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TANZANIA

SNAPSHOT

Growing to New Heights with Low Cost Greenhouses

Greenhouse technologies and good agricultural practices change life



Photo: by Fintrac

Wlyhard Lymo displays tomatoes grown in his greenhouse that are now being sold to high end lodges in northern Tanzania.

“In just five months I have already made more money than I ever have before.”

Wlyhard Lymo

Telling Our Story

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Near the foothills of Mount Kilimanjaro, in Nduweni village in Moshi region, Wlyhard Lymo stands on makeshift scaffolding, adjusting dangling leads of twine from wires overhead. Wlyhard is hard at work in his greenhouse, ever so slightly tightening the strips of twine until the stalks of his 10+ meter tomato plants have enough tension to support the weight of the dozens of tomatoes each plant holds. It is time consuming, tedious work, but Wlyhard knows it's worth it.

The Tanzania Agriculture Productivity Program (TAPP), funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), has helped Wlyhard transform from a subsistence farmer, barely making enough money to get by, into a full scale commercial farmer, supplying tomatoes to the high end Tanzanian National Parks' lodges.

In April 2011, USAID-TAPP helped Wlyhard construct a 28x11 meter greenhouse on a piece of land where he previously grew maize and bananas. In June, 780 tomato seedlings were transplanted as his first crop. As of the beginning of November, Wlyhard has already harvested 2,739kgs of high quality tomatoes which he sold for 978,000 Tanzanian shillings (about \$600 USD).

Wlyhard admits that at first he was a bit hesitant to adopt all of the recommendations by the program. However, once he saw the money coming in from his first harvest alone, he quickly applied all the good agricultural practices he was taught to his greenhouse production.

If Wlyhard keeps up his hard work and attention to detail, he will be able to harvest these same plants for another three months with an estimated production of at least another 3,000kgs. Not bad for someone who reports that previously on this same plot of land, “banana and maize never earned me even 100,000 shillings.”

Low cost greenhouses use simple technologies such as drip irrigation, raised beds and trellising to maximize production. At the same time, pests and diseases are easier to control and water is conserved. Additionally, pruning, proper post-harvest handling and record keeping practices are just a few of the other techniques that USAID-TAPP is teaching smallholder farmers like Wlyhard to help them increase yields and income.

While Wlyhard flips through his receipts, validating his sales, he explains how grateful he is for USAID-TAPP's support. He now makes enough money and has enough work to do on his farm that his wife is able to leave her job in Dar es Salaam and move back to Moshi to help him expand his farm. Wlyhard shows no signs of slowing down either. Pointing to an adjacent plot of land, he boasts “I am saving the money I have made so far to invest in another greenhouse over there.”