

A photograph showing three people in a vegetable field. On the left, a woman in a green and pink patterned headscarf and a light-colored patterned dress is smiling. In the center, a man in a dark brown t-shirt and khaki pants is leaning over a plant. On the right, a woman in a red and black patterned headscarf is looking down at a plant. The field is filled with green leafy plants in rows.

How new types of vegetable farming benefit communities: evidence from World Vegetable Center projects

Success with Vegetables



World Vegetable Center

Traditional vegetables ease farmers' finances

Hatutaki Shari, Zanzibar

Tomato growing is risky for smallholder farmers in Zanzibar. The crop requires heavy investment in agricultural inputs, while yields are unpredictable. But tomato prices are good, and if you are successful, profits are sweet.

The farmer group **Hatutaki Shari**, meaning “we don’t want bad luck,” started in 2019 with the aim to make money through tomato farming. The group’s membership criteria: 1) being familiar with vegetable growing, 2) not having another job outside farming, and 3) only one member per married couple could join, to avoid domestic quarrels. The group has 10 members (6 women, 4 men).

The group found a suitable piece of land and signed a lease

contract for three years. “Some of us didn’t have land to farm, nor a job,” explained Hatutaki Shari Secretary **Salama Hassan Hamisi**. “Yet we needed to earn money to take care of our children and send them to school.”

The group obtained a loan to pay for the land lease, seeds, irrigation equipment, agrochemicals, and an electric water pump. “Unfortunately, after we planted the tomatoes, the electricity became irregular and this hampered our irrigation efforts, said group Chair **Hassa za Hamari Shaba**. “The yields were low and we couldn’t repay the loan we had taken.”

At that point they met an agronomist from the USAID



Enterprising women: *Munira Rahsidi (left) and Salama Hamisi* have made vegetables a priority in their community.

Farmer groups pay down debt as demand for healthy traditional vegetables goes up.



The Hatutaki Shari group and WorldVeg staff.

Feed the Future-funded project Mboga na Matunda (Vegetables and Fruits) managed by Fintrac, who connected them to **Rhoda Kadaso**, a World Vegetable Center (WorldVeg) field officer working on the INSIST project funded by USAID through Fintrac. INSIST aims to increase farmers' income and improve nutrition through the production and consumption of traditional African vegetables.

Rhoda explained to group members how cultivating traditional vegetables would increase their profits and also improve the nutritional quality of their diets, as these vegetables are particularly high in vitamins and minerals.

Said Salama and Hassa: "Rhoda taught us a lot! We learned how to raise uniform and healthy seedlings in nurseries, how to plant and apply fertilizer and pesticides without harming the delicate seedlings, and how to harvest properly to sell to the market."

All group members water the crops by hand together and weed together. Hassa sprays pesticides if necessary, but the group strives to use safe formulations to protect their crops, themselves and consumers.

The results have been very good. "In our first cycle of growing traditional African vegetables, we earned Tsh 2.6 million (USD 1,130), which was enough to repay our Tsh 2 million (USD 870) loan for tomato production," Salama said.

Fortune followed the group even further when electricity became more stable, and the pump was able to irrigate the tomatoes, resulting in better yields. "Our best crops for the market are now African nightshade, followed by cowpea leaves and amaranth—all traditional vegetables," said Hassa. "African nightshade is sold at Tsh 800 (USD 0.35) a bunch, while amaranth sells at Tsh 200 (USD 0.09) a bunch."

Thanks to their improved production skills, the Hatutaki Shari group was able to enter into a profitable market arrangement for African nightshade.

Group members also learned why vegetables are needed for good health from **Munira Rashidi**, a WorldVeg Nutrition Officer. "She has become a good friend," said Hassa. "Before we used to eat a lot of rice with little vegetables. But after Munira explained what we need to eat for a healthy diet, now it is vice versa: We eat more vegetables and less rice!"