**January 1, 2010**

**DrumNet Sunflower Demonstration Plot Trial (Suba, Nyanza Province)**

**PRIDE** recently teamed with Bidco Oil Refineries Ltd. and CNFA-AGMARK to complete research on Kenya's oilseed sector. The research investigated the commercial viability of smallholder sunflower production in Kenya through the introduction of a new seed variety (Pannar 7369) and demonstration plots in Suba, Nyanza Province.

*"I have planted sunflower on my farm for many years. The difference between Kenya Fedha and Pannar is very clear. PAN 7369 has bigger heads which lead to higher production."*

***– James Ongara, Farmer***

**Background**

Smallholders in Kenya typically plant Kenya Fedha, a local sunflower seed variety. After working with 2,000+ sunflower farmers from across Kenya over a three-year period, PRIDE found that Kenya Fedha yields tend to range between 150-200 Kgs/acre. Such low yields make sunflower production impractical from producers' perspective.

This is in contrast to farmers growing sunflower in Lira, Uganda. Producers there realize much higher yields at harvest, making it a prime cash crop for smallholders.

PRIDE, in collaboration with Bidco, CNFA-AGMARK and an agricultural expert from Lira, devised a trial in March 2009 to introduce a new seed variety in Suba, Nyanza Province through the planting of demonstration plots. The hypothesis was that Lira-like yields could be realized if Pannar 7369 was planted and maintained using best agronomic practices.

**Results**

The introduction of PAN 7369 in Suba posed several challenges. This was predominately because PAN 7369 sells at nearly double the price of Kenya Fedha and farmers are generally adverse to change without visual proof that a new technology is worth the expense.

*PAN 7369 sunflower plant*

The trial's seven demonstration plots provided that visual proof. The PAN 7369 plots yielded crop 6' in height with heads between 9" and 12" in diameter. In addition, yield after harvest averaged 550 Kgs per acre, a significantly higher total than plots under Kenya Fedha. This was confirmed by all demonstration plot farmers involved in the trial.

The trials results confirm that sunflower is a viable cash crop for small-scale producers in Kenya. However, beyond seed variety, several other variables are worth noting:

- *Agronomic practices* – Farmers who planted using the correct depth and who performed a second weeding of their crop realized higher yields.
- *Soil conditions* – Farmers planting in loamy soils achieved better result than those planting in strictly sandy or clay soils.
- *Weather conditions* – Farmers who planted during (as opposed to after) the rains attained significantly higher harvest totals.

**Way Forward**

PRIDE, through its DrumNet Project, hopes to work with Bidco and CNFA-AGMARK to further promote the PAN 7369 trail results achieved in Suba. The promotion will have the dual effect of raising awareness about new seed varities that can boost smallholders' incomes and Bidco's ready market for purchasing sunflower seed from farmers in Kenya.

To find out more about the sunflower trials, please write to info@prideafrica.com.