

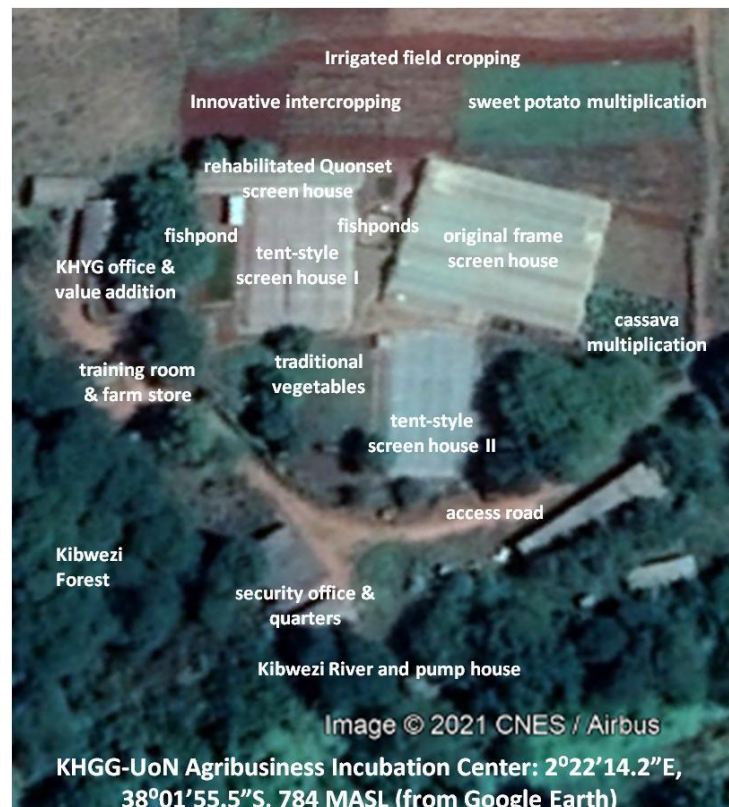
Brief on the Kibwezi Hortipreneur Youth Group and Its Relationship to the University of Nairobi

The Kibwezi Hortipreneur Youth Group (KHYG) is a Kenyan self-help group of enthusiastic youth that started its operations in 2015 through its host The University of Nairobi. It serves as a local chapter of the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) Youth Agripreneur Movement. Its purpose is to build the capacity of youth and expose them to numerous opportunities in agribusiness, and to do so in a gender-balanced and increasingly self-sufficient manner. All members are university graduates who seek careers in agribusiness. The group is located in Makueni County within the University of Nairobi Dryland Research Station. The University provides facilities and mentorship to the group and together they serve to modernize dryland agriculture in eastern Kenya (see photo, right). The group operates several pilot agribusiness enterprises including greenhouses and field crop production, fish farming, manufacture of nutritious snacks and operation of a marketing depot at the nearby Kibwezi town.

Since 2018, also KHYG promotes several commodities advanced through the African Development Bank's Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation Program (AfDB TAAT). These commodities include biofortified sweet potato and cassava (see Photo Gallery), High Iron Bean, aquaculture and other enterprises prioritized through the AfDB Feed Africa Strategy. The University of Nairobi assists in this effort through providing technical support, for example sending professional staff to Kibwezi in response to the recent invasion of Fall

Armyworm and by providing its station headquarters to KHYG when it hosts meetings involving county extension, women and other youth groups, and local farmer organizations. Another example of this win-win collaboration is when the university assisted one of its former graduates to develop a snack product from OFSP (see Photo Gallery).

Together the University of Nairobi and KHYG engage with key stakeholders from the private and public sectors such as the County Government of Makueni Agriculture Office, National Agricultural and Rural Inclusive Growth Project (NARGIP), Makueni Youth Empowerment Project (MYAEP), Agricultural Sector Development Support Programme (ASDSP), Kenya Cereal Enhancement Programme Climate Resilient Agricultural Livelihoods Window (KCEP-CRAL), AgriFI Kenya, Ikonik Agricultural Machinery Limited and the International Potato Centre (CIP). These partnerships have enabled youth to champion various initiatives and to access loans from government-led development programs. For example, KHYG has benefited from the Youth



Enterprise Fund through financial support to expand the station's horticulture enterprise. With mentorship from both the University of Nairobi LARMAT Department and IITA, KHYG is able to grow its technical skills and financial support as a whole.

Through its office at the University of Nairobi's Dryland Research Station, KHYG participates in mentorship of students in secondary schools through the IITA Start Them Early Program. KHYG improved classroom instruction in vocational agriculture, provides ICT support and mentors an extracurricular Young Farmer Club at the nearby Kisayani Secondary School in Kalulini (along the Kibwezi-Kitui Road and midway between the Station HQ and the KHYG farm). First, KHYG rehabilitated the school's agricultural facilities (see Photo Gallery). Mentorship from the group reinforces the importance of agribusiness to students in this rural area and is building a future generation of agribusiness leaders. The schools mean score for agriculture improved markedly during the latest Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education exam and 22 students attained a grade A. In this way, the University of Nairobi achieves not only excellence in university education but is also influencing student skills and interests at the secondary school level.

The farming community at large benefits from the collaboration between the University of Nairobi and KHYG. Youth from the area have access to the training facilities and knowledge passed to them through the group's training program. Many of these youth started their own small agribusinesses. The success of KHYG as one of the pioneer groups working with the University of Nairobi has helped other youth from the institution realize the various opportunities available along the agriculture and agribusiness value chain. University of Nairobi graduates that joined the group have developed practical skills and novel technologies in the process including low cost fish feeds, sanitary multiplication of improved sweet potato varieties and tomato rejuvenation management (see photo, above).

Our vision for the continued collaboration with the University of Nairobi is to (i) create a Centre of Excellence in Agribusiness at the Dryland Research Station, (ii) reach out to more youth interested in pursuing careers in agribusiness, (iii) encourage more youth from a younger age to explore opportunities within the agribusiness value chains, and (iv) contribute a youth perspective to various activities focused on attaining food and nutritional security in Kenya's cultivated drylands (see Photo Gallery). The LARMAT Department (Prof. Nancy Karanja) and IITA (Dr. Paul Woome) submitted a proposal to the International Fund for Agriculture Development Rural Youth Action Program to raise funds for this purpose (Box 1).



Box 1. Summary of a collaborative proposal submitted to IFAD Rural Youth Action Program intending to raise resources for the University of Nairobi to develop the KHYG facility as an IFAD Agri-Business Hub.

Grant title	Rural youth employment opportunities: Support to integrated agribusiness hubs in Cameroon, Kenya and Mozambique.
Recipient	International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (in partnership with the University of Nairobi and others)
IFAD grant	US \$3,500,000 over 48 months
Grant goal, objectives and outcomes	<p>Goal: To create sustainable employment and income generating opportunities for youth in agriculture- related activities</p> <p>Main Objective: To develop a network of integrated agribusiness hubs to build entrepreneurial capacity and technical/managerial skills of rural youth for sustainable employment.</p> <p>Specific Objectives: 1) To support development of Integrated Youth Agribusiness Hubs through strategic partnerships in three countries. 2) To generate empirical evidence of the developed and tested integrated agribusiness hub models. 3) To set-up a management structure that assists in the establishment of Integrated Youth Agribusiness Hubs on a wider scale.</p> <p>Outcomes:1) A pioneering Agribusiness Hub is replicated and modified for conditions in Cameroon, Kenya and Mozambique.2) Training resources are designed, disseminated and released to vocational institutions that reach wider beneficiaries.3) Skill sets are raised among youth allowing them to access decent employment and start new agribusinesses.4) Cadres of trained youth enter and stimulate rural economies in Cameroon, Kenya and Mozambique.5) The Integrated Youth Agribusiness Hub model becomes recognized and adopted by other vocational institutions.6) Resulting Hubs respond to the threat of the COVID-19 pandemic and aid in post-contagion recovery and future resilience.</p>

This proposal was shortlisted but then delayed due to COVID-19. Modest support for the group continues through the AfDB ENABLE TAAT Youth Compact and the STEP Program, and combined with the revenues from the training facility KHYG is able to operate within the station on a cost recovery basis. A Photo Gallery appears on the next page. Finally, KHYG and IITA recognizes that there have been some misunderstandings and poor communication between the youth and the University of Nairobi, and this is largely the result of the inexperience of group members. Be assured that our IITA project supervisors are taking appropriate action. At the same time, IITA and KHYG are deeply appreciative of the facilities and technical support that KHYG receives from the University of Nairobi and hopes to continue or mutually beneficial collaboration well into the future.

For more information on the Kibwezi Hortipreneur Youth Group, contact its leadership by telephone +254 707 859 015 and +254 705 873 395, email its leadership and supervisors by email E.Muema@cgiar.org (Group Leader), L.Mutinda@cgiar.org (IITA Administrator) or N.Mulinganya@cgiar.org (ENABLE TAAT Coordinator), or visit KHYG website at <https://www.khygroup.org/>

Photo Gallery: The following annotated photographs capture some of the many activities and community engagements by the Kibwezi Hortipreneur Youth Group



KHYG introduced biofortified vitamin A cassava to Makueni County through its activities at the Drylands Research Station



KHYG distributed Orange Fleshed Sweet Potato to Makueni farmers through its activities at the Drylands Research Station



KHYG developed and commercialized a new OFSP crisps product in collaboration with University of Nairobi food scientists



KYHG expertise in greenhouse vegetable production is widely shared with the agricultural community of Makueni County



KHYG members rehabilitating a greenhouse at the nearby Kisayani Secondary School through the IITA Start Them Early Program (STEP)



KHYG operates a travelling exhibit and participates in several agricultural and youth events throughout eastern Kenya