

S P R I N G 2 0 1 3

# the Agri-Stewards Report

## Amazing Fact

The state of Iowa produces more corn in one growing season than the entire continent of Africa!



## God is in Control

**We Americans like to have a plan and stick to it. However, on a short-term trip it is best to be open to where God leads.**

This trip to Kenya was no different. We started out our time with James Sinkua, one of the leaders of the Community Christian Churches in Kenya. He had been in the States back in November for the International Convention of Missions and visited Lamb Farms. James took me to two different churches where I was able to introduce them to Farming God's Way. The Masai are very new to grain farming; they were a nomadic people group until very recently. They are excellent herdsman, raising lots of cattle and goats. The two churches I visited were the Oltukai Church and the Ntulele Church. Many of the questions regarding farming that arose were very similar. The biggest breakthrough we were able to accomplish was in the area of hybrid seeds versus open pollinated seeds.





Many of these farmers work in very remote locations and try to save seed back from year to year to replant. As far as African nations go, Kenya is very advanced in developing and promoting hybrid seeds. However, the majority of subsistence farmers have never learned the difference between these seeds. One of the first questions that came up in both groups is why when they save back some of the biggest ears of corn and they try to replant them as seed the following season do they completely fail? Through some questioning I learned they were buying hybrid seed from the nearby town of Narok and trying to replant seeds from hybrids. I taught them a quick lesson on the anatomy of a corn plant and how hybrid seeds are derived from two different plants and when you try to replant them the following season you have no idea what kind of traits you will end up with. You would have thought I was teaching a group of jr. high students by the giggles from the group as we discussed the tassel being the male part of the plant and the silks coming from the female part of the plant. Through questioning I also learned that the only fertilization anyone was doing was applying DAP, even though they had pens full of manure. We discussed the benefits of soil testing to learn what the soils greatest needs were. We also discussed how much corn loves nitrogen and that manure was a great source of nitrogen. They asked a good question of which animal manure produces the best fertilizer as many of them had donkeys as well.

To help the community find better resources James and I went and visited a couple of agricultural stores in Narok to locate open pollinated seeds and nitrogen sources such as urea or ammonia sulfate. The shop owners had no idea what we were looking for or what we were talking about, amazing!

My greatest recommendations to James and his community of believers were to: 1. Get their soils tested at KARI (Kenya Agricultural Research Institute) 2. Purchase an open pollinated variety of corn called Katumani so they can save seed back year after year. 3. I gave James the location in Nairobi where we are buying nitrogen for the farm in Joska, so they can apply it based on their soil testing results.

While concluding my time with each group they asked me to help them acquire a tractor. I shared with them Luke 16:10 which says if we are faithful in the small things that God can trust us with more. I encouraged them to continue studying the FGW DVD's and applying what they learn and see where God leads them. The Ntulele Church is currently farming 10 acres and have 300 acres set aside for farming. I can't wait to see what God has in store for them in the future...





## ECHO in Arusha

Part two of my trip took me to Arusha, Tanzania where I attended the ECHO East Africa Conference. What a joy to have four different Kenyan men attend who I have worked with over the last two years join me at the conference. Two of the men were from Kager Village in western Kenya (Homa Bay region) their names were George Amimo and John Nyangi. They were excited to report the improvements that had been achieved through Farming God's Way in their community. They exclaimed that no one was hungry in Kager any longer. Their community was becoming known as the 'provider' of the region and that other communities would come to them during the dry season to buy food when theirs ran out. I hope to return to Kager this September for more teaching. Others who attended were Rueben Mutunga, one of the farm directors at Joska who works for Missions of Hope International. The final delegate was Prince Makaya who has an agriculture background from Zimbabwe.

The conference focused primarily on conservation agriculture. The African farmer has used the disc plow for over 30 years consecutively on their fields. Year after year of soil inversion has led to a tremendous amount of erosion and a complete loss of organic material and microbial activity in the soil. The tropical sun bakes the exposed soil and sterilizes it during the dry season. Many examples were given on no till planting, using cover crops to regain organic matter, and how a lack of mulch is the greatest limitation in production in the tropical climate.

One astounding fact I learned that I cannot get out of my head is that the state of Iowa produces more corn in one growing season than the entire continent of Africa!

Before leaving Arusha we got to visit some of the CMF missionaries and see the work they are doing training Masai families to be church planters and a newly opened production facility for the BUV (basic utility vehicle).

## Back to Joska...

Joska is beginning to feel like home. I joined up with Dave Chance and his team of 5 for my final week of my trip. Our hopes were that our container full of agricultural equipment would be on the ground when we arrived. God had a different plan. God has a way of redirecting us to His plan and this trip was no different. Had the equipment arrived on our schedule our whole focus would have been on the equipment. Without the equipment the team had to look for other opportunities to fill their time. The most beneficial thing we accomplished was investing time in the lives of the students. Our team was made up of a number of agricultural professionals including an Ag lawyer, an Ag CPA, a soil expert, a plant geneticist from Pioneer, and a supply chain leader for the agricultural input company Dow. We have come to realize what a low status symbol it is to be a farmer in Kenya. Who wants to spend a month tilling up to two acres in the hot sun during the dry season with just a hoe to prepare to plant when the rainy season begins, it is not a glamorous life. Then comes the harvest time only to be disappointed by the meager 30 bushels to the acre one typically harvests. (U.S. farmers average between 150 – 160 bushels per acre)



We came to realize that mechanizing Joska might not be Agristewards prime objective, although we view it as a necessary step to try to feed the growing number of children in the MoHI school system soon to reach 10,000. Our primary goal may be to give a new generation of Kenyans a whole new vision on how to produce enough food to feed Kenya without relying on any outside help. We, on the fly one evening, put together a 40 minute presentation using some photos from Dave Chance's farm on what agriculture looks like mechanized. Our hope is that some of these students get excited about taking agriculture to a whole new level in Kenya and use their God-given talents and abilities toward agriculture.

We see so much potential in agriculture in Kenya, the scary thing is the Chinese see it too, and are already there. We pray Kenya can proceed to a whole new level of agriculture production on their own for their own gain, not the gain of another country.





Well our equipment finally arrived. The memory will forever be etched in my brain. After days of pleading and prodding we received a phone call that our container was minutes away. We stayed up till 11 PM that evening staring down the dark dusty lane seeing who would be the first one to spot some headlights approaching. We finally spotted the truck! On queue a group of girls gathered just outside the gate and began singing “Our God is a miracle working God” What a moment! We had a little trouble removing the large seal placed on the rear of the container with our simple hand tools, but were finally able to manage opening the doors. We were thrilled to find everything appeared to be accounted for and in tact. I’ll never forget the ear-to-ear grin Livingstone had on his face, as I pointed my flashlight at him as he climbed into the tractor seat for the first time while it was still in the container at 11:30 at night.

The next day we eagerly awaited the arrival of the crane to off load the container from the truck chassis to the ground. Once the tractor was out, we wasted no time putting it to work. We quickly faced some challenges as we began working the ground. We originally planned on ripping 24 acres of virgin ground to be prepared to be put into production. We soon realized just how bad the compaction was in these black cotton soils during the dry season. In no time we had broken two different top links and came to the conclusion we would need some rain to loosen the soil before it could be ripped. Instead we turned our focus to tilling 4 acres at Joska boys to prepare it for planting for the rainy season that begins in mid-March. My final day there was very sobering to me. As I was reflecting on my frustration of not being able to accomplish my original goal of ripping the 24 acres, John, the man farming the 5 acres at Joska boys approached me and began thanking me over and over for tilling the 4 acres. He claimed our team accomplished in two days with the tractor what would have taken 4 men working full time a month to complete by hand. He was ecstatic all he had to do was plant. The Kenyans have a Swahili phrase I have added to my limited vocabulary that is “kidogo kidogo” which means little by little. By American standards our pace may be a little slow, but little by little we are making a big impact in Kenya for the Lord.

