

Farmers in Kenya's Makueni County benefit from the P2859W maize variety promoted by their Village-based Advisors

Project update: July 2016

Despite the low and poorly distributed rainfall during the short rainy season which started in March 2016, farmers who prepared land using deep tillage with improved P2859W variety from *Dupont Pioneer* have a reason to smile. The farmers have harvested enough maize for their families to last them until they are due to harvest again in 6 months time.

FIPS-Africa's networks of self-employed Village-based Advisors (VBAs) in Makueni County have continued to promote the early-maturing P2859W maize hybrid variety, amongst small-holder farmers. Each farmer received a 25 g small pack of seed to try out on small plots outside their homes.

In Nzaui sub-County, FIPS-Africa VBAs disseminated 3,400 small (25 g) packs of the P2859W variety last season. After getting significant yield gains on their small plots last season, farmers purchased seed and scaled up improved crop/soil management practices to larger land areas this season.



1. Francisca Mbatha of Kyoma village showing the P2859W variety on her farm. She planted 4 kg seed of the variety in March 2016. She expects to harvest 6 bags from the plot.

“Last season, my family planted local maize on this plot, I remember helping my Dad harvest only 2 (90 kg) bags. I also remember him buying maize from the market just a month after harvest,” she says.

Francisca's family needs 4 bags to sustain it though the season (five months). “We will harvest enough to eat this season and I attribute this to good management and specifically deep tillage using the spring plough,” she explains.

The “Spring Plough” is a chisel-like attachment, developed by FIPS-Africa, which is mounted on an ox-plough. It digs deeper than the normal mouldboard plough that only scrapes the top soil, leaving the hard pan intact. The following are farmers who bought seed of the P2859W variety and adopted good agronomic practices, including placement of manure within the rows at planting.

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2. FIPS Network Coordinator Martin Nzunga showing the P2859W variety in Kivalu village. "The rains stopped earlier than expected and most farmers who did not plant improved varieties along with deep tillage will not harvest anything," he says.

3a



3b



3. VBA Joel Mutunga of Maviaume village planted 4 kg seed of P2959W on 0.5 acre and the local variety on another half. "I could not afford to buy 8 kg of maize for all my plots, for that reason I planted the local maize on half of the plot (3a). I am not going to harvest anything from my plot with the local maize variety," he says.

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4. Dorcas Kyalo of Kitululu village in Nzau sub-County with the P2859W variety. "We did not have enough rains this season but this variety did not struggle because we practised deep tillage. I love it so much."

5a



5b



5. Esther Mokua of Kyome village in Nzeeni ward showing cobs from her P2859W harvest (image 5b). After shelling she expects to get 3 (90 kg) bags. "It is the first time I am combining deep tillage with an improved variety and the results are amazing. My plot with local variety (image 5a) is the same size as the one with P2859W but I will only harvest 50 kg," she says.

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6. VBA Joel Mutua and farmer Kingoka Katolo in Mutua village showing the P2859W variety. The farmer planted 4 kg of seed at the end of March 2016. He expects to harvest 7 bags from his 0.5 acre plot.

"I made the right choice of preparing my land using deep tillage and also planting this variety. Neighboring farms have struggled. Good thing is that six of my neighbors will also plant this variety next season using the deep tillage method of land preparation," says Kingoka.

7. Erick Waita of Kyome village. "I love the size of the cobs; they are big and full of grains," he says.