

Small farmers working with FIPS-Africa in Butere/Mumias district report large increases in maize crop production



FIPS-Africa has been working with small farmers in Butere/Mumias district in Western Kenya since January 2005 in a project funded by the Rockefeller Foundation. FIPS-Africa worked closely with private sector seed and fertilizer companies to make the appropriate farm inputs available in small affordable quantities. For example, Athi River Mining made its new *Mavuno* fertilizers available in affordable 1 kg packets, and Western Seed Co. and Monsanto donated several thousand 150g samples of its new disease-and drought-tolerant maize varieties. FIPS-Africa developed a promotion concept, whereby farmers purchasing a 1kg packet of fertilizer for KSh 40 would receive a free sample of maize seed for free, and training on seed spacing and fertilizer placement. Through this promotion campaign, FIPS-Africa staff have been able to reach an estimated 10,000 farmers in Western Province (including Vihiga and Kakamega districts) over 3 cropping seasons.

To determine the impact of the approach, 31 farmers in Butere/Mumias district who received the promotion package were selected at random and interviewed (see table).

The survey revealed that farmers increased their yields from on average 4.5 (90 kg) bags/0.56 acre (equivalent to 8 bags/acre) before advice from FIPS-Africa to 29.7 bags/1.54 acres (equivalent to 19.28 bags/acre). Farmers produced on average an extra 25.2 bags equivalent to KSh 25,200, assuming a conservative value of KSh 1000/90 kg bag.

Interestingly, whilst maize yields increased by a factor of 2.41, mean land area under maize cultivation increased by a factor of 2.75, as farmers realised that they could make money from growing maize using improved seeds and improved crop management methods.

The survey also showed that before receiving advice from FIPS-Africa, only 39% farmers purchased improved seed (H614), and only 42% purchased planting fertilizer (DAP). Following the promotions, all farmers purchased seed (58% Western Seed Co. varieties, and 32% Dekalb varieties), and 94% purchased planting fertilizer of which 80% purchased Mavuno fertilizer. Before FIPS-Africa, only 55% used to buy topdressing fertilizer. Following the promotions 97% purchased topdressing fertilizer (Mavuno topdressing).

The method has great potential to contribute to the alleviation of poverty in this region. FIPS-Africa aims to scale-up this methodology over the next two year period to assist 100,000 other farmers in Western Province to improve their livelihoods.

District	No. of farmers	Before FIPS-Africa		After FIPS-Africa		Extra yield produced (bags)	Value of extra yield produced (KSh)/ farmer
		Yield (bags)	Land area (acres)	Yield (bags)	Land area (acres)		
Butere/Mumias	31	4.5	0.56	29.7	1.54	25.2	25,200