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Construction of Thiba Dam to expand Mwea Irrigation Scheme in Kirinyaga County

CHIEF EDITOR'S NOTE.

It is always my pleasure to introduce you to our “Unyunyizi News” now at the 6th Issue. Your feedback in the previous issues has been overwhelming and valuable in shaping our content delivery.

Dear reader, despite the ‘new normal’ brought about by Covid-19, the Authority has managed to achieve notable milestones.

In this Issue we look into the impact of the pandemic on rice production in Western Kenya Irrigation Schemes, economical and sustainable Irrigation, farming in Tharaka Nithi County and enlighten you on crop protection in Paddy rice production.

On matters National Cohesion and Values, we indulge in Rule of law and Democracy & participation of the people.



Mr. Daniel M. Nzonzo- Head of Corporate Communication

In our continued segment of “Your Opinion” we document some of the feedback on “How covid-19 has affected your farming practices.” In the next issue we look forward to featuring your feedback on “How you are surviving these effects”.

Lastly, we have featured Eng. Nesline who is the Manager at Lower Kuja Irrigation Scheme. She has a lot you will learn from. Enjoy the read.

WORD FROM THE CEO



Mr. Gitonga Mugambi- CEO National Irrigation Authority

The Financial Year 2020/2021 has taken off on a good note despite the pandemic we are currently facing globally.

The Authority has reviewed its performance as per the previous financial year’s contract and set new targets for the current. It has been a rigorous process and I congratulate the members of staff for their dedication and zeal in steering the Authority towards achieving its mandate of delivering water to every irrigable acre.

Our primary stakeholders, the farmers, have also not shied away from putting their

best foot forward and carrying out food production activities. The Authority commits to holding your hand and supporting you in line with our mandate in order to scale up the country’s food production.

Our irrigation schemes have embraced double cropping of rice and application of better farming practices hence scaling up food production. The goal is to not only develop irrigation infrastructure across the country but to also exploit the irrigation potential and reap of its maximum benefits through employing water harvesting and water conservation techniques as well as having our farmers engage in the best farming practices.

I urge everyone to continue observing safety measures to protect themselves as well as their loved ones from contracting Covid-19. Let us continue wearing our face masks, keeping high hygiene standards, seeking medical attention whenever you experience any related symptoms as well as every other precautionary measures recommended by the Ministry of Health.

Economical and Sustainable Irrigation Techniques



By Brenda Rajwayi

The National Master Water Plan (NMWP) 2030 stipulates that Kenya has ample land resources but very limited irrigation water resources. It is therefore fundamental that as farmers are encouraged to harvest rain water and surface run-off, they are taught on the best irrigation systems to use in order to maximize on the available water while practicing irrigated agriculture. Researchers in various parts of the globe including the Authority's research centres Mwea Irrigation Agricultural Development (MIAD) Centre and Ahero Irrigation Research Station (AIRS) have been working on developing, testing and/or improving on different irrigation systems in order to see to it that the recommended systems are not only efficient in wetting the soil but also conserving water, fertilizer, labour, energy and power.

Some of the conventional irrigation systems that have been employed by farmers over the years are furrow, basin and flooding majorly because they require low investment costs. However, they come with the major challenge of water wastage and in other cases wastage of farm inputs such as fertilizer. For this reason, researchers recommend the use of drip and sprinkler irrigation systems for the purpose of water conservation. Many of them however agree that drip irrigation system is the most efficient despite the relatively higher investment costs.

The drip irrigation system has been applied by some farmers who have benefited from the Expanded National Irrigation Programme (ENIP) and the National Green House Project rolled out by

the Authority.

Drip Irrigation System has also been tested with various crops including maize in Galana Kulalu model farm in Tana River and Kilifi counties. Various farmers across the country benefitting from the Household Irrigation Water Storage Programme have also employed

as well as crop productivity. Sub-surface irrigation system also incurs lesser cost as compared to conventional drip irrigation system.

However, despite the many advantages sub-surface drip irrigation has, just like the conventional drip irrigation it also has certain demerits. As explained by



Drip Irrigation system used in Baringo County.

the use of drips on their farms. There are two types of drip irrigation system namely; conventional drip irrigation and sub-surface drip irrigation. Conventional drip irrigation system entails placing the drip lines a few centimetres above the surface or on the surface. On the other hand, sub-surface drip irrigation system refers to placing drip lines a few centimetres below the surface, preferably 20cm.

According to a research conducted by MIAD Centre, sub-surface drip irrigation is recommended in comparison to the conventional drip irrigation system. This is because unlike the conventional drip irrigation system, it does not lose water through evaporation hence more efficient in water utilization. In addition, it also allows for uniform soil moisture and delivers water directly to the root zone. As a result, it increases the water use efficiency

Dr. Raphael Wanjogu, Chief Officer of Research and Development at the National Irrigation Authority, some of the factors that limit sub-surface drip irrigation are soil salinity and water logging. In sub-surface irrigation, salt normally accumulates above the drip lines and salinity increases with increase in distance from the drip hence an imbalance in the soil salinity levels. Water logging on the other hand makes it challenging for the plant to take up nutrients as well as oxygen while growing hence retarded growth. Nevertheless, even with the limitations that sub-surface drip irrigation has, it still has an upper hand because the limitations can be managed by studying your soil water retention and managing it accordingly.

It is important to not only irrigate our lands but also use water responsibly while at it in order to achieve more with less.

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON RICE PRODUCTION IN WESTERN KENYA IRRIGATION SCHEMES



By Joel K. Tanui

In the Rice growing schemes in Western Kenya, rice farmers were affected by one of the worst floods in recent history, and now face substantial challenges created by the COVID 19 pandemic. The pandemic has affected rice farming in many ways including security of land tenure and access to credit, capital inputs, remittance of operation & maintenance fee, and safe food and water.

During emergencies such as the 2020 Floods and the COVID-19 pandemic, farmers need assistance, either from the Government or Non-Governmental Organizations. National Irrigation Authority in the region, has provided farmers with basic assistance in maintenance of irrigation structures such as canals and water regulatory gates.

All said and done, farmers in the region are struggling. About a third of Kenya's domestic rice production comes from WKS (Ahero, West Kano, South West Kano and other community established schemes), with production averaging 27,592 metric tons with an estimated value of Kshs. 1,241,784,000 annually. The region has over 4,300 rice

farmers cultivating over 11,000 acres.

Rice farmers across the region have experienced a challenge of labor shortages as working age adults migrated to nearby cities in search of better jobs and opportunities. As a result, farmers have increasingly mechanized rice production (cultivation and harvesting), switched to high yielding production practices such as use of herbicides, pesticides and fertilizers, all of which require greater capital inputs.

To this already stressful situation, COVID -19 has added an additional level of

In June 2020, more than 30% of the farmers had not planted their rice crop as compared to the same period in 2019, with the main reason being constraints by flood damage not Covid -19 with which: More than 65% of the farmers have reported problems with purchasing agricultural inputs such as seeds and fertilizers. Limited access to credit is highly mentioned by farmers. Agricultural Finance Corporation (AFC) and other banking institutions have paused issuance of loans and some suspended operations hence critically affecting more than 65% of farmers who rely on loans to buy inputs.



Farmers Transplanting Paddy in Ahero Irrigation Scheme

uncertainty for both farmers and rice value chain actors in the region. For the young farmers who had moved to cities, the pandemic has caused unprecedented job losses and has affected remittance flows to the farming community. Across the region, locals who live within the schemes but have other jobs have also lost income.

As a result of the 2019-20 floods and rising lake levels, farmers have not produced enough rice for both the market and home consumption. According to our projected harvests, there is likelihood of a drastic reduction by up to 40% since majority of the farmers are still affected. COVID -19 has made it difficult for them to get off-farm employment to earn money for food and some have reportedly

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been forced to take up fishing in the Lake.

There is need for a joint effort by all the concerned Government Agencies to support the farmers to continue farming activities and come out of the floods and covid-19 stronger.

Interacting with strong-willed Eng. Nesline Ogwe



By Rhoda Mbuvi

Eng. Nesline Ogwe is the Scheme Manager at Lower Kuja Irrigation Scheme situated in Nyatike, Migori County. The Scheme was at 100 acres when she joined and it has grown to 3,610 acres under her leadership. She heard her first gunshot at her line of duty. She is neither satisfied with just being good nor great but being unstoppable.

How has it been growing up?

It has been interesting. I was born back in July 14, 1980 in a big loving family in Southern part of Nyanza, Homa Bay County. I grew up a focused bright girl. Schooled at Lake Primary School with the likes of Felix Odiwour commonly known as Jalang'o. I went to Loreto High School - Limuru, scored A- qualifying me to undertake a civil engineering course from the University of Nairobi. In the engineering class, out of 60 students only 10 were female but it felt good, I excelled.

Then I got into the job market, married, did my masters from the University of Dar es Salaam.



Eng. Nesline Ogwe: The Scheme Manager at Lower Kuja Irrigation Scheme

I am now a wife, a mother and a Scheme Manager. It has been a fulfilling, worthwhile journey.

Fun fact, Homabay was originally known as Chich Onuno (Onuno's market) until 1925 when the colonialists renamed it because it was overlooking the then Huma Hills in Karachuonyo. Visitors from overseas pronounced Huma as 'Homa' and the residents adopted the name Homa Bay.

How did you join the Authority?

National Irrigation Authority then referred as National Irrigation Board reached out to the University of Nairobi and JKUAT department

of Civil engineering for referrals and that's how I got a call, did an interview and ended up working for the Authority.

How has it been working for the Authority?

Interestingly, I began as a maintenance engineer; in charge of vehicles, generator, electrical items e. t. c. (more than 13 years on, she remembers the vehicle registration numbers.... KAT 229... she laughs).

Then I got a scholarship, went for my masters degree in Tanzania on a study leave and joined back as an engineer then later as a Scheme Manager in 2016.

Your life as a Scheme Manager.

It took me 5 months to accept this position. Three (3) days after reporting, floods came knocking to the area. I could not imagine surviving in Lower Kuja being situated in a harsh, dry area with no much amenities.

I finally accepted my new normal, re-adjusted, sought advice from other leaders and got into making an impactful difference to the community.

Tell me of some successes you pride in?

I take pride in my academic excellence. Scoring A's to attaining a distinction in my master's degree. I have never re-done any failed subject or done a supplementary exam.

I also take pride of the growth achieved at Lower Kuja Irrigation Scheme under my leadership. When I joined the project, it was at 100 acres and now we have expanded to 3,610 acres under production. The Scheme ventured into rice farming for the first time in my tenure and the farmers have embraced it whole heartedly.

Do you have fears?

Yes. I fear failure. I fear darkness. I am also acrophobic.

How would you describe a good working environment?

I would describe a good working environment as a space in which employees have peace of mind. A space where the staff involvement with their work itself, co-workers and management is well coordinated and there is room for personal development.

A good work environment makes employees feel

excited and motivated to go to work and creates room for innovations hence high productivity.

Tell me about the scariest thing you have encountered in line of duty.

Sighing... "I came close to death. Actually, it was my first time to hear a gunshot. It was also my first time to differentiate between a pistol and an AK47. We had gone to Samburu to inspect some irrigation projects when bandits attacked us and took with them laptops, cash, phones and other valuables." This scared me.

Any regrets in life?

I wish I did my PHD immediately after my masters degree when I was younger. (She assures me she will still go for it).

One lesson life has taught you?

When faced with a challenge or setback, do not wait for someone else to take it up. Deal with it yourself. The solution lies with you.

Set up stairs to your success; from the foundation to the top.

How has Covid-19 affected your life?

Contrary, I got the opportunity to spend 6 weeks with my husband and family continuously for the first time in 13 years of marriage but on the other side, Corona has affected market/inputs accessibility for the farmers as well as loss of income.

What do you do for fun?

I cook, bake, read and teach kindergarten children.

She is currently reading 'Relentless: From Good to Great to Unstoppable', by Tim Grover.

What keeps you moving?

I hate poverty. I hate seeing people suffering and this thought takes me out of bed knowing that my sweat will contribute significantly to the Country's food basket.

I am also not satisfied with being good. I wake up every morning aspiring to do be great, but most importantly to be unstoppable."

HIGHLIGHTS



Water Sanitation and Irrigation CS Sicily K. Kariuki (Mrs) EGH (2nd Right) and PS Joseph W. Irungu, CBS (Left) and National Irrigation Authority CEO Mr Gitonga Mugambi (2nd left) during an induction tour of Galana Kulalu Model Farm.



A group photo of the Authority's CEO (Center) and the Heads of Departments/ Sections/Schemes/Stations after signing the 2020/2021 Financial Year Performance Contracts in Nairobi.



Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Cooperatives CS Hon. Peter Munya E.G.H(2nd Left) and other senior officials from the Authority touring Galana Kulalu Model Farm.



Water, Sanitation and Irrigation CS Sicily K. Kariuki (Mrs) E.G.H (4th Right), National Irrigation Authority CEO Mr. Gitonga Mugambi (3rd Left) and other officials from the Ministry and the Authority being taken through Thiba Dam Model By Eng. Charles Muasya during an induction tour in Thiba Dam.



Beneficiaries of greenhouses installed by National Irrigation Authority at Mansa Irrigation project in Wajir East Constituency.



Ministry of Water, Sanitation and Irrigation CS Sicily K. Kariuki (Mrs) EGH (Center) and PS Joseph W. Irungu (2nd Right) and other officials from the Authority during an inspection tour in Bura Irrigation Rehabilitation Project.

A RICH FARMER, A RICH NATION



By George Maina

Irrigation in Tharaka Nithi County has been a game changer in the region as farmers are now majorly depending on farming as their main source of livelihood. Muringa Banana Irrigation Development Project is one of these irrigation projects in Tharaka Nithi county at the 3rd phase which is 2% away to completion. Farmers have counted more benefits in production in Phase 1 and 2 of this project.

John Mutwiri a beneficiary in the 1st phase says, "Reflecting back when we did not have this irrigation project and now, there is a huge change. Currently with water to irrigate our crops, most of us are producing almost twice of what we used to produce. Lifestyle has changed as well. I am so grateful to the Government through the Authority for enabling this change and for going an extra mile to advise us on the best farming practices".

Another farmer Joyce Kajuju says she depends fully on irrigated farming and she has been able to provide for her family since the Authority came into the region. "Since the Authority provided us with



Sprinkler Irrigation system used in Muringa banana Irrigation project in Tharaka Nithi County

irrigation water, it is rare to hear a case of a family suffering from hunger. We also use water for domestic purposes."

The Authority's presence in this region is felt since they are doing a lot in making sure we are food secure. We have developed trust with the Authority that irrigated agriculture is the way to go, to be able to produce in and out of rain season." said Mr. Kinoti.

However, with the current times of the Covid-19 pandemic, the farmers say it has come with a lot of adjustments and affected their income. "With the new normal, the price of 1kg of banana has reduced from Kshs.18 to Kshs.10. Usually brokers buy 1kg of banana at Kshs. 16 to 18 shillings but now the price of a kilogram of bananas is at Kshs.10." said Mutuma.

This has made us experience losses and it is quite unfortunate to most farmers in the area who are majorly growing and selling bananas.

Muringa Banana Project covers 3,568 acres and once complete is expected to directly benefit 107,225 residents and the surrounding community through cheaper and all round food supply.

"Your success lies in your own hands. You must therefore not wait for the grass to become greener by magic. You have the hands to irrigate your own territory by doing what is expected of you." Israelmore Ayivor and "If the farmer is rich, then so is the nation." Amit Kalantri

"Your success lies in your own hands. You must therefore not wait for the grass to become greener by magic. You have the hands to irrigate your own territory by doing what is expected of you." Israelmore Ayivor and "If the farmer is rich, then so is the nation." Amit Kalantri

CROP PROTECTION IN PADDY RICE PRODUCTION



By Koskei Vincent

Rice is a self-pollinated (pollen from the same flower or from another flower on the same plant) annual grass in the family Poaceae with three growth phases; vegetative, reproductive and ripening which influence grain yields. Rice production challenges vary with agro-ecological zones depending on cropping and farming systems. These include; high cost of farm inputs, mechanization, rice seed quality, high cost of labour, efficient irrigation infrastructure, market dynamics, cross-border trade, irrigation water quality and insect pests incidences among others.

Crop protection in rice farming

Generally, crop/plant protection is a system of measures that ensures negative effects of pests and diseases are minimized below economic importance if not avoided. Usually tropical environment (Kenya included) favors growth of rice crop as well as weeds which compete for moisture and nutrients. Similarly, insect pests, parasitic fungi, bacteria and viruses if not managed can cause between 22%-37% reduction in crop yields and in rare but critical case 100% loss.

Intervention

The most advisable management method for pests and diseases is prevention; prevention is

better than cure. To limit pest and disease incidences in a rice crop, the following integrated management measures can be followed:

- Practice cleaning of farm equipment; daily cleaning routine of farm implements should always be encouraged. This will not only ensure that no harmful pathogens are transferred to other fields but also manages the

certified seeds and resistant varieties. Treatment of the seed material should be by a recommended procedure and by a trained personnel.

- Plant Short-duration and tolerant crop/plant to decrease insect pest populations.

- Planning: Synchronized planting (or within a 2 week window) to minimize insect, disease, bird, and rat pressure



A section of farmers in a rice field in Mwea Irrigation Scheme

“Rule of thumbs is; nutrition is actually far more important to disease management than use of pesticides.”

pest within a localized area.

- Field hygiene: Clean the field between seasons by managing stubbles, ratoons and by maintaining/repairing of bunds (bund trimming).

- Seeding: commence a cropping season by using clean

on individual fields.

- Nutrition: Following specific fertilizer recommendations is important because high nitrogen can increase susceptibility to certain pests and diseases. Rule of thumbs is; nutrition is actually far more important to disease management than use of pesticides.

- Diagnosis: If there are pest or disease incidences in the crop, it is important to diagnose the problem accurately. For help with the diagnosis, seek advice from a trained agricultural professional.

Remember; when deciding to use a chemical product for pest and disease control, it is important for

the farmer to:

- Use well-maintained spray equipment that has been properly calibrated;
- Apply the dosage recommended by the manufacturer
- Follow the safety precautions for mixing and spray applications
- Wear protective clothing

Calculating thresholds in economic loss

When scoring destruction of rice insect pest and diseases, a loss of 5 to 10 percent of expected yield are considered minor. Meanwhile any loss of 10 percent and above are considered to be major.

Case Study

The Authority has at some point faced challenges that caused significant crop & yield lose due to pest and disease incidences. For instance Mwea Irrigation Scheme in the year 2009-2010 faced

a serious invasion of dreaded rice blast disease. This was the first major reported case of economic impact where some farmers lost up to 75% of the expected yield. Other major pests and diseases in the scheme include weeds, migratory quelea quelea birds and currently golden apple snails.

Some of the pests and diseases affecting Western Kenya Schemes are Rice Yellow Mottle Virus (RYMV), rice blast disease and migratory birds.

The Authority offers advisory services to the farmers from time to time during respective cropping seasons and this has not only offered solutions but also proactively diagnosed emerging issues.

OPINION NOOK

"Some of the feedback on how covid-19 has affected your farming practices"

1. "Farmers expect the theory of supply and demand to work in their favor, but unfortunately the price of farm products has not worked to our advantage. With the President having advised people to "Stay Home Stay Safe "only a few are turning up to open the market" Martin (via interview)
2. "COVID 19 has disrupted regional agricultural value chains and posing risks to household food security" Otieno (via interview)
3. "The price of bananas has decreased. Usually, brokers buy a KG of bananas at 16-18 shillings but now the price of one kg of bananas is at 10 shillings. This has made us to experience losses and it is quite demoralizing to most farmers in the area who are majorly growing and selling bananas." NDERITU (via interview)
4. "The level of orders from customers has really reduced since COVID 19 started, this has frustrated my main source of income." Ms. Kananu (via interview)
5. "Social distancing and isolation are a huge challenges to farming communities who rely on daily labor and wages for their subsistence." Kamau (via interview)
6. "The movement of farm products from rural to urban centers has been severely affected by the crisis, farmers find it difficult to bring their produce to the markets." Ronoh (via interview)
7. "Covid 19 has created heightened awareness of food safety for producers and consumers." Denno (via interview)
8. "Extension officers are no longer conducting their functions normally owing to travel restrictions. We are really suffering" Dorcas (via interview)
9. "Use of face masks while farming has been challenging to most of us, we have found it hard to breath with the face masks on, some of us have fainted while working" Anyango (via interview)
10. "The arrival of covid 19 pandemic has put stress on the farming sector and will escalate poverty levels among the poor small scale farmers. The Government needs to continue with its efforts to implement strategies to alleviate the plight of farmers to ensure a food secure nation." Dr. Ogola (via interview)

RIGHTFUL DIGNITY



By Johnbosco Obonyo

National values guide the attitudes, actions and behavior of citizens in a manner that promotes their general wellbeing.

In this issue, we look into: The Rule of Law and Human Dignity.

human
RESPECT DIGNITY
worth
HUMAN dignity

Rule of law refers to the legal maxim that each citizen and person within the state should respect and observe the law for an orderly society, while Human dignity refers to honor bestowed on individuals and people, and the upholding of the individual rights, as spelt out in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights regardless of one's status (Article 28). It is the recognition that human beings possess a special value intrinsic to their humanity and as such are worthy of respect simply because they are human beings.

National Irrigation Authority endeavors in all its operations to adhere to the Constitution of Kenya, the National Labor law, Land Act,

Kenya Disability Act, Procurement Act (PPDA) amongst others. All processes in the Authority from employment, to projects initiations/implementation to procurement of goods/services to all areas of service delivery are done as per the relevant laws.

In understanding human dignity it is important to step back and reflect on few aspects: Has someone ever treated you with degrade? How did it feel? Would you tolerate the same being done to someone else? Treating other people with dignity means treating them the way we would like to be treated ourselves and this should be done ethically and lawfully.



Dignity is one of the most important things to the human spirit. It means being valued and respected for what you are, what you believe in, and how you live your life.

“Dignity is one of the most important things to the human spirit. It means being valued and respected for what you are, what you believe in, and how you live your life.”

Get Familiar with Irrigation Terms.



By Brenda Rajwayi

WEIR

We have introduced a new segment in “Unyunyizi News” with the aim of familiarizing you with terms you are likely to encounter anywhere matters irrigation is concerned.

For this issue, we introduce you to the term ‘weir’.

What is a weir?

“It is a stream or river meant to raise the water level of the river/ stream or divert its flow. It also refers to a fence or enclosure set in a waterway for taking fish”- Merriam-Webster dictionary

“A weir can also be described as a structure constructed across an open channel such as a river to change its water flow characteristics” - Eng. Charles Muasya.



Ongoing Construction of an intake weir in Lower Nzoia Irrigation Project.

Purpose

A weir is used to:

- Raise the level of water upstream so as to achieve the head required for water to flow in a diversion channel; “The weir needs to be submersible, that is, not blocking the water completely. It may limit the amount of water flowing downstream if blocked completely,” says Eng. Henry Ochiere. A weir constructed for the purposes of diverting water must have a water intake point and a diversion point through which the water flows into a diversion channel after the head of the water has been raised.
- Mitigate floods and make rivers navigable,
- Measure the volumetric rate of water flow.

The National Irrigation Authority has constructed several weirs; not to take fish but to raise the water levels, divert the water flow and channel it to farms to avail it for irrigated agriculture. The weirs are submersible hence not limiting the flow of water downstream.

In our next issue, we will talk about the channels through which this water is taken to the farms after its diversion.

“A weir can also be described as a structure constructed across an open channel such as a river to change its water flow characteristics” - Eng. Charles Muasya.

VISION

Water to every irrigable acre

MISSION

Provide and Coordinate Sustainable Development and Management of Irrigation Services in Kenya

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