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Small cuttings, big change

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Independent midline evaluation by iKappal East Africa Ltd. (evaluation lead: Dr Abel Otieno) · August 2026

A decentralised seed model, tested — and proven to last



Introduction

Smallholder potato farmers have long depended on recycled and informal seed. Before FIPS, about half of farmers in Nakuru got their seed from neighbours' recycled stock and fewer than one in ten from formal certified suppliers (Figure 1). **FIPS Africa's decentralised seed model** has trained Village-Based Advisors (VBAs) and Decentralised Seed Multipliers (DSMs) to multiply clean seed - including from potato rooted apical cuttings (PRACs) — and supply it, with advice, in or near farmers' own villages. The model now operates at scale with **650 VBAs** and DSMs reaching **over 100,000** farmers.

Objective: why this evaluation matters

This evaluation was commissioned to answer four strategic questions:

DIAGNOSIS
1. Is the FIPS model working?

COMMERCIAL VIABILITY
2. Are farmers and VBAs making enough profits to continue investing?

SUSTAINABILITY
3. Will the seed systems continue functioning after project support ends?

SCALING READINESS
4. Is the model ready for partnerships, expansion and investment?

Methodology

An independent midline evaluation compared FIPS-supported network farmers with nearby comparison farmers not reached by FIPS, using a stratified, multi-stage probability-proportional-to-size design.

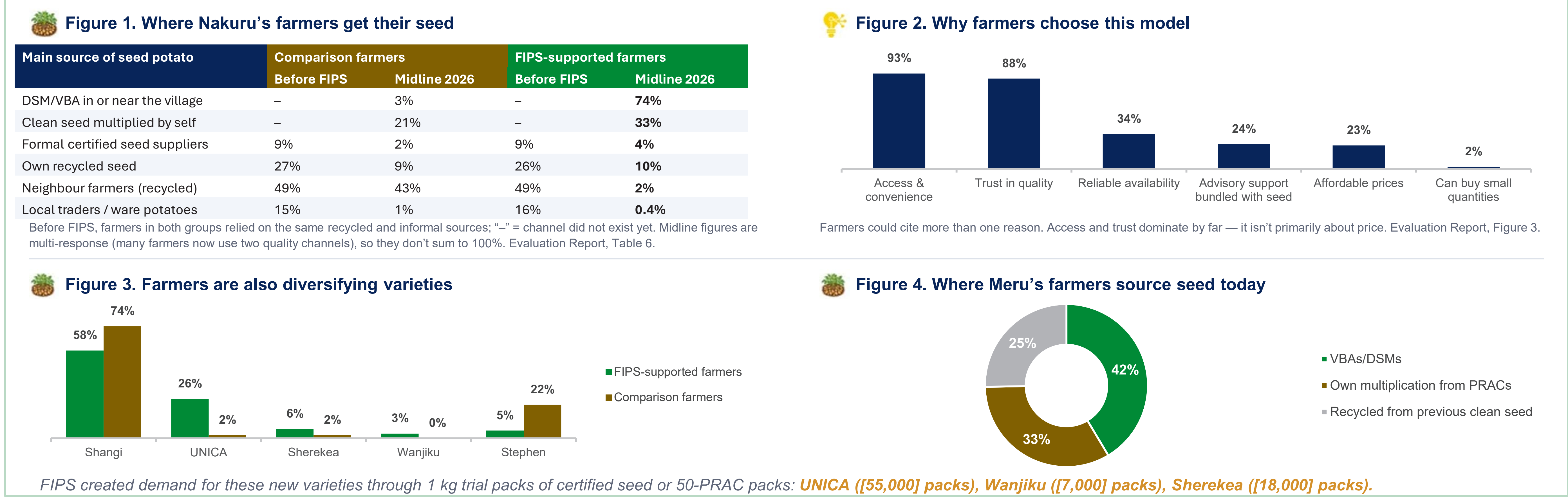
Table 1. Study design	
Sample	673 farmers, VBAs and DSMs, randomly sampled
Counties	Nakuru (494), Meru (97) and Nandi (82)
Comparison group	Nearby farmers not reached by FIPS
Sampling frame	FIPS beneficiary records — roughly 72,000 farmers across the three counties (programme estimate, not independently audited by the evaluators)
Fieldwork	Sequential: Nakuru, Meru, then Nandi, 2026
Evaluator	iKappal East Africa Ltd. (independent)
Validation	FIPS Africa stakeholder workshop, Nakuru, August 2026

Key findings

Seed sourcing · Nakuru
74%
of supported farmers now get their seed from a trained Village-Based Advisor — compared with just 3% of comparable farmers nearby

Sustainability
Meru county · 4 years post scale-down
80%
of sampled Meru VBAs still regularly advise or sell seed, four years after FIPS scaled down support (13% do so occasionally; only 7% are no longer active)

Profit for VBA seed enterprises
KES 552,000
economic gross margin per acre per season
328.6% return on cost, for a 1-acre Nakuru seed enterprise, Evaluation Report, Table 8.



Conclusion
The FIPS model is no longer being driven by FIPS alone
“...the emergence of private sector investment, county government ownership, and independent farmer-led enterprises confirms that crowding-in is a strong indicator of systemic change.”
— Midline Evaluation Report, Executive Summary (iKappal, 2026)

NAKURU
Bayer East Africa, AgRevive Africa & GreenLife Crop Protection now train farmers and distribute products through VBAs

NANDI
Farmers who once knew only recycled seed now demand specific varieties — and specific generations of seed

MERU
County government has invested in PRAC greenhouse infrastructure and uses it for farmer field days, years after FIPS scaled down

FIPS Africa has a model for decentralised potato seed multiplication, evidence that it works, and a plan to scale it. Partner with us to bring it to the next county — and the next country.

Acknowledgements

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Companion posters — scan to read

Poster 1 — Maintaining juvenile mother plants for sustainable PRAC production

Poster 2 — Agronomy for full yield potential: getting good results from PRACs

Full evaluation report

www.fipsafrica.org