

USAID Funds Research on Soil Management to Boost Smallholder Farmer Yields

August 19, 2021—High soil acidity contributes to low and stagnant agricultural productivity. This is particularly true for maize, which is the country's main staple crop.

The Feed the Future Advancing Local Leadership, Innovation and Networks (ALL-IN) program, supported by United States Agency for International Development (USAID), has launched a new project led by the Tegemeo Institute of Agricultural Policy & Development at Egerton University in Nairobi, Kenya to build evidence on practical ways to encourage farmers to update their knowledge about the condition of their soils and encourage them to apply appropriate soil management practices. Few small-scale farmers test their soils to make soil management decisions.

“The project will support efforts by the government, development agencies, and private sector investors in promoting and facilitating proper soil management among farmers for sustainable agricultural productivity growth,” said lead principal investigator Dr. John Olwande, a research fellow at Tegemeo Institute of Agricultural Policy & Development, Egerton University.

This project takes place in villages across four counties that are among the most important for maize production areas in Kenya: Bungoma, Kakamega, Trans Nzoia, and Uasin Gishu. These counties are among those in which the government conducted soil tests in 2014 and found that the soils were highly acidic.

“Agriculture is critical across Sub-Saharan Africa considering the challenge of feeding and employing a rapidly growing population in the coming years,” said Dr. David Sarfo Ameyaw, president and CEO of the International Centre for Evaluation and Development (ICED) and co-director of Feed the Future ALL-IN. “This project is a game changer in terms of improving food security in Kenya.”

The results from this project will provide guidance on promoting effective soil management for sustainable agricultural productivity growth in Kenya and across Sub-Saharan Africa. By addressing widespread soil acidity, this project aligns with Feed the Future and USAID's efforts in Kenya to expand economic opportunities for smallholder farmers and entrepreneurs to build resilience of households, communities, and markets to shocks and stresses - including climate change - and diversify agricultural production.

“This project from Tegemeo Institute is testing ways to relax the constraints that limit smallholder farmers' adoption of lime and other soil management practices that can fundamentally improve their maize yields,” said Dr. Michael Carter, Director of the Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Markets, Risk and Resilience. “The evidence from this project could even benefit smallholder farmers across the continent who face the same challenge of soil acidity.”

Feed the Future ALL-IN was established by USAID as a partnership between International Centre for Evaluation and Development (ICED), with offices in Nairobi, Kenya and Accra, Ghana, and the Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Markets, Risk & Resilience (MRR) based at the University of California, Davis. Feed the Future ALL-IN funds researchers at African institutions to lead large-scale international research collaborations, leveraging their local knowledge, skills, and ideas to build actionable evidence for promoting resilience and inclusive agricultural growth.



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Read the project summary here: <https://www.iced-eval.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/ALL-IN-project-in-brief-Olwande-Kenya.pdf>

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