

## Farmers in Nyeri and Kirinyaga Counties benefit from advice on improved coffee crop management from their VBAs

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Coffee farmers in Nyeri and Kirinyaga continue to face challenges of pests, diseases and poor coffee crop management because of lack of advice. In collaboration with the Coffee Research Institute, Farm Input Promotions-Africa (FIPS-Africa) has trained 50 self-employed Village-based Advisors (VBAs) on coffee management to help farmers in their Villages increase the productivity of their crops.

During the 2016 long rainy season, starting in March, VBAs demonstrated the use of fertilizer and lime on their coffee farms together with their farmers. Each VBA established 2 demonstrations using *Mavuno* fertilizers and Minjingu fertilizers. In November, VBAs and farmers were visited to assess progress (see testimonies below).



Just six months ago, Margaret Wairimu of Mututu Ngaru village could only harvest 5 kg from one coffee bush. Her bushes were unpruned and she used to apply the 17:17:17 fertilizer on her. Last season she experimented with both Mavuno and Minjingu fertilizers and she also applied lime on her bushes to neutralize the soil acidity. “This is the harvesting season, I have harvested 16 kg from one bush, three times more than what I used to harvest before,” she says.

Margaret, like 17 other VBAs in Nyeri set aside 50 bushes in their plots for demonstration. According to the smallholder farmer, bushes that were untreated with lime and fertilizer, did not flower and had no berries while those that she treated had dark leaves and had healthy berries.

Images 2 and 3 give a comparison of non-treated bushes and bushes treated with fertilizer and lime. The bush in image 2 has few berries, the leaves have a yellow colour and the farmer may harvest no coffee. The bush in image 3 appears green and healthy and has large, well-formed berries.

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Hellen Wanjira lives in Gachatha village. She set up a demonstration with 50 bushes to experiment the treatments. "I used to harvest 2 kg of coffee from a bush but after adding fertilizer and lime, I have been able to harvest 7 kg from bushes in the same plot." Hellen attributes the increase to pruning, application of fertilizer and lime.



In the neighboring Gadwine village, Nancy Wangui has seen yields from a coffee bush increase from 5 to 18 kg. "I used to apply manure and 17:17:17 fertilizer but my production was always low. FIPS-Africa advised me to prune, apply manure, lime and coffee fertilizer and also to spray my bushes at regular intervals. My yields have more than trebled," she says.



In Mukure village in Kirinyaga County, Charles Gachobi is a happy coffee farmer. He has seen a possibility to treble his coffee production. According to the farmer, this will happen if he applies Mavuno coffee fertilizer and lime along with other good management practices like pruning.

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