

Harvesting Rainwater for Tree Nursery Farming

By Peter Voster Odhiambo

Johnson Chege Maina, a 60-year-old farmer, is one of the squatters who were relocated from forested areas of Mount Kenya and resettled in Solio by the government of Kenya (GoK) in 2009. Chege resettled on his half-acre piece of land with his wife and 5 children and farms on his other 4 acres that was allocated to him by the government.

Chege was very passionate about nursery tree production and wanted to do it on large-scale but this was not possible as he had to buy water from the borehole to water the seedlings. As a result, he managed to start up a tree-nursery with only 3000 seedlings. Chege could spend up to 40% from the seedlings sales on water hence this business became so unattractive and almost gave up.

He adopted water pan technology from Upper Tana Nairobi Water Fund (UTNWF) in 2017 and excavated two 100,000L water pans in his 4 acres. With this, he expanded his tree-nursery to 12,000 seedlings that UTNWF bought from him at Ksh.20 per seedling with the only inputs costs incurred



on 1.25kg seeds and 1 bale of seedling bags at Ksh. 5,000 and Ksh. 11,000 respectively. This left Chege with a profit of Ksh. 224,000 that he spent on his form two daughter's school fee, bought one dairy goat and a dairy cow, and excavated another water pan, 50,000 L on his half-acre to further expand his tree nursery production.

Chege currently has a total of 30,000 seedlings he expects to sell at a profit of at least Ksh. 500,000 which he plans to use to start up a cereals shop in the Rehema market to expand his income generation avenues. Being one of the most active farmers involved in conservation activities he also plans to benefit from the UTNWF biogas installation project to farmers to reduce the felling down of already planted trees for fuel.