GREEN FARMING

The Green Farming programme was set up in order to stimulate the collaboration between Dutch horticulture, suppliers and horticulturists in Kenya and Ethiopia. To be clear, the programme is not initially intended to sell 'the Dutch horticultural supply product', but, rather, to look for opportunities in the area of production, development and research concerning horticultural projects in Ethiopia and Kenya, together with partners in those countries.

The Green Farming programme is coordinated by AVAG - the Dutch platform for suppliers to greenhouse horticulture - en the independent consultancy and research agency DLV Plant.
Support is provided by the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation. And Wageningen UR provides the scientific support.

Green Farming, two examples from the African 'field'.

BILASHAKA FLOWERS

Naivasha is located in the Kenyan province of Bonde la UFA, in the north-west of Nairobi. In 2001, Bilashaka Flowers started here with the production of cut roses according to European standards. The company is a part of Zuurbier & Co from Heerhugowaard, the Netherlands, which is one of the major cut-roses producers in the Netherlands. The Kenyan grower cultivates roses on an area covering 29 hectares. Bilashaka Flowers has high ambitions. In addition to supplying top products, the company also wants to contribute to a healthy operational climate for man and environment.

And, as is demonstrated in Naivasha, the company is quite serious. Modern technologies are adapted to the African reality. For example, in 2007, the expensive energy source of oil was replaced by solar power by means of solar panels across a total surface area of 3200 square metres. This solar heating system was designed in collaboration with Frans van Zaal Totaal Techniek. There were three reasons for this. First of all, the greenhouses were to be heated up extra in the mornings, in order to remove the damp out of the greenhouse quickly. In addition, the oil prices were steadily rising, so that an oil-fired boiler system would no longer be profitable in the long term. And finally, the sun is a clean source of energy and Kenya has plenty of solar heat.

Many metres of black coated pipes are running through the solar panels. Water is pumped through these pipes during the day and due to the solar heat it reaches a temperature of 50 degrees. During the day, this hot water is stored in buffer tanks. The next morning, this water is pumped through the heating pipes of the greenhouse. The necessity to heat up in the mornings has to do with the transition from the cold night to the hot day. Especially in the mornings, the crops are damp, making them sensitive to moulds, such as botrytis. Heating up in the mornings will diminish this risk, thus also enabling savings on plant protection agents. In areas where there is a lot of sunshine during the day and the nights are cold, the relatively simple solar panels – technologically speaking – by Frans Zaal Totaal Techniek are a godsend. Especially their relative simplicity allows them to be applied in many African areas. Also, the water is filtered and reused, reducing water consumption by 40 percent compared to similar companies.
In addition to these technical efforts, the social efforts stand out. The 350 employees and their 1500 family members all enjoy free education and medical care. With support from the Netherlands, the 12,000 village inhabitants are provided with clean drinking water. And finally, thanks to support from Lions Heerhugowaard and Cordaid, a secondary school was founded, offering youths from the age of 13 the opportunity to develop themselves.

VAN DEN BERG ROSES KENYA

A second example of support from the Green Farming programme is located in the Kenyan village of Naivasha. In 2011, rose farmer Van

den Berg, who also has a commercial greenhouse there, started to plant three hectares using a ditch system, complete with recirculation of the water. In addition, a reservoir was constructed to collect rain water, as well as an installation for inverse osmosis. All of these facilities are to lead to a production increase of 15 percent, while cutting back the use of fertiliser and water by half.

Van den Berg Roses is not only frugal with water, but also looks after its employees and invests in the future of their children. By means of sponsoring to primary schools in the area, the children receive education. Van den Berg also employs a few teachers and the company realised two water wells and a sanitary facility. Concerning medical facilities for staff and their families, the company set up its own medical station with two physicians and there is a professional hospital that is run completely on sponsoring money from the horticulturists.

PILLARS

The Green Farming programme is built on two pillars:

- Demonstration of the possibilities and benefits of the application of high-quality horticulture-related products and services in Kenya and Ethiopia.

- Development of sustainable production systems in economic, environmental and social areas, in collaboration with local partners, so that these production systems will closely match the specific conditions in Kenya and Ethiopia.

Content of the programme:

- Carrying out studies in the areas of marketing, technology, logistics, law, tax matters, and the environment.
- The organisation of joint participation in trade fairs, visits to exhibitions and presentations, in Kenya, the Netherlands and Ethiopia.
- The organisation of seminars in different areas including technology, sustainability and collaboration between the Netherlands, Kenya and Ethiopia.
- Calling in local advisers.
- Setting up a demonstration project whereby the possibilities of high-quality horticulture-related products and services from the Netherlands are demonstrated.
- The organisation of trade missions between Kenya, Ethiopia and the Netherlands.

WIN-WIN SITUATION

The Green Farming programme creates a win-win situation. On the one hand, horticulturists in Ethiopia and Kenya are provided with the Dutch horticultural know-how, which allows them to develop tremendously within a relatively short time.
Dutch horticultural suppliers, in turn, are given the opportunity to export their knowledge and innovation and use these in Kenya and Ethiopia to stimulate innovative horticultural progress in those countries. Moreover, the Green Farming programme is a source of inspiration for the development of new innovations geared to African conditions.

www.greenfarming.nl