

**COOPERATION****Italian 'giardiniera' helps Kenyan farmers****ALMACIS INTELLIGENT SUPPORT IN WEST POKOT**

23-11-2023 by Freddie del Curatolo



Concrete help to the populations of one of the most troubled areas of Kenya, West Pokot, thanks also to an all-Italian speciality, to make the most of their agriculture and shift their mentality from agribusiness as an unprofitable activity to one that could lead to job creation.

This is the project prepared by the Abruzzo-based company Joint Venture Almacis, which, after winning a call for tenders issued by the International Development Cooperation, in 2020 started working on Kenyan territory, specifically in the village of Sigor, near the Wei Wei river in West Pokot

county.

Agriculture in that area, due to the endemic lack of water, is problematic and the farmers only work in the fields for subsistence purposes and at best they practise barter, i.e. they exchange their products with those of other farmers and breeders.

The aim of JV Almacis from the outset was to move community members from subsistence farming to agribusiness. To curb the problem of the lack of a constant water source, Almacis first decided to install an irrigation scheme.

'After the implementation of the irrigation scheme, farmers can now reserve a portion of land for subsistence farming,' the Italian company explains. 'This effectively eliminates malnutrition in the community. The school monitoring report substantially indicates how the lives of the school going children have been affected by the irrigation project. Access to food, better hygiene thanks to access to water, and the elimination of problems with school fees are some of the benefits the school going children now enjoy.'

The first phase of the project involved reaching a memorandum of understanding with Moi University in Eldoret in order to offer young engineers graduates opportunities in line with the call.

Here, young engineers were able to be trained to acquire the necessary skills to manage agro-entrepreneurial activities. From there, active involvement with community members began.

The aim is simple, as well as not an end in itself, which our cooperation, through 'project' donations, has been pursuing for years: to guarantee producers that by improving in all phases and sectors of cultivation and harvesting, right up to sale, they will be able to repay the loan granted.

This is how, under the auspices of the Kiptolelyo aid group, sowing of organic products has begun, with a focus on watermelon, which, according to expert studies, is the most suitable crop because of the pH of the soil, but also beans, which have recently been sold with good returns, and vegetables.

And, icing on the cake, the latest Kopluk community project supported by Almacis and presented at the recent World Italian Cuisine Week. With specific training from chef Luca Mastromattei and his team, the Kopluk farmers have transformed some of their best vegetables into a totally organic, high quality 'niche' product: it is the classic Italian giardiniera, pickled vegetables in glass jars that can be sold to generate other income.

All in keeping with Almacis' credo of implementing an 'beyond subsidy mentality' ideology for local farming communities.

---