



2SCALE

Stories from the Field

Potato partners

Potatoes are big business in Kenya – strong demand, vibrant trade networks and a booming processing industry. The challenge is that small-scale producers, especially women, receive a very small share of the profits. To address this challenge, 2SCALE builds networks connecting farmer groups to each other, to local companies providing goods and services, and to the market. The potato network in Kenya includes 48,000 farmers (20,000 women) and dozens of small businesses.

The program is market-driven, led by two private firms with complementary skills: aggregator Molly Flowers and processor Kevian. To see how it works, look at the Kirimara cooperative in central Kenya. Its 135 members (mostly women) have doubled their potato yields, won supply contracts with well-known processors, and even work with crop scientists to test new varieties.

From farm to fries

Most small-scale producers grow traditional varieties. 2SCALE worked with seed companies, researchers and regulatory agencies to introduce new high-performance varieties – higher yields, improved dormancy (better storability) and suitability for processing. One innovation, for example, is to bring in new varieties not as seed potatoes but as ‘micro-plants’, eliminating the risk of seedborne diseases. More than 50 new varieties have been registered in Kenya in the past 2 years, 26 of them by 2SCALE partners.

Before 2SCALE, there was little appreciation of variety characteristics – potatoes were distinguished only by size and color. Now, farmers ask for

2SCALE consortium



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Home-made refrigeration. This low-cost mini-warehouse keeps potatoes fresh for weeks.

“This is one of the few cooperatives in Kenya where we grow more potatoes than maize – 2SCALE has come to the right place.”

– Florence Kinoti, Chair of the Kirimara Farmers Association

specific varieties. One favorite is the Dutch variety Markies. Processors are willing to pay extra for Markies because it costs less to process – lower peeling wastage and lower oil consumption during frying.

Safe storage

The two biggest challenges for small-scale potato farmers? Post-harvest losses (up to 40%) and price (without storage facilities, farmers are forced to sell immediately after the harvest, at very low prices). Kirimara has a new 40-ton warehouse that solves both problems. The warehouse is one of 15 built across the country: a standardized 2SCALE design, built by local artisans using local materials – a wooden frame, wire mesh, bales of straw, and mud for plastering. The design ensures that freshly harvested potatoes can be stored for several weeks without refrigeration.

Business connections

Potatoes in Kenya are traded mainly on the spot market. We helped negotiate the first formal supply contracts, specifying volumes, quality standards, delivery schedules and prices. The first contract was signed in 2015. In the past three seasons the cooperative has supplied more than 1000 tons to processors. We also brokered the country’s first financing agreement designed specifically for small-scale potato farmers. The arrangement involves the buyer and a local microfinance provider. Before the season begins, farmers receive low-interest loans to buy seeds and other inputs. The loans are repaid by the buyer after the harvest, through deductions from farmer payments. Everyone wins – farmer, processor, consumer, even the doctor who checks your cholesterol.



The 2SCALE project is funded by the Netherlands government and implemented jointly by IFDC, ICRA and BoPInc. 2SCALE was launched in June 2012. By mid 2017, our partners included 567,000 smallholder farmers, 1300 agribusinesses and nearly 1500 cooperatives in nine countries across sub-Saharan Africa.