



Kibirigwi Sustainable Integrated Schools Forestry and Fruit Growing Project

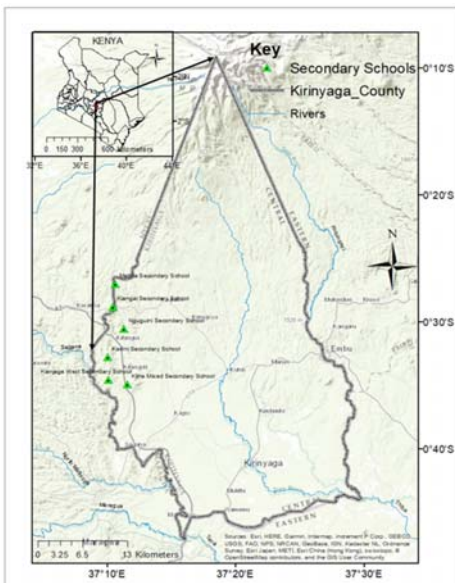
ECOM Foundation, through Sustainable Management Services-Kenya, is carrying out a one-of-a kind project designed to promote environmental conservation and educate youth on sustainable farming practises. The project is structured as an agroforestry student club and is being offered in six (6) secondary schools affiliated with the the Kibirigwi Farmer’s Cooperative in Kirinyaga County, Kenya. Currently, there are 614 students participating in the clubs. The trees selected by the Cooperative for the project were macadamia and avocado trees, as these varieties are very promising from the perspective of the fruit value chain.

What is particularly unique about this project is it offers multi-faceted intervention directly responsive to the improvement needs of the Cooperative. Though the primary objectives are environmental conservation and youth education, the project also serves the community by improving nutritional resources and aiming to reduce poverty by introducing a new income stream from fruit produce. Another critical aspect of the project design is to integrate youth in farming to promote greater interest in carrying on the generational coffee farming business of the Cooperative families, which has been fading over the years.

With leadership of the project steering committee (including broad community representation), 655 students received training on climate change, coffee sustainability and integration of fruit tree farming, to prepare for distribution of 3,600 fruit tree seedlings. As of now, seven (7) fruit tree orchards have been established – one at each participating school and one at the community chief’s camp land. For the period of July – August 2019 student training will continue with a focus on post-harvest handling, marketing practices, best practices for crop growing and diversification needs, as well as assisting with identification of potential markets for farmers produce. The ECOM Foundation extends warm thanks to Martin Kangi and the rest of the SMS-Kenya team for their expertise and hard work in implementing this project and the genuine passion they show to improve the lives origin coffee producers.



Students involved in training sessions on climate change causes and impacts



Above: Map showing participating schools involved in the project

Above from top: Students and members of the community participating in seedling distribution and in planting exercises in their various orchards establishments on previously neglected coffee farms