

## WELCOME TO THE MARCH 2025 EDITION OF THE NPCK NEWSLETTER!

A Season of Growth, Innovation, and Unity in Kenya’s Potato Sector

As the long rains roll in and the earth begins to soften under the weight of new life, Kenya’s potato sector is witnessing a transformation that is both bold and promising. This edition of the Potato Newsletter captures a snapshot of that momentum, from new seed regulations and digital platforms to youth empowerment and preparation for the International Day of Potato.

The recent gazettelement of the Vegetatively Propagating Seeds (VPS) Regulations 2024 by the Ministry of Agriculture is a welcome and timely intervention. For too long, our farmers have battled with low-quality seeds and unchecked diseases that compromise yields and marketability. These new regulations promise a more structured and quality-assured seed system, particularly for seed potatoes. With mandatory registration, certification, and clearer traceability, the industry is now better positioned to deliver clean, disease-free planting material to farmers a foundational step toward National food security and prosperity.

*[Click here to explore more on the introduction](#)*

## THE VEGETATIVELY PROPAGATING SEEDS (VPS) 2024 REGULATIONS AND WHAT IT ADDRESSES IN THE SEED POTATO VALUE CHAIN

THE SEEDS AND PLANT VARIETIES ACT (Cap 326)	
IN EXERCISE of the powers conferred by Section 3 of the Seeds and Plant Varieties Act, the Cabinet Secretary for Agriculture and Livestock Development makes the following Regulations: -	
<b>THE SEEDS AND PLANT VARIETIES (VEGETATIVELY PROPAGATING SEEDS) REGULATIONS, 2023</b>	
<b>PART I -PRELIMINARY</b>	
Citation	1. These Regulations may be cited as the Seeds and Plant Varieties (Vegetatively Propagating Seeds) Regulations, 2023
Interpretations	2. In these Regulations, unless the context otherwise requires: -  <div style="padding-left: 20px;"> <p>“Act” The Seeds and Plant Varieties Act CAP 326</p> <p>“authorized person” means a competent private or public persons authorized by the Service to perform specified functions in accordance to Section 3B (1) (b) of the Act;</p> <p>“Basic Seed” means progeny of breeder’s seed or pre-basic seed;</p> </div>

**A photo of the first page of the VPS regulations and certified seed potato with the approved KEPHIS label**

The Seeds and Plant Varieties (Vegetatively Propagating Seed) Regulations 2024, enacted by the Ministry of Agriculture, aim to enhance the quality and accessibility of vegetatively propagating seeds (VPS) within the nation's seed industry. These regulations categorize VPS into groups such as root and tuber crops (potato is to be classified), oil and nut crops, sugar crops, medicinal herbs, spices, and aromatic plants, beverage crops, fruit trees, grasses, and pasture legumes. Key provisions;

1. Mandatory Registration-Individuals intending to produce or sell VPS must obtain a valid registration certificate from the Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS). Operating without this certificate is an offense.
2. Certification Requirements-Sellers of specified seeds must apply for certification from KEPHIS. Certificates are valid for one year and then subject to renewal.

*[Click here to explore more on Vegetatively Propagating seeds](#)*

## VIAZI SOKO: REVOLUTIONIZING POTATO FARMING WITH EASY ACCESS TO SEEDS, FERTILIZERS, AND MARKET CONNECTIONS

Viazi Soko collaborates with top-certified seed potato companies, including Agrico, Kisima, Fresh Crop, and Global South, enabling farmers to conveniently book and order seeds, fertilizers, and agrochemicals directly through the platform. Once ordered, the inputs are delivered to the farmer's nearest collection point, making it easier for farmers to access high-quality products. One key feature of Viazi Soko is its commitment to helping smallholder farmers. While the platform limits seed purchases to four bags per farmer, it recognizes that many farmers only require one to three bags of certified seed. To overcome this, Viazi Soko encourages the formation of farmer groups. By coming together, farmers can pool their resources to collectively buy inputs, which are then delivered to a designated collection point, making access to certified seeds more affordable and practical for smallholder farmers.

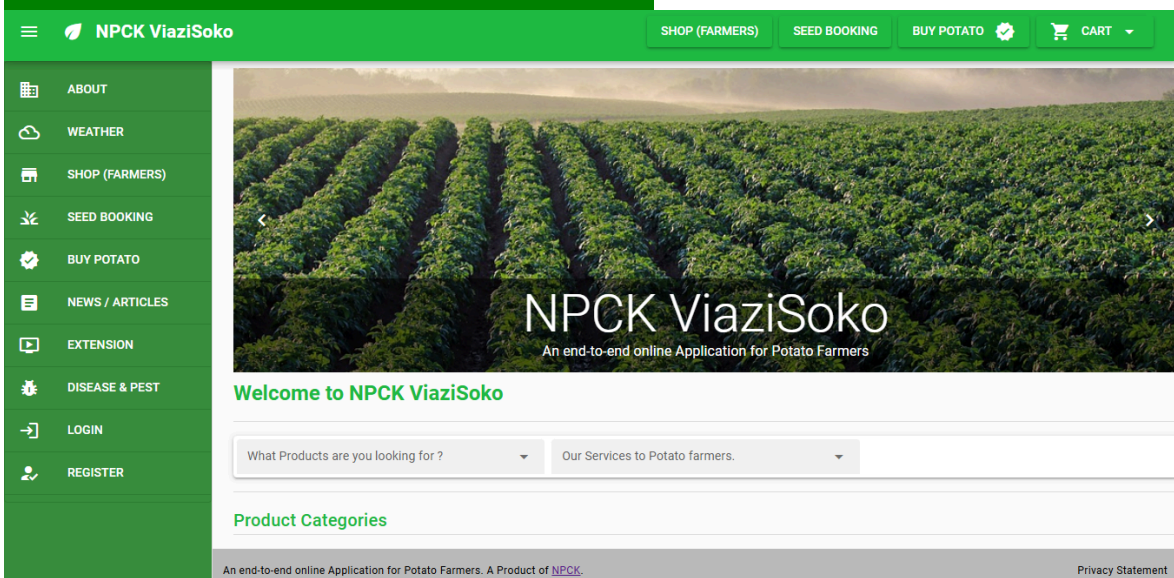
## STRENGTHENING FARMER GROUPS FOR GREATER AGRICULTURAL IMPACT

Small-scale farmers often face challenges such as limited market access, high production costs, and unpredictable production risks. However, collective production and marketing empower farmers by increasing their bargaining power, reducing costs through economies of scale, and enhancing risk-sharing mechanisms to mitigate challenges like weather changes and market fluctuations. Additionally, strong farmer groups benefit from access to better markets, allowing them to sell in bulk, secure contracts, and access high-value market segments. These groups also benefit from improved market information, enabling farmers to make informed decisions and optimize their productivity.



Mr. Henry Chemjor, Value chain manager NPCK, with Umathi Farmers' Cooperative in Nyandarua in one of the sensitization forums

[Click here to explore more on Strengthening Farmer Groups](#)



The screenshot shows the NPCK ViaziSoko mobile application interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with a menu icon, the NPCK logo, and the text 'NPCK ViaziSoko'. To the right of the logo are buttons for 'SHOP (FARMERS)', 'SEED BOOKING', 'BUY POTATO', and 'CART'. Below the navigation bar is a sidebar menu with options: ABOUT, WEATHER, SHOP (FARMERS), SEED BOOKING, BUY POTATO, NEWS / ARTICLES, EXTENSION, DISEASE & PEST, LOGIN, and REGISTER. The main content area features a large banner image of a potato field with the text 'NPCK ViaziSoko' and 'An end-to-end online Application for Potato Farmers'. Below the banner is a 'Welcome to NPCK ViaziSoko' message and two search input fields: 'What Products are you looking for?' and 'Our Services to Potato farmers.'. At the bottom, there is a 'Product Categories' section and a footer with the text 'An end-to-end online Application for Potato Farmers. A Product of NPCK.' and a 'Privacy Statement' link.

### Viazi Soko Dash Board

[Click here to explore more on the Viazi Soko Platform](#)

## STRENGTHENING VARIETY ADOPTION FOR A RESILIENT AND MARKET-DRIVEN POTATO SECTOR IN KENYA

Kenya has released a growing number of potato varieties in recent years, but their adoption remains low due to challenges such as limited seed availability, poor access to quality seed, and lack of market alignment. Many farmers continue to use recycled seed from local sources, which reduces productivity and restricts variety diversification. This cycle of low innovation and poor yields limits the sector's growth and makes it harder for farmers to benefit from improved genetics and modern practices.

One of the key solutions lies in strengthening the link between farmers and formal seed producers. NPCK, through the *Viazi Soko* digital platform, are making notable progress by partnering with seed companies such as Agrico, FreshCrop, and Kisima Farm. These partnerships are helping improve the availability and affordability of certified seed, while also promoting direct farmer engagement with seed merchants to encourage informed decision-making and sustained use of improved varieties.



*A farmer trying the *Viazi soko* platform on his mobile phone and being assisted by Mr. Henry Chemjor of NPCK (Right)*

[Click here to explore more on Strengthening Variety Adoption](#)

## FROM GROUND TO GREATNESS: PREPARING FOR INTERNATIONAL DAY OF POTATO THROUGH SMART LAND PREPARATION AND SOIL TESTING

Success in agriculture begins long before the seeds touch the soil—it starts with preparation, planning, and a deep understanding of the land. As we gear up for International Day of Potato, NPCK, in collaboration with partners is championing the power of proper land preparation and soil testing as vital steps toward achieving bumper harvests.

In readiness for the upcoming International Day of Potato celebrations, which will be held on 29th and 30th May 2025 at KALRO Marindas, Molo, Nakuru County, preparations are in full swing. Demarcation of plots, soil testing, land clearing, and planting activities are currently underway with various partners setting up demonstration fields. These preparations will provide real-time learning experiences for farmers and visitors, showcasing the impact of these often-overlooked practices in transforming yields and improving productivity.



*Demarcation of plots KALRO Marindas*

[Click here to explore more on the preparations for the International Day of Potato](#)



**Kiazi Mfalme Bountiful Harvest of Challenger Potato Variety in Mau Narok**

## POTATO POST-PRODUCTION OPERATIONS

**Threshing (Sorting and Curing):** After harvesting, potatoes go through a sorting process to ensure only the best quality tubers make it to storage. During this stage, any unwanted materials such as stones, dirt, and plant waste are removed. The tubers are also checked for any signs of disease or pests. Sorting can be done by hand or with machines, and while manual sorting can be effective, using sorting machines is much more efficient and cost-effective. It is important to handle the potatoes carefully to avoid bruising, as this can affect their quality.

**The Importance of Proper Curing and Conditioning:** Once the potatoes are sorted, they need to be cured. Curing is a vital step in preserving the tubers, allowing them to heal from any wounds caused during handling. During curing, the potatoes are kept in a cool, well-ventilated area for about 1 to 2 weeks. The ideal temperature is between 16°C and 21°C, with about 90% humidity.

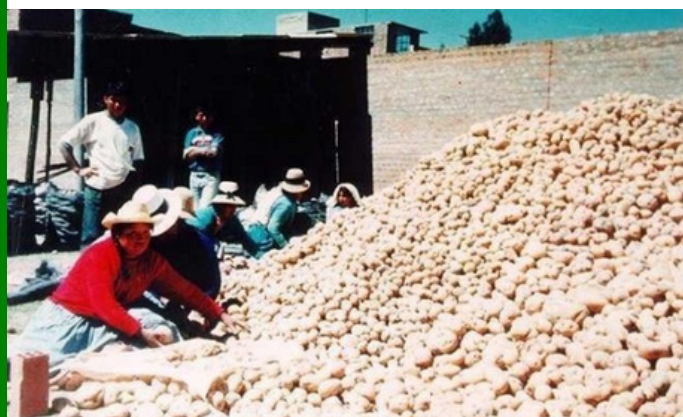
[Click here to explore More on Post Production Operations](#)

## WHY SMART FARMERS ARE SWITCHING FROM MAIZE TO POTATOES

Agriculture remains the backbone of Kenya's economy, with maize traditionally being the staple food. However, in recent years, potatoes have emerged as the second most important food crop in the country. While maize is deeply ingrained in Kenya's food culture, potatoes offer far greater benefits in terms of productivity per unit area and income for farmers. Here's why potatoes are a superior choice for agricultural investment in Kenya.

**Higher Yields per Unit Area – The Numbers Don't Lie!** One of the most compelling reasons why potatoes are superior to maize is their significantly higher yield per unit area. Under optimal conditions, Maize yields in Kenya average 2-3 tons per hectare, with improved farming techniques raising this to about 5-6 tons per hectare. In contrast, potatoes produce an average of 10-15 tons per hectare, with high-yield varieties capable of producing up to 30 tons per hectare.

[Click here to explore more on Farmers switching from Maize to Potatoes](#)



**Potato sorting and grading**

## REVOLUTIONIZING SEED POTATO PRODUCTION USING ROOTED APICAL CUTTINGS



**Rooted Apical Cuttings at different stages: (a) Mother Plants in the Rooting Media, (b) Apical Cuttings transformed to the trays with rooting Media. © Hardened Apical Cuttings in the Screen House (d) Transplanted Rooted Apical Cuttings at the spacing of 75cmX30cm (e) Rooted Apical Cuttings growing in the field**

- Apical cuttings are vegetative parts of the potato taken from the top (apex) of a young potato plant grown in a controlled environment like a screen house or greenhouse. They are a game changer in areas where seed potato production is affected by seed degeneration, leading to the spread of seed-borne pests and pathogens from one season to the next. Examples of the pests and pathogens that accumulate and spread include Potato leaf roll virus (PLRV) and bacterial diseases like bacterial wilt.
- Use of apical cuttings is a clean seed system that provides quality, disease-free, and healthy seed potatoes for enhanced potato production. These apical cuttings are usually rooted in soil or other media to grow into new, healthy potato plants that are transplanted in the field after hardening. Once planted in the field, they produce tubers that are classified as the basic seed.

[Click here to explore more on Apical Cuttings](#)

## YOUTH AND FARMERS IN NANDI COUNTY EMBRACE DIGITAL AGRICULTURE AND POTATO INNOVATION THROUGH KSPI

A wave of agricultural transformation is sweeping across Nandi County, thanks to a series of dynamic training sessions and field demonstrations supported under the Kenya Sustainable Potato Initiative (KSPI). Backed by the Nandi County Government and various development partners, the month of March saw both youth and farmers rallying around potato farming as a promising path to income generation and self-employment. On March 12th, youth groups from Olleso Ward, Mogon Village gathered to discuss their role in the future of agriculture. The message was clear: potato farming offers a quick return on investment and a practical alternative to the long wait for formal employment.



**Youth training in Olleso Ward**

[Click here to explore more on Viazikings and Viasi Soko Seed Distribution](#)