6 billion in farmers' debts.

It is spearheading reforms that include settling sh6.8 billion in cooperative debts and enforcing a five-day pay-out system for

farmers. It will also boost pay-outs to Sh250–Sh300 per kilo, up from Sh120–Sh160.

Middlemen will be eliminated to maximise profits directly for coffee growers. The programme will also provide subsidised farm inputs and high-yield seedlings to lower production costs and expand the area under coffee from 110,000 hectares to 150,000 hectares.

The government is focusing on increasing average tree yields from 2kg to 6kg through better farming practices. The coffee farmers are on a major sector turnaround, thanks to the sweeping government reforms, and ambitious goals to triple production.

As part of the coffee industry reforms, the cooperative societies are receiving massive debt write-offs. A good example is the nearly Sh1 billion to be paid to farmers in Kirinyaga.

The Nairobi Coffee Exchange is being modernised to ensure fair pricing and cut out exploitative middlemen. Unroasted coffee

export values recently surged notably, reaching Sh35.4 billion in a half-year period. Prices at the exchange have seen increased due to strong global demand for the high-quality Kenyan beans.

To ensure farmers receive a larger, more transparent cut of the profits, the Capital Markets Authority (CMA) has expanded the Direct Settlement System (DSS), adding banks such as Stanbic to process payments alongside Co-operative Bank.

Coffee farmers' fortunes are being revived. A planned regulatory and financial overhaul is to boost production for the crop to regain its status as a leading foreign exchange earner.

A 12 per cent rise in production has been forecast for the 2026/27 marketing year, with exports expected to reach 940,000 bags.

There are plans to increase coffee farming land from 280,000 to 380,000 hectares to raise national production from 50,000 to 150,000 metric tonnes by 2028, as the crop regains its prime spot.



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