



Healthy farms and jobs for over 70 young men thanks to the Kintampo Pruning and Spraying Gang (PPEDCO)

In the eye of a new threat for the Mango Industry

In 2012 the Bacterial Black Spot (BBS) was detected as a new disease threatening the mango industry in Ghana. By 2015/2016 it has spread widely to mango farms in the country, with Kintampo being one of the most affected districts with 70% of cultivated acreage invaded. As a result, the average mango yield has dropped from 3 t/acre to 1,4 t/acre, leaving farmers devastated. By that time, the Market Oriented Agriculture Programme (MOAP) supported the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MoFA) with trainings of mango farmers to promote good agricultural practices and prevent the disease from further spreading.

Yaw Asenso-Mensah was by then Agricultural Extension Agent (AEA) in the Kintampo District and about to retire: “We knew pruning is an effective mean to manage the disease - but no good pruning tools were available by that time. Additionally, pruning is heavy work and most mango farmers are 55 – 60 years old. So, they just hired people from the street without any skills for this work. This did not improve the situation. Indeed, mango farmers were cutting down entire farms due to BBS. This was when I approached GIZ with my idea and they came in with their support instantly.”

A viable business model for service provision

Mr Asenso’s idea was to set up a business specialised in pruning and spraying services for mango and other tree crop farmers. MOAP supported him from the start, bringing on board a renowned BBS and pruning expert for the first training in July 2017.

On the 1st August 2017, Mr Asenso’s newly established company named “Plant Pest and Disease Company Limited (PPEDCO)” started work and served 25 farms in the 2017/2018 season. In the 2018/2019 season their work

Key Facts

- New business built up in 3 years (2017)
- Over 70 new full-time jobs for young men created, each earning 25 GHC/day = 5,625 GHC per year
- Contribution to the control of BBS in Bono and Bono East Regions, and thus yield increase

area augmented to 86 farmers in 4 districts. Additionally, PPEDCO was able to open an office in Kintampo Town for interested farmers to order the service directly. The company was able to extend its service also to harvesting, which ensures the gang members to gain income year-round from the different activities. The goal for the 2019/2020 season is to serve 200 farmers.

Strong partners

“MOAP has been a strong partner for PPEDCO from the start on. MOAP supported us with various trainings such as pruning and canopy management, spraying and harvesting as well as record keeping, business management, coaching and monitoring in order to ensure the profitability of the business. Also, an initial set of pruning tools and personal protective equipment was provided”, confirms Mr Asenso.

One challenge that PPEDCO still faces is the inability of farmers to pay directly for the services and inputs. Often, they must wait until farmers have harvested and sold, which requires PPEDCO to work based on loans. Luckily, all loans have been repaid so far. However, PPEDCO started discussions with leading mango processing companies in the country to assist farmers with the payment of the chemicals to spray against BBS in a joint arrangement with a major input provider: The input provider supplies the chemicals to PPEDCO to spray the farms and the mango processing company pre-finances the inputs, buys the fruits and deducts the costs from the payment to the farmer.

Making the difference

PPEDCO started operations in 2017 with 30 young men newly hired as members of the service gang and was able to increase to a total 72 in 2019. The new staff will be based in Atebubu, Nkoranza, Techiman and Wenchi Districts and include six agricultural officers of the Ghanaian Government Initiative - Nation Builders Corps (NABCO), who were hired to provide training internally in the future.

Awerry Derry (19) is a service gang member since 2019, he started at PPEDCO just after Senior High School and is now leading a group of 5 colleagues: “It is my first job and my first self-earned money. The work is full-time, except when the rain disturbs us too much. This way I earn 25 GHC per day plus lunch and transport. I try to save some of the money to invest in a small pig project in the future.”

Experienced mango farmers highlight the effectiveness of PPEDCO’s services. One of them is Yaw Effah-Baafi (64). He owns a mango farm of 100 acres in the Pru District and was one of the first clients of the service gang in 2017. The day he spoke with MOAP, Awerry Derry and his colleagues were spraying his farm against BBS. Mr. Effah-Baafi confirms he employs the gangs regularly: “There has not been any occasion where I have been disappointed by their service. No doubt, I will hire the gang again.”

Mr. Effah-Baafi has seen major changes on his farm since he employed the groups: “3 years ago I lost a lot of fruits due to BBS and Anthracnose, in fact I harvested nothing. This was when I engaged Mr Asenso. Then, last season I had a bumper harvest of 5 t/acre with superb fruit quality – I even could delay marketing (August 2019 instead of June/July) and got a better price. Also, the rejection rate was very low for my deliveries, about 1%. I am absolutely satisfied with the service, Anthracnose is not a problem anymore and BBS has been reduced significantly.”

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Photo 1 (top): Christoph Pannhausen (MOAP) in discussion with Mr Effah-Baafi and Mr Asenso (right)

Photo 2: Christoph Pannhausen (MOAP) in discussion with Mr Derry and fellow colleagues

Photo 3: PPEDCO gang member spraying against BBS

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