

INTRODUCTION

We are excited to share a summary update of activities across Kenya's potato sub-sector taking place up to December 2024. NPCK and partners continued to make strides in expanding partnerships and transforming the potato industry. Key activities undertaken include recruiting and training Village-based Advisors, capacity building of farmers and improving market structures. Other key activities included the signing of an MoU with the Nandi County Government, Captains of Potato Industry Dinner 2024, collaborative efforts to harmonize potato trading regulations within the East African Community, insights into strategic potato marketing practices in Kenya, and the joint efforts to strengthen crop protection against common potato diseases. We also celebrated Kenya's commitment to sustainable agriculture during the World Food Day celebrations in Nandi County. The implementation of the Crops (Irish Potato) Regulations, 2019, was relaunched, marking a significant step toward improving compliance and standardization in the industry.

MARKETING

POTATO MARKETING IN KENYA: HARMONIZATION AND STRATEGIC STRUCTURING



Potato marketing in Kenya is evolving into a structured system aimed at enhancing profitability for farmers and stakeholders. One key approach is contract marketing, which fosters agreements between farmers and buyers, ensuring guaranteed markets and stable prices for produce. This strategy is complemented by collective production and aggregation, where farmers band together to increase their bargaining power and reduce transaction costs, thereby improving efficiency and access to larger markets. NPCK driven by the need to harmonize market prices and trends collects potato market prices in different towns to guide the farmers and marketers on the prevailing market prices across the country and nurture healthy competition.

[Read more about the Potato Marketing](#)

NPCK and Viazi Kings Ltd courtesy visit to AGRICOPSA to deliberate on seed potato availability..



NPCK visit at Norda Industries



NPCK visit at Simplifine



A display of potato tubers and starch. Photo Credit: Suraj Maulrya

THE EXPANDING MARKET FOR POTATOES

Potato has always been a resilient and versatile crop, and today's market is growing richer with opportunities that go beyond traditional uses. As demand for potatoes expands into new industries, farmers are in an ideal position to benefit from this dynamic crop's diverse applications. With recent developments, potatoes are not only being used for consumption but also for starch processing, medical applications, and even liquor production offering a promising future for potato cultivation. Starch processing does not require much of grading because the most important aspect is potatoes that are mature and firm. Below are the various utilities of Potatoes.

[Read more about expanding market for Potatoes](#)



LIQUOR PRODUCTION

A growing trend in the alcoholic beverage industry is the use of potatoes in liquor production, especially vodka. Potato-based spirits are renowned for their smoothness and unique flavor profile, making them popular in premium liquor brands.

Photo Credit: [https://chuckanutbaydi stillery.com/](https://chuckanutbaydistillery.com/)

PARTNERSHIPS

NPCK AND NANDI COUNTY SIGN MOU



Nandi Governor Hon. Stephen Sang signs the MoU with NPCK CEO Wachira Kaguongo

NPCK signed an MOU with Nandi County Government to Boost Potato Farming on 19th December 2024. This partnership is part of the Kenya Sustainable Potato Initiative (KSPI) Project, supported by AGRA. Through this MOU, NPCK and the Nandi County Government aim to address key challenges facing potato farmers, such as low productivity, limited access to quality seeds, poor agronomic practices, and inadequate marketing infrastructure.



The collaboration will focus on sustainable solutions that enhance productivity, improve market access, and create a favorable policy environment for the growth of the potato value chain in the county.

[Read more about the NPCK/Nandi MOU](#)

REGULATIONS

RE-LAUNCH OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CROPS IRISH POTATO REGULATIONS 2019



A section of CECMs during the first stakeholder engagements meeting at merica Hotel, Nakuru

Since the gazettelement in 2019, the regulation implementation and enforcement has not been so strong due to disjointed efforts thus inhibiting realization of the industry maximum potential. One of the best implementation mechanism is through ensuring a well-coordinated effort between the potato producing and marketing counties. Multi-stakeholder engagement meetings were conducted on 22nd October and 10th December 2024 bringing on board CECM and County Directors Trade and Marketing from both marketing and producing counties respectively.

[Read More about the Relaunch](#)

The Crops Irish Potato regulations were established to create a supportive policy and regulatory framework aimed at addressing the key challenges within the potato subsector. When fully implemented, they will enhance industry standards and operations. The regulations mandate the registration of growers and all value chain participants to aid data collection and ensure compliance, Irish potatoes must be packaged in clean, food-grade materials, with each unit weighing no more than 50kg. Furthermore, all potatoes for trade must meet national, regional, and international standards for sorting, grading, packaging, labeling, transportation, and storage. The regulations also call for the appointment of inspectors to oversee and enforce these requirements.



UPDATES FROM THE REGION

COMESA-EAC HORTICULTURE ACCELERATOR (CEHA) REGIONAL STRATEGIC PLAN (2025-2035)

COMESA-EAC Horticulture Accelerator (CEHA) was created in 2022 by public and private sector partners to better coordinate policy, value chain development programs, financing, and Research and Development (R&D) of the horticulture industry. The aim of CEHA is to speed up the growth of the Fruit and Vegetable (F&V) sub-sector in the COMESA and EAC regions. The countries of focus are Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda. NPCK is the Coordinator in Kenya. CEHA Strategy was endorsed during a Partner's Engagement Meeting organized by the Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa (ACTESA), A Specialized Agency of COMESA, in Lusaka, Zambia. Regional Strategic Plan (2025-2035) was validated by the CEHA National Chapters, Governmental Officials, and Implementing Alliance.



A group session during strategy review

Read More about the CEHA Regional Strategic Plan

EVENTS

CAPTAINS OF INDUSTRY FORUM

The Captains of the Potato Industry Dinner, held on December 20th at Pride Inn Azure in Nairobi, was a spectacular evening dedicated to celebrating the milestones and achievements in Kenya's potato value chain. The event brought together an impressive array of stakeholders, including government representatives such as Ministry of Cooperatives, KEPHIS, Warehouse Receipt System Council, farmer representatives, and leaders from the private sector and agrochemicals.

A key highlight of the evening was the presentation of the Viazi Soko Awards, which recognized top performers on the NPCK's market platform. Agnes Chebet emerged as the best Village Based Advisor, with an outstanding record of 1,368 bags sold. In the seed production category, Kisima Farm was celebrated as the Best Seed Producer, reflecting their pivotal role in providing high-quality inputs that drive productivity.

Read More about the Captains of industry Forum

ENHANCING REGIONAL TRADE

Trade in potato among EAC (East Africa Community) member countries exists due to comparative advantages in some countries over others. For this to take place, commodities must transit across borders. However, the movement of potato poses a risk of introduction, establishment and spread of quarantine pests or regulated non-quarantine pests (RNQP). Therefore, phytosanitary measures have to be taken to mitigate such risks. These measures (non-tariff measures), should be instituted in a scientifically justified, transparent and non-discriminatory manner. For this reason, an agreed way of inspecting potato among the EAC Partner States has been conceived



Stakeholders during the review of Standard Operating Procedures for Phytosanitary measures

Read More about the EAC Regional Trade



KEPHIS MD Prof Theophilus Mutui giving his remarks

FIELD ACTIVITIES

FARMERS TRAINING IN NANDI COUNTY CHESUMEI SUB-COUNTY

A farmer training session was held at Lelchego Cooperative Hall in Chesumei Sub-County, Nandi County, aimed at empowering local farmers to build cooperative structures. The training emphasized the importance of forming farmer groups, which would eventually integrate into a larger cooperative governing all potato farmers in the sub-county, with the ultimate goal of establishing a national potato cooperative. Farmers were guided through the gross margin of potato production, from seed acquisition to marketing and value addition, as well as the financial aspects critical to cooperative and group growth. Additionally, attendees were briefed on the Kenya Sustainable Potato Initiative project, including its regional activities, goals and objectives, fostering awareness and engagement among local farmers.



Ongoing Farmer Training Session on building cooperative structures

[Read More about Chesumei Field Day](#)

DEMO FARM PREPARATIONS

REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

Our Field Officer, Nandi County conducted visits to three selected demo farms. The goal was to assess each site for accessibility, water availability, and overall suitability, ensuring all necessary details are ready for stakeholders. Soil samples were also collected from each farm to support effective planning for the demonstrations.

In a hands-on learning opportunity, agriculture students from Aldai Technical College joined the Field Officer at their farm in Kemeloi/Maraba Ward. Together, they practiced soil sampling techniques, including collection and proper packaging for testing, providing the students with valuable practical skills in soil analysis as they contribute to the project's success.



[Read More about the Field Reports](#)

COOPERATIVES

NEED ASSESSMENT OF POTATO FARMER GROUPS AND COOPERATIVES

A need assessment for farmer groups and cooperatives was done in Nandi Chesumei subcounty on 9th October 2024 and Meru, Buuri subcounty on 8th October 2024. During the meeting, farmers were also trained and registered on Viazi Soko platform. A sensitization on importance of building strong marketing groups and formation of a National cooperative was done. A total of 15 farmer groups and 2 community based organization, one cooperative participated in Nandi and in Meru County the meeting was attended by one cooperative; Ntiritimiti Potato Cooperative.



Ntirimiti Tumaini co-operative Officials, NPCK co-operatives officer and Viazi kings marketing officer after groups assessment meeting

DISEASES

MANAGING POTATO DISEASES: COMMON ISSUES AND SOLUTIONS

Potato is vulnerable to several pathogenic organisms all which can cause severe quality and yield losses. As a consequence, potato production is highly reliant on agrochemicals to manage the disease which has a negative effect on the sustainability of the crop. One of the major diseases that is affecting potatoes is late blight. The symptoms of late blight include dark lesions on leaves and stems with white mold on undersides of the leaves. The solution is to plant blight resistance potato varieties such as Unica and Sherekea, practicing crop rotation and removing infected plant and debris. Farmers also are advised to apply preventive fungicides such as Equation Pro by Corteva and Infinito by Bayer. Another disease affecting potato production is Early blight. It causes yellowing of leaves and concentric on dark lesions. The solution for early blight are similar to late blight.



Symptoms of Late blight on a potato plant

[Read More about Potato Diseases](#)

TRAINING ON APICAL ROOTED CUTTINGS SEED POTATO MULTIPLICATION

To promote seed potato multiplication, NPCK together with KPSI partners, visited the Baraka Women Group members in Ngenia sub-location, Mukogodo East Ward, Laikipia North on October 1, 2024 to train on ARC. The group is committed to produce seed and ware potato.



Some members of Baraka women group in their Greenhouse

MECHANIZATION IMPACTS POTATO PRODUCTION IN KENYA

The use of nationally certified seed currently covers less than five percent of the acreage — a key impediment to growth in the sector. The International Potato Center (CIP) estimates that bacterial wilt spreading through poor seed yield can result in 30 percent losses. In addition, climate change — erratic rains and degenerated soil in the key potato-growing agroecological zones — leads to significant fluctuations in access to ware potatoes.



Farmers watch a live demonstration of potato harvesting machinery on a field day. Photo courtesy of Fresh Crop Ltd

[Read More about Mechanization impacts](#)

WORLD FOOD DAY

The World Food Day 2024 took place from October 16th to 18th, in Nandi County, Kaimosi, Kapsabet Sub-County.. The event, themed "Right to Food for a Better Life and Better Future," was graced by CS Hon. Andrew Karanja, PS Hon. Paul Kiprono from the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, and Fisheries (MOALD), the Governor of Nandi County, and the CECM of Nandi. This gathering attracted various players from across the food value chain and research institutes dedicated to advancing food production.

At the event, NPCK shared a booth with Egerton University and Viazi Kings Limited, both key partners in the AGRA-funded KSPI project aimed at promoting sustainability in the potato value chain. NPCK's booth drew strong interest from farmers eager to learn more about potato farming.



NPCK stand at World Food Day at Kaimosi, Nandi County

[*Read More about World Food Day.*](#)

THE POTATO TEAM CONTINUES TO SHINE AT THE ANNUAL STANDARD CHARTERED MARATHON

For yet another year, the Potato Team constituted the International Potato Center (CIP), Sereni Fries, Agrico Potato Services Limited, Viazi Kings Limited, Kirinyaga Seeds Limited, Nichosville Dyslexia Shamba Village Farm, NPCK, Potato Framers and friends of Potato participated at the Annual Standard Chartered Marathon 2024. The team has built a reputation as the one to bring energy and passion and create awareness of the 2nd most important food crop in Kenya through the race every year. Potato Team's runners showcased incredible resilience, crossing the finish line with smiles and cheers. This team members were groomed in signature potato-inspired gear which made the team stand out and increased visibility among others.



Some of potato team members enjoying the 5km family Run



Potato team at Summerdale Inn



Potato team after the race in Uhuru gardens

[*Read More about the Standard Chartered Marathon*](#)

SHORT RAINS FARM DEMOS

NPCK in partnership with potato seed companies, agrochemical, and fertilizer companies actively participated in the planning and planting of potato demonstration farms to transfer useful knowledge and information to farmers on the use of certified potato seeds, modern technologies and innovations, use of potato-specific fertilizers, the recommended agrochemicals to control pests and diseases, and the importance of good agricultural practices in potato production. Such initiatives continue to enlighten potato farmers on good agricultural practices in potato production, enhance potato productivity, and improve farmer's income and businesses in the potato value chain.

Short rains farm demonstrations are ongoing in four project counties namely; Nandi, Meru, Nyandarua, and Laikipia) under the Kenya Sustainable Potato Initiative (KSPI) project. Three demo sites were identified in each of the four counties and one non-project demo site in Nakuru county. These sites were identified following the criteria in the questionnaire where the farmer has to be in a farmers' group, the land should not have been planted with crops in the Solanacearum family for the last 4-7 seasons, should be accessible and should have water for irrigation.



Farmers' training on-going as they actively participate in planting of potato demo at Kithaku in Meru county

STEPS IN IDENTIFYING FARM DEMO SITE:

1. Soil sampling

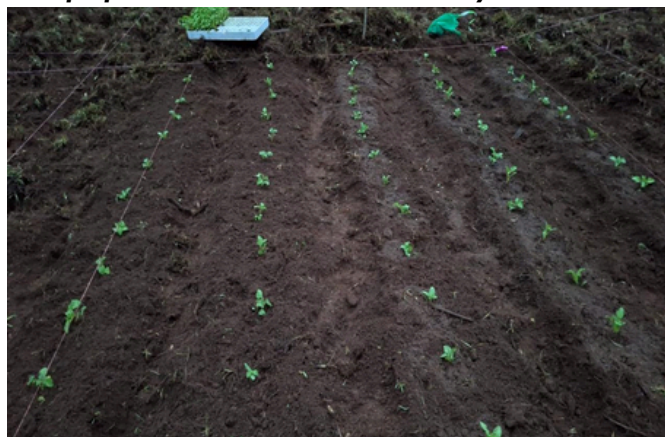
A standard operating procedure (SOP) for collecting soil samples from farms was developed. The procedure outlines how to collect soil samples to be submitted to the laboratory for pathological tests which include bacterial wilt caused by *Ralstonia solanacearum* and potato cyst nematodes (PCN), as well as soil fertility test.

(ii) Land preparation:

Land preparation is key for increase crop productivity. It helps create the best conditions for plants to grow and establish themselves. The pieces of land identified for the demos in different counties were ploughed and harrowed using tractors before planting.



Land preparation in Lessos in Nandi county



Apical cuttings planted at a demo site in Njabini, Nyandarua county

[Read More about the Short Rains Farm Demos](#)