



“Embracing modern farming methods has given me a reason to smile”. Ms. Purity Success Story



Figure 1: Purity’s millet last season before modern farming.

The 10-acre plot in Mithigini village near Tunyai market in Tharaka-Nithi County belongs to farmer Ms. Purity Gateria, whom everyone in the village knows, as she is one in a handful who tries her hand at modern technology in farming. During a visit to her farm, Purity began by saying “We have come a long way, and nothing has been easy as far as farming is concerned.” When she was asked why such a strong statement, Purity then went on to explain, “I will never forget the days we used to till our lands, plant every season but harvest very little or almost nothing, a period of serious starvation would follow; livestock would die and our children are left to starve.”

Farmers in this area majorly grow millet and have not ventured into growing crops like maize, cowpeas and sorghum, they mostly concentrate with green grams and millet; which they do not use farmyard manure and fertilizers or even use certified seeds

She takes a deep breath and adds, “We have been millet farmers for years, but we have not been using certified seeds, farm yard manure or fertilizers; which led to very low yields. ,” She said. “However, life changed when I met GRADIF KENYA and DETRA AFRICA through Wamiuka Farmers

Network which I am the chairlady”. Asked how they changed her life, she said, “They opened my eyes. I started embracing modern farming technology and integrated farming which has proved to be very rewarding”.

Purity has two separate farms; on the 10 acre land that is far from home, she has planted millet which is a drought tolerant crop and good for food security while on the other, she has planted maize, cowpeas, bananas, trees, reared livestock and poultry. This millet farm in particular has become a tour site for many farmers whose millet farms are incomparable. “I decided to try out modern farming technology and the results are amazing. Am now expecting a bumper harvest of over 120 bags of millet, equivalent to approximately ksh. 350,000 this season as compared to last season when I harvested only 52 bags.

Apart from that, Purity also tries the micro-irrigation method for farming. In a sub county that reels under severe water scarcity, this proves to be more sensible. She grows bananas and vegetables which are rare crops in the area; which earns her an income of ksh: 18,000 per month. Purity feels that the agricultural department should popularize micro-irrigation and water harvesting in an area like Tharaka. Use of manure, fertilizers and certified seeds was unheard of, but now with these practices as well as timely planting even the crops like maize that used not to grow are now flourishing.”

Purity describes modern farming and integrated farming as a risk-free business. “A farmer will never incur loss in integrated farming while uses of modern farming technology will double your crop yields. Also, apart from monetary gain, both can offer food security, and create a job just paying even better than a government job. More so, integrated farming requires one to be innovative,” she added. “You better cultivate a small piece of land with a variety of crops; using all the required farm inputs than many acres which are poorly farmed” Purity also emphasized on the need to know the market trends in order asses viable markets. She therefore explains this as the reason why they formed wamiuka farmers’ network.” Through the network, farming information is now reaching us, the government knows that we are here and are helping us, while we also bulk our produce and eliminate the brokers in our chain” Purity also tries the micro-irrigation method for farming. In a sub county that reels under severe water scarcity, this proves to be more sensible.

Pointing out the gains of organic farming, Purity says, to ensure profit, a farmer should not buy anything apart from seeds. Rather he should produce fertilizers or pesticides from farm wastes. She also urged the members of her community to stop selling manure from cow, goats and poultry to people in the upper zones but rather used it in their farms to increase productivity.

She also advised farmers to grow naturally available pesticides for getting healthy crops.

Compiled by: Flora Kaari-DETRA-Africa

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