

News Brief (October 2004)

FIPS-Africa catalyses major private sector investment in production of new improved fertilizers for use by small farmers

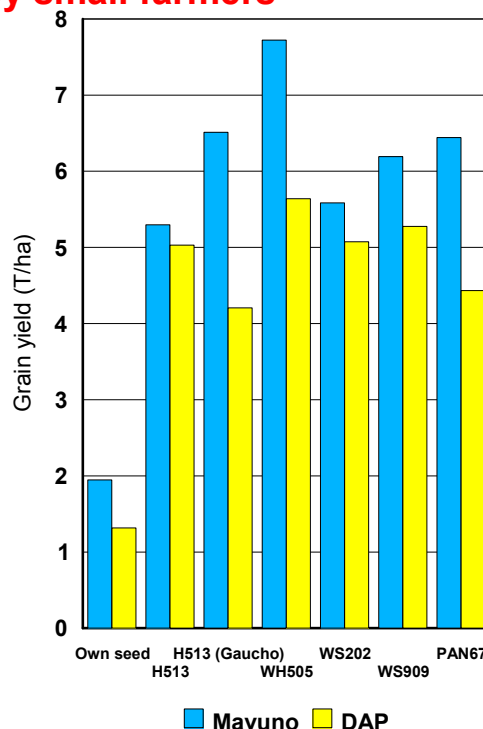


1. Poor soil fertility seriously limits maize production on small farmers' fields in Kenya. Soils have been depleted of their natural soil fertility through many years of continuous cropping without inputs, or through the use of unbalanced fertilization.

In many small-holder farming areas, Potassium (K) and/or Sulphur (S) are now starting to limit crop production, but until recently these nutrients were not available in planting fertilizers.



Small farmers in Kenya also suffer from limited access to fertilizers which are conventionally packaged in large 50 kg bags. Market surveys have shown that the majority of small farmers are interested in purchasing fertilizer in small bag sizes (0.1-1kg). Experience has shown that farmers who experiment with these small packs return to their local shop to purchase larger quantities.



2. In June 2003, Athi River Mining started to co-operate with FIPS-Africa to make more appropriate fertilizers more accessible to small farmers. Athi River Mining developed two new multi-nutrient fertilizers, called *Mavuno* (meaning "harvest"). The planting fertilizer contains 10%N, 26%P2O5, 10% K2O, 4%S, 8% CaO, 4%MgO, and traces of B, Zn, Mo, Cu and Mn. The top-dressing fertilizer is a blend of Urea and gypsum containing 30%N, 10% CaO, and 5%S. Athi River Mining packaged its *Mavuno* fertilizers in attractively-branded 1 kg bags, which retail for as little as KSh 30-35 per kg, in order to encourage all farmers to experiment with their use, and to experience the benefits.



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September 4, 2004

Mining firm to invest Sh600m in fertiliser

By NATION Reporter

Athi River Mining Company Ltd will next year invest over Sh600 million in production of cheaper fertiliser for local farmers.

Managing director, Pradeep Paurana, said that currently, the company produces the Mavuno fertiliser developed

3. Between June and November 2003, FIPS-Africa staff promoted over 100,000 packets of *Mavuno* fertilizer through farm input stockists throughout the country. Having experienced the benefits, farmers started to demand *Mavuno* from their local stockists. By April 2004, approximately 2000 tonnes of Mavuno fertilizer had been supplied to stockists in Trans Nzoia, Uasin Gishu, Bungoma, Kisii, Embu, Kirinyaga, Nakuru and Bomet districts. Demand for the *Mavuno* fertilizers quickly exceeded Athi River Mining's capacity to supply.

4. Between June 2003 and August 2004, FIPS-Africa conducted approximately 2500 demonstrations throughout the country comparing Mavuno and DAP fertilizer in co-operation with farmers, stockists and the Ministry of Agriculture. Results showed that depending on soil conditions, Mavuno fertilizers performing as well as, if not better than DAP+Urea.

5. As a result of FIPS-Africa's promotions, and the rapid increase in demand for the *Mavuno* fertilizers from farmers, Athi River Mining decided in September 2004 to invest in scaling-up production from a current capacity of about 3000 T/year to 50,000 T/year (see newspaper article).

Through incorporation of locally-available minerals, Athi River Mining will deliver more balanced fertilizers at reduced cost to farmers. Farmers will benefit from reduced cost of production, harvesting higher yields with lower costs of inputs.

The 1 kg promotional packs will greatly improve small farmers' access to more balanced fertilizers, empowering them to adopt improved technology to improve their food security, and generate income.

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