

Title Socio-economic impacts of tissue culture banana in Kenya through the whole value chain approach

Author F. Wambugu, V. Ndungu and W. Mgbuthia

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Abstract

Banana is an important staple food and source of income for small-scale subsistence farmers in Kenya. However, the production of this crop is hampered by various constraints, including pests and diseases. Traditional propagation of banana through suckers as planting material has over the years contributed to the spread of pests and diseases, reducing yields by up to 90%. Banana production received a major setback in the early 1990s (986,000 metric tons in 1992 to 489,000 metric tons in 1996), mainly due to the high incidence of diseases and non-availability of disease-free planting material. Initiatives by KARI, AHBFI, JKUAT and ISAAA, in subsequent years made significant strides in addressing these constraints through the introduction of tissue culture (TC) planting material. Africa harvest through two of its major projects has continued to facilitate the provision of TC planting material to farmers in Central and Eastern Kenya, through the “Whole Value Chain Approach”. This has resulted in significant positive socio-economic impacts at individual farmer and community level. The whole value chain approach involves a range of activities, from awareness creation on the TC technology, to development of appropriate marketing systems, and empowerment of farmers through promotion of banana growers associations. Significant specific economic impacts of the TC banana have been achieved by all sections of the country’s population including the producers and consumers. The direct and indirect impacts are estimated to be K Shs 6471 million over the past 10 years. There have also been various social impacts. Some of these include i) addition of TC banana plantations to family assets, ii) improvement of household food security, iii) reduction in malnutrition, iv) empowerment of women v) improved housing and ability to pay school fees, vi) improved cohesiveness within the community, vii) reduction of anti-social behavior in community, and viii) creation of entry points for other development activities. Various other specific aspects of the socio-economic impacts of TC banana through the whole value chain approach are discussed.