WorldRenew
LIVING JUSTICE • LOVING MERCY • SERVING CHRIST

Kenya
Fresh from the Field

worldrenew.net December 2016

Jenninah Kabiswa
Country Consultant
jkabiswa@worldrenew.net

Stephan Lutz
Program Consultant, Kenya
stephanlutz@worldrenew.net

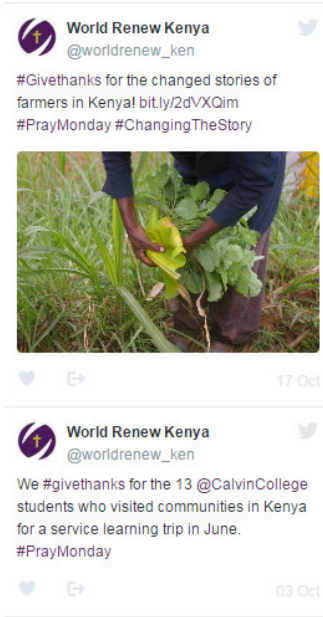
Nema Aluku
Health Program Specialist
East and Southern Africa
naluku@worldrenew.net

Chris Shiundu
Disaster Response Manager
cshiundu@world-renew.net

World Renew Canada
3475 Mainway
PO Box 5070 STN LCD 1
Burlington, ON L7R 3Y8
1-800-730-3490
Fax: 905-336-8344

World Renew US
1700 28th Street SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49508
1-800-552-7972
Fax: 616-224-8060

worldrenew.net/kenya
@worldrenew_ken



Scaling Up Conservation Agriculture, Transforming Lives in Solai-Nakuru

CFGB Project Story of Transformation

In an area where farming in the short-rain season is not considered practical because of very little rainfall, Mr. Johnson Njoroge Njahia dared to farm using the conservation agriculture approach.

Johnson, age 67, is one of the project beneficiaries in the Scaling Up Conservation Agriculture project funded by the Canadian Foodgrains Bank (CFGB). He is married and has four children. He was recruited and trained as a contact farmer. ADS Central Rift Approach involves recruitment of 32 contact farmers. The contact farmers then each recruit 15 mentor farmers, who then reach out to work with four to five farmers each. This strategy has been set up to enhance farmer-to-farmer learning and extension. Johnson was trained in the month of August along with 31 other contact farmers within the project area.

At the beginning of the short-rain season, Johnson and other farmers benefited with support of green manure/cover crop (GM/CC) seeds for the establishment of a model farm. Among the seeds he received were dolichos lablab (beans), cowpeas, and pigeon peas. He has planted these GM/CC seeds for multiplication and, in turn, distribution to other farmers.

Generally, the Solai area of Nakuru does not receive adequate rainfall during the short-rain season (Sept.–Dec.), when the rains are minimal and planted crops do not yield well. Farmers therefore mainly opt to avoid farming and planting during this season. Johnson, after attending the conservation agriculture training as a contact farmer, decided to give the conservation agriculture approach a try. During the training the farmers were encouraged to start with a small piece of land measuring at least 20 feet by 20 feet. Johnson tried the three principles of conservation agriculture (minimum tillage, soil cover, and crop rotation) not only on a small piece of land but on three acres, planting 1/8 of an acre with Dolichos lablab and the rest with other legumes.

Johnson in his CA model farm with soil cover using cover crops (dolichos lablab) & mulching

For comparison purposes, Johnson also decided to farm half of the land using the conventional way of farming, and the other half using the conservation agriculture principles.

For minimum tillage, Johnson did not use a tractor to plough the land, as he usually would do before; instead, he applied herbicides and removed weeds directly (hand weeding).

He has already started realizing several benefits as he waits to compare the harvests:

(Continued on page 2)

Did you know that you can receive this letter directly to your own e-mail and that by doing so you are helping World Renew be a good steward of your gifts? To sign up, contact Carrie Elzinga at celzinga@worldrenew.net.

(Continued from page 1)

- The use of herbicides compared with the use of a tractor in land preparation has changed his perception that the land should always be plowed before planting. Johnson has saved funds that would otherwise have been used to hire the tractor and pay for other labor costs that he could have incurred. With the minimum tillage, Johnson was able to conserve the soil moisture, and therefore his crop managed to do well in comparison to those of neighbors.
- His crop has already podded, and he is anticipating a harvest of about 10 bags of beans, which he estimates will get him about Ksh. 55,000-60,000, an income that he would otherwise not have realized.
- Conservation agriculture skills have enabled Johnson to adopt early planting through relay cropping—a practice that enables him to plant other crops in between the rows before the main crop is harvested. This has enabled him to time the rains, unlike other farmers who have waited to harvest the first crop before planting the next one.

Johnson is currently a happy farmer due to benefits realized through conservation agriculture. This has made him change his perception on conventional farming.

Johnson has also practiced the crop rotation principle. In the previous long-rain season he had planted maize on his piece of land, and now he has made mulch from the maize crop residues for use in soil cover. In addition, by introducing the lablab bean as a cover crop, he is considering including this crop in his rotation plan, as it is suitable for that area and has a higher profit margin than other beans.

A hip of crop residues for mulching and feeding the livestock

After his experience in practicing conservation agriculture, Johnson has the following recommendations to enhance faster adoption by the other farmers in the Solai area:

- Integrate mechanized tools for conservation agriculture, such as tractor-mounted equipment like the chisel plough. This will enable farmers to produce more and expand the area under conservation agriculture.
- Support farmers with GM/CC seeds for adoption of cover crops and diversification in fighting food insecurity and improving livelihoods.

Bean grown using minimum soil tillage through application of herbicide

On farm research /experiment on production with dolichos lablab using conventional farming