

AGRA Impact Series

Catherine Mbili, a VBA in her Mother Demo Plot. Photo: CGA



Partnerships with the county government of Makueni boosts extension services through the VBAs

Chronic water shortages arising from erratic rainfall seasons and perennial droughts. With adverse effects of climate change, land degradation, declining soil fertility and limited access to extension services. They all have a negative impact on Smallholder farmer's well-being in Makueni County.

"Climate change has become adverse posing a great danger to livelihoods of farmers" says Isaac Kariuki, the Makueni Sub- County Crops Development Officer.

Since July 2020, the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), Cereal Growers Association (CGA), and the County Government of Makueni have joined forces through a public-private partnership to address challenges faced by the smallholder farmers.

"At CGA, we see value in working with partners. By leveraging each other's strengths, the Public and private sector are helping improve food security, strengthen communities and ecosystems resilience through adoption of regenerative agriculture practices and

technologies among smallholder farmers," says Anthony Kioko, the Chief Executive Officer for Cereal Growers Association (CGA).

To strengthen the community-based public-private extension system in the county. CGA prioritized its partnerships and developed a trusted working relationship with the county government, agriculture departments as well the value chain actors in the county.

"The County Government has also embraced the VBA model by using it in their activities through the Ministry of Agriculture as well as embracing the idea of calling community-based facilitators," says George Mabuka, CGA's regenerative agriculture Project Manager.

With collaboration and partnership with the county being important for ownership, cooperation, and sustainability, CGA worked with AGRA to train 27 county extension officials on the identification and selection of Village Based Advisors in Makueni, Kaiti and Kibwezi West Sub- Counties.



“I was part of the 27 Ward Agricultural Officers from seven (7) wards that were tasked to train Village Based Advisors (VBAs),” Kariuki said.

Together, they have equipped 114 Village Based Advisors (VBAS) with knowledge and skills to offer training to smallholder farmers on Regenerative Agriculture and Climate Smart Agriculture Practices and Technologies that improve crop production, increase income, create market linkages and build stronger and more resilient communities

“The VBA Model has come to assist the county government to reaching out to more farmers through regenerative agriculture and climate smart agriculture practices and technologies,” says Isaac Kariuki, Makueni Sub- County Crops Development Officer

To enable the VBAs to perform well, CGA coordinated a robust training program in partnership with the country government and the participating private sector actors – input suppliers, output buyers, supportive service providers, Hermetic Storage Technology (HST) providers and other key value chain actors. Through a training of trainers, CGA facilitated the training of its technical and the county extension staff. The trained county extension officers served as the Master Trainers for the participating VBAs.

“The investment in RA has really helped we the extension officers together with our farming community,” says Daniel Musila, Kathozweni Ward Extension Officer.

“In the staff farmer ratio, when I was a lone, I used to handle 3000 farmers, the VBA model has helped us to reduce the ration,” added Daniel

To enhance the knowledge and capacity to train farmers on RA and CSA practices and technologies, CGA in partnership with the County Government and relevant private sector/value chain actors organized training sessions for the VBAs. The training focussed on the following RA practices: Crop rotation, Compositing (use of compost and farmyard manure, Cover cropping (legume integration), Intercropping, Agroforestry and Minimum soil disturbance.

“RA is using local people to advance technologies they apply to their farms” said Kariuki.

To promote the adoption of regenerative agriculture and climate smart agriculture technologies and practices, CGA is working with the County Government of Makueni to introduce a private sector-led Extension Approach, which involves the identification and training of self-employed Village-based Advisors (VBAs) to practically train farmers on regenerative agriculture and climate smart practices and technologies. CGA has identified and trained 114 VBAs, who have assisted to directly reach approximately 14,005 smallholder farmers with promoted interventions.

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