

Vegetable Farmers in Africa Benefit from Australian Expertise



Mike Titley (front left), a vegetable agronomist at Applied Horticultural Research (AHR) in Australia, provides technical support to the project teams and farmers.

AVRDC Eastern and Southern Africa recently received a visit from **Mike Titley**, a vegetable agronomist at Applied Horticultural Research (AHR) in Australia. AHR is one of the partners in the VINESA project (“Improving income and nutrition in eastern and southern Africa by enhancing vegetable-based farming and food systems in peri-urban corridors”) and Mike was in Tanzania, Malawi and Mozambique to provide technical support to the project teams and farmers. During his visit to Tanzania, Mike gave a seminar on recent findings for improving soil health and controlling whitefly in vegetable crops.

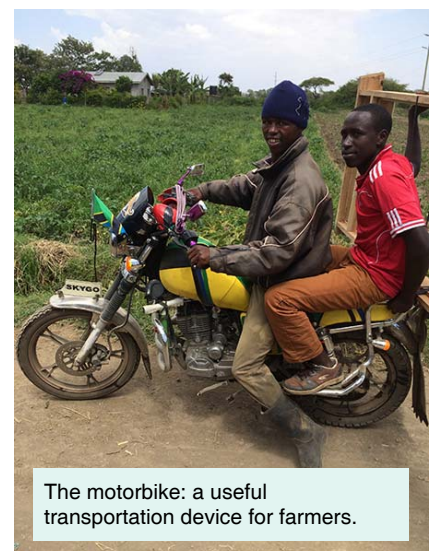
It had been almost a year since his last visit to Tanzania, and Mike was delighted to notice the improvements that had been made at Madiira Farm’s VINESA Best Practice Hub. He was especially impressed by the better use of barrier crops as a part of the farm’s integrated pest management plan. Best Practice Hubs are one of the defining features of the VINESA program; at these central locations,

young farmers receive intensive practical training on best production techniques, postharvest technologies, marketing, and business management skills.

Mike was excited to meet the fourth group of 25 farmers currently receiving training at Tanzania’s Best Practice Hub. “As you know, there are two main aims in this project,” he told the group. “One is to help improve the nutrition of your families and villages—and second, it is for you to actually put some more money in your pockets by growing tomato, cowpea, amaranth, and nightshade.” VINESA is funded by the Australian International Food Security Research Centre, and Mike spoke about the ethos of the project: “It is not me giving you the money and you saying thank you very much and going home,” he emphasized. “It is VINESA giving you training and you going home and being able to continue making money.”

John Macharia, head of the VINESA project, along with the Tanzania Country Coordinator **Agatha Aloyce**, travelled with Mike to surrounding villages to

meet some recent graduates. They were pleased to see that many have begun to put into practice the skills and knowledge they gained from VINESA. One graduate, Daniel, had such a good yield from his tomato crop that he has begun building a four-bedroom house. Another graduate, Titus, was able to buy a brand new motorbike after a great harvest. He plans to provide a transport service for passengers and goods in his village, where finding reliable transport is a problem. This is a great start for these young farmers, who are already seeing the benefits of their six-month training.



The motorbike: a useful transportation device for farmers.