

Sustainable Farming in Niger

Project Updates - January 2025

Greetings from Kenya!

As many of you know, I was not able to obtain an entry visa to Niger this year. It appears that the borders are closed, the junta government of the last 1 ½ years continues to do what they do, and the elected president and his wife continue to be locked in the basement of their home. I pray for these people, but more so for the 23 million people of the country, as starvation comes to an all-time high and the economy and security of the country begin to falter. There is some good news: the WhatsApp group we started for farmers continues with about 60 members; I can send messages and share photos. They are all planning to seed a new crop this June/July and try to get something from the land for food and profit. We also pray for good weather.

I had a short stay in Madagascar, where I found expenses high and my productivity low so on Jan 6th, I landed in western Kenya at the invitation of two organizations called Vision Ministries Kenya (VMK) and Shelter of Hope, directed by Ishmael Okuku. It encompasses more than one area of the country and includes over 100 Christian churches in the network! VMK is an offspring of Vision Ministries Canada, and ImpactHope has been working with them for many years and has developed several projects in Kenya, such as a school, clinic, and a water well, with another project of water for irrigation to come.



Photo 1: *The compost pile.*

Photo 2: *Two seed beds - Kale in the front and Tomatoes in the back.*

However, my role has been to develop the agricultural ministry with the hundreds of farmers that are affiliated. It is starting from the ground zero (so to speak), and it is busy, challenging and comes with a series of costs, not all of which I can handle. But enjoying it, I certainly am and already have been able to see growth and potential for much more.

The people speak Swahili and a few local dialects, but English is the official language of the country, and most people have a high level of competency in English. Also, I find them to be very warm and welcoming, and they tell me every day how glad they are that I have come to help. I find that about 75% of this population is Christian and proud of it!



Photo 3: Hut of the worker and storage for seeds.

We have started a demonstration farm on a 3-acre piece of land that had to be let go to sod. 2 weeks ago, five young men from the local college helped me to break about 1 acre, and another man who is becoming the manager of this demonstration farm has built some seedling beds where we have planted kale and tomato seeds which are coming up nicely and will be transplanted and in about 2-3 weeks in the fields where we have removed the sod. I have also been able to locate some vital nutrients, such as humic acid. While I am confident this will make for a very nice crop, and we will have many farmers coming to visit and a harvest which should show a profit to offset the expense of paying the young man who has taken up residence there to safeguard our project from thieves.

In addition, we have applied to become a seed distributor for certified seeds from the government office of Kenya Seed Company, and we are in the process of upgrading the little building on the property to become our seed store. The government will send an inspector in a couple of weeks to see that our building meets standards, and we can then bring in seed. We are planning to make a small profit to pay Ben, a mature man helping me in so many ways. He will manage not only the farms but also the seed business during and after my stay. I promise you that I feel the hand of God in this project, and it is gratifying!

However, the struggle for funding continues, and the overall costs are much beyond my personal capability so we are seeking the needed funding. In the meantime, I am providing you with a list in the order of urgency with the related costs. If you feel called by God to participate with us in any one of these items, please send your donation to ImpactHope to the same link on the **ImpactHope** website (<https://impacthope.ca/niger>) or if mailing a check designated to "Ron Gerwing." All

funds received will be directed to the ministry I am involved with in Kenya. Your gift will move this ministry forward as I continue to serve. **Please specify which item on this list you are donating to:**

- 1. The seed building must be upgraded with plastering, metal work, paint and shelving - \$500.**
- 2. We will need our initial minimum order of seed to be bought - \$200.**
- 3. Ben's salary for the next 12 months - \$2000 (his income for the first year).**
- 4. A soil tester for soil quality - \$175.**
- 5. We need a new gate for security at the farm. It will be in metal - \$500.**
- 6. We would like to start using humic acid granulare as it will increase the yield by 50-70%. We must bring in an entire container of 900x 25kg bags. Landed cost is \$12,000 USD. This investment will be sold to the local farmers creating a profitable return.**
- 7. The director's vehicle (Ishmael) is in consistent need of repair. It is breaking down constantly and is really not a good investment to fix anymore. Vehicles here are heavily taxed, but we can bring one into the port of Mombasa from Japan (used) for \$45,000cdn. This is really my only form of transportation unless I catch a ride on somebody's motorcycle. I will need to start visiting farmers in villages to have a significant impact on farming in this area.**



I have already purchased most of the required hand tools and labour to get the field work done. I also have been assisting in keeping Ishmael's car running, certainly with the necessary diesel and other maintenance as well as the living expenses while I am here. I am overwhelmed by the needs, but I know God's hand has been upon me, and He has placed me here to assist farmers and to create

ways of sustainability for the ministry and community. I am joyful that I can be a part of what God is doing in Kenya. Seeing the joy on the faces of the Kenyans and being a part of this remote community keeps me smiling – I look forward to what God will do during my time here as I rise up and minister to the farming community.

Your continued partnership and greater investment in this ministry will make an incredible impact as we continue to see God's work and Kingdom be expanded in this region of Kenya!

Thank you for your continued support, prayers, and encouragement. I will be here until March 31st and will give you a couple more updates as we go along.

God Bless You.

Ron Gerwing (PappaRon)

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P.O. Box 211 Stn Main, Guelph, ON N1H 6J9
office@impacthope.ca | www.impacthope.ca | Tel: (519) 824-9380 |