

COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIP IN KENYA'S POTATO SUBSECTOR

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INTRODUCTION

The National Potato Council of Kenya (NPCK) is a Public Private Partnership organization charged with a role of revitalizing and developing the potato subsector. The Council aims to transform the subsector into a robust, competitive, and self-regulating industry through; i) Providing National and County forums for engagement, planning, networking and solution search, ii) lobbying and advocating for supportive policy and legal framework, iii) providing any services that will enhance businesses in the industry, and iv) promoting adherence to regulations and adoption of good standards and best practices. The Council has a goal of making potato industry become a leading contributor to poverty alleviation through realization of higher stable incomes, food security and improved welfare of Kenyans.

The Potato Council was formed with the aim of helping organize activities of the subsector, in order to address the many and complex challenges and bottlenecks chocking development of the Kenyan potato industry. It has the role of coordinating the stakeholders with a view of developing the potato value chain for the benefit of all actors and players. Through the Council, various initiatives such as Stakeholder forums, National Potato Conferences and Potato fairs are undertaken to help in awareness creation, information sharing, networking and showcasing technologies and innovations with the aim of transforming subsector.

STAKEHOLDER FORUMS

The Potato Council has a number of forums aimed at supporting initiatives at different levels of the value chain and offering a point of references for potato activities, engagement, information exchange, planning and coordination. Such forums include Potato Partners Platform, County Potato Platform, seed committee and the late blight management committee.

Potato Partners Platform

Potato Partner's platform (PPP) is made up of development partners and organizations supporting initiatives in the potato subsector at National and county levels. The aim of the partners' forums is to create a cohesive industry with common approach to development while offering the members an opportunity to share information, plan and harmonize subsector initiatives, engage on regular basis to support and monitor the subsector development and help consolidate support for the industry.

Partners Platform was formed to help complement partners' work. Partners in support of potato value chain and NPCK decided to collaborate and work together as a team to utilize their pool of resources and expertise to contribute to the development of the subsector. Working in multi-stakeholder environment can present challenges that emanate from uncoordinated objectives, goals and action plans for different players. It helps avoid duplication of efforts, overlaps in resources utilizations and even contradictions in implementation of activities.

For example in value chain development, one partner in the platform may support seed production, another supports farm production by training farmers on GAPs, while another deals with trade and marketing. In a case like potato value chain, each step of the value chain benefits from the work done in another step, and by this mechanism the development of the entire Value Chain is more or less achieved based on the mandates and interest of different development partners and players. Furthermore, leaving everything to be supported by one organization would require a lot of resources and may not be easily achievable.

Members of the platform include International Potato Center (CIP), Technoserve, Kenya Agricultural & Livestock Research Organization (KALRO); Government & Public institutions Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Services (KEPHIS), Agriculture And Food Authority (AFA); Development Partners: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Dutch, Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) and any other player who is supporting value chain activities in the industry. The Potato Partners Platform works in close collaboration with other stakeholders in the industry who include Financial Institutions; Processors; Farmer Groups and Producer SMEs, aggregators and input suppliers. The activities of each member of the Partners platform are summarized in a page named Partners Activities in the NPCK's website: <https://npck.org/partners-platform-summary/>.



Potato Partners Platform Committee members during a meeting held at KALRO Kabete

The activities of the Partners platform are replicated at the county levels with formation of *County Platforms* under County potato coordinating units

County Potato Platform

County Platform is an initiative by NPCK and county governments which aims at availing to stakeholders, information of potato activities in each county. This includes providing information about activities undertaken in the county by National government, County governments, development partners, NPCK and other stakeholders. The County Potato Liaison Officer (CPLO) who is the contact person and custodian of all potato information in the county is a member of the County potato subsector coordinating unit (CPSCU) and together with other stakeholders key they form County potato platform which has a webpage or website linked to the NPCKs website. Counties which have already formed or are in the process of forming CPSCUs include Nyandarua, Nakuru, Bungoma, Elgeyo Marakwet and Nyeri. The County Platforms summarize activities carried out by partners and other stakeholders in the Potato industry. The information provided in county webpage include: Location of the county, Potato production and details of Potato projects in the country which include; Project name, Funding Partner, Implementer, Objectives, Duration of the project. The summary of County activities can be accessed through the following link: <https://npck.org/counties-platform/>



County Potato Platform members in a Workshop in Nakuru County

NATIONAL POTATO CONFERENCE AND REGIONAL POTATO FAIRS

The Potato Council collaborates with development partners, County governments and stakeholders in preparation and hosting of National Potato Conferences in Nairobi and Regional Potato Fairs which are held in the counties every year.

National Potato Conferences

To date, NPCK has convened four National Potato Conferences held in 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019. The conferences attracts over 1,000 participants and exhibitors drawn from the entire potato value chain, who include National government representatives, large and small scale farmers, traders, processors, regulators, input providers, seed potato producers, agricultural machinery companies and other value chain actors and players.

The Conferences are organized by NPCK in collaboration with partners and are normally held at Kenya Agriculture and Livestock Research Organization (KALRO) headquarters in Nairobi. During the National conferences exhibitors showcase products and services from different levels of potato value chains which include, Mechanization, Irrigation, Seed Potato Production technologies, Potato varieties, Crop protection, Soil Nutrition, Insurance and Finance, Storage, regulations, women in Agriculture and Nutrition. The event also focuses on creating awareness of new potato varieties, importance of using certified seed potato, importance of mechanization, good agronomic practices and creating B2B linkages in marketing, among others.



Exhibitor showcasing machinery product during the National Potato Conference

The 2019 National Potato Conference was held on 23rd and 24th May 2019 at KALRO Headquarters in Loresho under the theme: *“Transforming potato value chain through innovation and partnerships for food and nutrition security, employment and accelerated economic growth.”* The Conference included two key activities, the Youth and Small Enterprises session and official Launch of Irish Potato Regulations.



Section of participants during the National Potato Conference held in May 2019

Youth and Small and Medium Enterprises Session (SMEs)

The first day of the event (23rd May) had a session targeting the youth and SMEs. Top on the agenda was exposing the youth and SMES to business opportunities along the potato value chains and potential sources of funding. The objectives of the session were:

Enlightening the youth and SMES on how they can take full advantage of the business opportunities in the potato subsector

Exposing them to the finance options available for investment in agriculture

Exposing them to strategic partners for possible partnership in supporting acquisition of skills and adoption of technologies and innovations in potato value chains.

The session had seasoned panelists drawn from different sectors of the value chain covering the relevant topics. The interactive sessions gave the participants opportunity to get answers to their questions and direction from the experienced experts but also networked with a goal for further guidance after the event.



James Nderui – Model Young Farmer contributing on opportunities for Youths and SMEs in Potato Value Chains

Launch of Irish Potato Regulations

For a long time potato industry has been trying to establish standards in potato marketing through regulatory framework in vain. Traders have been buying potatoes using extended bags that way from 100kg to 260 kg and pricing per bag which highly reduced farmers' profitability. The extended bags also pose health risk to the casual labourers who are involved in loading and off-loading of big potato bags which also contravene the stipulation by the international labour law. Sorting and grading has also been lacking which also lowers the quality of potatoes in the market. After years of NPCK lobbying for potato regulations Permanent secretary in the ministry of agriculture launched Public Participation during the National Potato Conference held in May 25th 2018 at KALRO headquarters.

The public participation exercise was undertaken in 14 potato producing counties and 3 major consuming cities (Nairobi, Kisumu and Mombasa) which is part of regulation development process as stipulated by the constitution. After approval by the National Assembly the official launch of the *Crops (Irish Potato) Regulation 2019* by Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture & Irrigation, took place on second day, 24th and this was a milestone for the industry.



Cabinet Secretary Ministry of Agriculture & Irrigation, Hon. Mwangi Kiunjuri officially launching the Potato Regulations 2019

Regional Potato Fairs

The Regional Potato Fair offers opportunity for businesses, input and service providers, innovators and researchers to showcase their products and services to potato farmers and other stakeholders at the local levels of the county. NPCK partners with county governments and stakeholders organize for the regional potato fairs. The County Potato Fairs are held in different Counties and so far four have been conducted since 2016; three Central and Eastern region Potato Fairs held in Nyandarua, Nyeri and Meru counties, one South Rift Potato Fair held in Nakuru County and one North Rift Potato Fair held in Uasin Gishu County. On average, between 800 to 1,200 smallholder potato farmers and stakeholders participate in regional potato fairs.



Exhibitor showcasing one of the demo plots during East and Central Potato Fair in 2019



H.E Deputy Governor of Uasin Gishu County Daniel K. Kiprotich Chemno touring the demonstration plots during the North rift potato fair



Exhibitor showcasing machinery product during South Rift Potato Fair 2018