

September 2024

NPCK NEWSLETTER

Dear partners, farmers and stakeholders,
Welcome to the September 2024 NPCK Newsletter! This month, we bring you exciting updates from the Kenya Sustainable Potato Initiative (KSPI), our field demonstrations, and ongoing capacity enhancement activities. Together, we are building a sustainable future for the potato industry in Kenya.

PROJECTS

GROWING OPPORTUNITIES: THE KENYA SUSTAINABLE POTATO INITIATIVE



Participants during Meru County KSPI Inception

THE LAUNCH OF KENYA SUSTAINABLE POTATO INITIATIVE (KSPI)

The Kenya Sustainable Potato Initiative (KSPI) is a three-year project funded by AGRA. It runs from 2024 July to June 2027 with three Consortium Members, NPCK, KALRO-Tigoni, and Egerton University. It is being implemented in Laikipia, Meru, Nyandarua, and Nandi Counties.

The key objectives include; enhanced access to quality seed potato, sustainable increase of the ware potato, inclusive and structured input and output market and creating an enabling environment and coordination of the sector.

The project envisions to build a strong and robust seed system, to reduce the seed gap by 50%, and increase adoption of sustainable farming practices. It will also focus on crop diversification for rotation, nutrition-oriented and sensitive agriculture programs that respond to the current climate change effects. The project emphasizes on sustainable farming to improve productivity, enhance private sector incentives, facilitate a supportive policy environment for improved food and nutrition security and livelihoods. It seeks to address legal and regulatory challenges to production, marketing, distribution and processing.



Participants during Laikipia County KSPI Inception



Participants at Nyandarua County KSPI Inception



Participants at Nandi County KSPI Inception

[Read more about the KSPI Project](#)

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY ASSESSMENT OF POTATO FARMER GROUPS AND COOPERATIVES

NPCK has embarked on conducting a need assessment for farmer groups and cooperatives. The exercise will help in establishing their status quo which includes current gaps, their strengths and areas of improvement to make them effective and sustainable.

[Read More about the Capacity Assessment](#)

EMPOWERING FARMERS TRAINING OF VILLAGE-BASED ADVISORS AT EGERTON UNIVERSITY

The KSPI project aims to create employment for 4,873 youth and women through Village Based Advisors (VBAs).

These VBAs are entrepreneurs recruited to support potato farmers in improving production and generating business opportunities along the potato value chain.

NPCK, in collaboration with Egerton University, conducted the first cohort training for 55 VBAs at Egerton University's Njoro campus in Nakuru County.

[Read more about the VBAs Training](#)



Professor Kibe training VBAs at Egerton University



An ongoing session in Nandi County Olessos Ward farmer group assessment meeting

POLICIES



Meru County stakeholders during the CPS validation meeting

REGULATORY FRAMEWORK, MERU COUNTY POTATO STRATEGY 2024-2028

The County Potato Strategy (CPS) is a policy document that aligns with the National Potato Strategy, Kenya Vision 2030 and County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP). The policy document factors in the contributions of subsector players and development partners in enhancing potato industry performance and growth at the County Level.

Read More about the Regulatory Framework

FOOD SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION –NAIROBI CITY COUNTY PERSPECTIVE

The transformation of food systems is critical to achieving sustainable development, improving public health, and addressing the challenges of climate change, food security and safety. It emphasizes on the need for systemic changes that address sustainability, equity, and resilience while ensuring that food systems can meet the needs of a growing global population, growing wealth, changing consumption patterns and globalization.

Read More about the Food Systems Transformation



Utafiti sera house members and the county government of Nairobi

CAPACITY ENHANCEMENT ACTIVITIES

AT NPCK, WE VALUE COOPERATIVES

Through the Reclaim Sustainability Project supported by Solidaridad and Kenya Sustainable Potato Initiative (KSPI) project supported by AGRA, NPCK in collaboration with the County government of Meru conducted a capacity enhancement workshop for the Meru Tamu Potato Cooperative on 27th, 28th, and 29th August 2024, at Kirua, Meru County. The main objective was to support the cooperative develop a strategic plan for 2024-2028, sensitize about the ViaziSoko platform, and create awareness on Crops Irish potato regulations 2019.

Read More about the Cooperative Development



Photo of Meru Tamu cooperative members and the stakeholders

POTATO FARM DEMONSTRATIONS

During the long rains season from April to August 2024, NPCK, in collaboration with Kisima Farm, IPM Potato Group, Agrico PSA, FreshCrop Ltd, Solynta HPTS, Elgon Kenya, Bayer, Syngenta, Corteva, Lachlan, OCP, Yara, Chiromo Fertilizer Ltd, Ayedos Group Ltd, Biolevel, KPluss, CGA, Syngenta Foundation, Agribase, Lanyuak Cooperative Society, Ainabkoi farmers' cooperative, KALRO, HZPC, The Real IPM, Wedgehut, Viazi Kings, EABCL, and MOALD, established eight demonstration sites across eight potato-growing counties: Nakuru, Uasin Gishu, Meru, Nyandarua, Elgeyo Marakwet, Bungoma, Narok, and Nyeri.

Read More about Demonstrations

FIELD ACTIVITIES

SHORT RAINS SEED DISTRIBUTION

NPCK in collaboration with Viazi Kings Limited distributed the seeds to farmers for the short rain season August to October. The bags ordered through Viazisoko digital platform were more than 12,000 certified seeds and distribution is ongoing. The farmers expressed joy in receiving the potato seeds which are becoming difficult to source. Potatoes is the second most important crop after maize and the demand has been expanding overtime. Farmers need certified seeds to increase yield.

Read More about seed Distribution



Lorry carrying 28 tonnes-560 bags distributing seeds in Olenguruone



NPCK Nyeri demo site training by Bayer East Africa

INNOVATIONS AND SOLUTIONS IN POTATO PRODUCTION IN KENYA

Potato consumption has been rapidly growing in Kenya, driving the need to increase production and improve quality and access to the markets. It is, therefore, important for all stakeholders in the potato subsector to work together to implement innovative approaches and solutions, thus addressing farmer's needs. Several innovative solutions are being implemented to address challenges faced by farmers in this sub-sector such as the development of high-yielding, pest and disease-resistant potato varieties. KALRO, Agrico potato services and Kisima farm have been working to breed seeds that can have resistance to most devastating diseases like blight and bacterial wilt. These varieties include Shangi, Markies, Sherekea and Unica. The improved varieties have enhanced farmer's resilience to climate change.

[Read More about the innovations](#)



Irish potato Unica Variety

PROPOSED INTRODUCTION OF POTATO WITH RESISTANCE TO LATE BLIGHT

The Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization (KALRO) in collaboration with International Potato Center (CIP), and African Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF) have proposed a release of Potato (*Solanum tuberosum* L.) with resistance to late blight (*Phytophthora infestans*) developed through modern Technology with an ambition for outcomes that will enable the introduction of late blight resistant potato variety in Kenya. Growing potatoes in Kenya and many parts of the world is constrained by disease and pest challenges, including the most serious disease known as late blight (LB).

Scientists have tried to get natural resistance from existing potatoes through traditional breeding techniques with little success.

[Read More about the proposal](#)

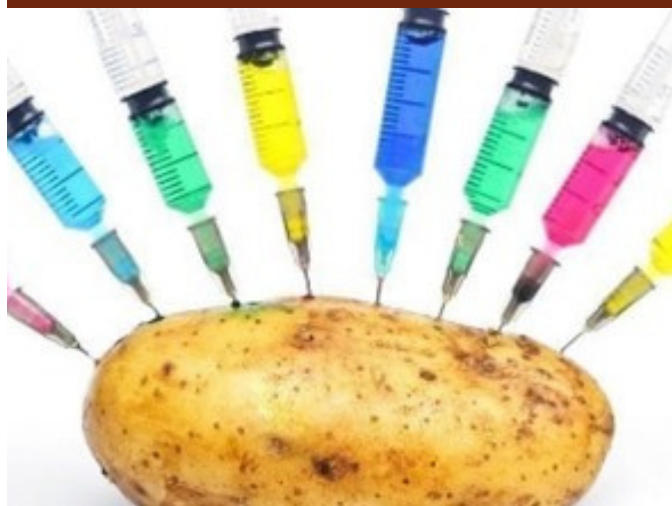


Photo credits: change.org/t/ge-potato-en-ca

BACTERIAL WILT IN POTATOES

Bacterial wilt is caused by a soil-borne bacterium named *Ralstonia Solanacearum* (formerly *Pseudomonas Solanacearum*). Potato wilt bacterium mainly inhabits the roots and enters the root system at points of injury caused by farm tools or equipment and soil pests. It is also known as brown rot, southern wilt, sore eye, or jammy eye on potatoes. This is a serious problem in many developing countries in the tropical and subtropical zones of the world.



Potatoes affected by bacterial wilt
|Photo Courtesy CIP



Potato crops affected by bacterial wilt
|Courtesy of researchgate.net

THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF BACTERIAL WILT

Bacterial wilt is one of the most destructive diseases of the potato. It's responsible for causing considerable losses to the potato industry where the disease exists. The disease can cause total loss of a crop and prevent the use of land for potato production for several years.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS FAVORING BACTERIAL WILT.

The bacterial wilt of potatoes is generally favored by temperatures between 25°C and 37°C. It usually does not cause problems in areas where the mean soil temperature is below 15°C. Under conditions of optimum temperature, infection is favored by the wetness of the soil.

Once infection has occurred, symptoms will often be more severe with hot and dry conditions, which hastens wilting.

[*Read More about Bacterial Wilt*](#)



Potato crops affected by bacterial wilt |Courtesy of
African Farm Resource Centre