

MAKING A STRAWBERRY SMILE FROM NUTRITIOUS ASSETS

“As far as the eye can see, women are bent over with children on their backs doing the farming, carrying wood, carrying water...if they all stopped but for a day, your country would shut down.” – Hillary Clinton during a visit to one of the countries in Africa

For Eunice Wanjiku strawberry farming has proved to be a source of self employment and income generation. The mother of six has waded into the most unlikely of businesses as only a few farmers in Kenya have embraced strawberry farming. Only the serious ones! Eunice, a member of Ruiru Dam women group hails from Kabaa village in Kiambu County. Before joining HiH EA in December 2014, she worked as a tea picker in the nearby tea plantations earning a meager income of KES 150 daily. Buoyed by the harsh realities of paying school fees for her children, providing for their daily wants as well as depending on her jobless husband, pushed Eunice into joining the women group as she reasoned this would atleast help her financially. ***“I had seen some of the group members whom I had earlier picked tea with drastically change their livelihoods and I thought why not follow them?”***

Working in the tea plantations left Eunice with little time for her other household chores and exposed her to weather vulgarities as she would get rained on. Fast forward to present Eunice says, ***“I am my own boss. I control the time I wake up and how the rest of the day will flow.”***

She embarked on strawberry farming after been taught by a HiH EA officer about the enterprise module which equips members with skills on how to identify a business idea, start an enterprise, grow it and sustain it. Residents in her area live on land divided into small plots. She thought to herself that she could turn her 1/8 acre piece of land into a successful farming enterprise. She borrowed KES 1,500 from the group’s table banking which she used to buy 100 seedlings. She has planted 70 runners in 20 prepared beds. The plants are 18 inches apart. According to Eunice, strawberries do not require a lot of labour save only for the constant water supply. She sells 8kg every week at a price of KES 100 per kg making about KES 800 weekly. Her clients include her neighbours and at the local market.



Harvested strawberries in a bowl.

Market linkage

Eunice approached a leading retail store in Kenya to supply the strawberries but it was clear that she could not maintain a constant supply and lost the tender. However, with assistance from the HiH EA officer, she has mobilized five of her group members and sold them the seedlings each at KES 30. This is in order to maximize on growing the strawberries to be able to meet the demand. ***“My first harvest was in June 2015 and I realised a profit of KES 20,000 which I used to clear my daughter’s school fees. Were it not for the strawberry farming enterprise, my child would be with me at home.”***



A happy Eunice in her strawberry farm



Packed strawberries ready for the market

Eunice hopes that as her business grows, she will incorporate the value addition aspect by making jam and juice. She also looks forward to borrowing from the Enterprise Incubation Loans to scale up her enterprise.