

PLANTWISE INITIATIVE IN KENYA

Dr. Dora Kilalo attended a validation workshop under the plantwise Initiative in July (8-11th) 2014 whose objective was to analyse the data so far validated in order to write reports / draft papers for publications to inform the policy makers, other stakeholders of the Plant health system and the wider general public on the status of pests and diseases as captured through the network of plant clinics currently operational in Kenya.

Background

Plantwise is a global programme led by CABI intended to provide cheap plant health knowledge to the small scale farmers so that they can reduce losses in the fields thereby increase yields that will contribute to improved food security. It works by establishing a network of plant clinics where farmers can find practical plant health solutions to the pest problems they face in their fields. Plantwise also strengthens the National Plant Health system (PHS) enabling countries to avail the knowledge that will give farmers solutions to the pest problems they face. Currently, Kenya is enjoying a strong liaison between the stakeholders (institutions where the UON is participating as a National research organization) who represent the functional units of the PHS. Plantwise Initiative in Kenya started in 2010 when Plant Clinics were established after State Department of Agriculture extension agents were trained as Plant Doctors to run the same. The Plant doctors, give advice to the farmers on how to manage the pest problems after diagnosing them as they are brought to the plant clinics. Presently, the plant clinics are providing a platform where farmers and extension agents interact easily with minimal facilitation. In addition to the advice given, plant doctors maintain records of the pest problems that farmers bring to the plant clinics. The records are stored as data that is validated every now and then (4 times in a year) against a prepared criterion to judge the quality of diagnosis and recommendations made by the plant doctors. After validation, the data is analysed and the results organized into reports / papers for publication to communicate the observations made. The data so far has: availed information on the major crops, pests and diseases seen in the plant clinics which largely represent the picture in the field; provided information on the farmers problems, perceptions and knowledge; helped in identifying needs for further research, diagnosis, pest management, capacity building and other plant health activities; documented the work being done in the plant clinics and helped in monitoring the quality of advice given and hence improve the services to the farmers. The University of Nairobi participates in other Plantwise activities that include, policy making in the Plantwise Steering Council, capacity building in diagnosis of plant pests and diseases and curriculum development to offer refresher courses in plant health and other emerging needs within the PHS to enable the plant clinics offer quality services to the farmers, training of plant doctors, preparation of pest management guidelines (Green and Yellow lists) and validation of data that is eventually transformed into knowledge that can be shared with other stakeholders and the public in general.

The validation workshop was one such activity in the Plantwise calendar in the year where the already validated data was analysed and the trends / pattern observed put into papers for publication to share with the policy makers, stakeholders and the wider public on plant clinic activities in Kenya. The papers drafted are intended to provide an understanding and areas of intervention with regard to

i) The status of insect pests and mites present in Kenya, ii) Disease pathogens causing plant health problems in Kenya, iii) Extent of nutrient deficiencies brought to the plant clinics, iv) extent to which IPM is recommended or practiced by the farmers, v) the quality of diagnosis and recommendations made by the plant doctors and vi) the impact of this type of extension method in areas where the plant clinics are operating. It is hoped that the manuscripts will be ready soon for publications.

The participants/partners were drawn from CABI, KEPHIS, KARI, UON, State Dept of Agriculture, PCPB, Dudutech and AAK. In total, 14 participants were in the workshop. The sponsor of the workshop was CABI the

organization leading Plantwise programme in the world. Attached are photos showing the participants working hard to draft the six papers that were the product of the workshop.



Mr. S. Wagate (PCPB) and Mr. J. Ngeny the statistician discussing analysis of nutrient deficiency data



Members of the team drafting a paper on disease pathogens



Dr. D. Kilalo, Ann Kimani (Crop Protection MSc student and Eunice Ringera of KEPHIS drafting a paper on Insect pests and Mites



Florence Chege the Cabl Country Coordinator of Plantwise and Evelyne Luseneke of AAK drafting papers on the use of IPM by farmers and impact of Plant Clinic activities as an extension method