

**REPORT ON A MEETING BETWEEN STAFF OF THE RESEARCH AND
DEVELOPMENT DIVISION, MKU AND DEL MONTE KENYA LTD.
AT THE DEL MONTE KENYA LTD. PROCESSING PLANT,
THIKA ON FEBRUARY 6TH, 2014**



The Research and Development team from MKU and Del Monte Kenya Ltd. staff pose for a photo after a meeting with Mr. Davis Thuo Research & Development manager, Del Monte Kenya Ltd. (not in the picture). From the right: Ms. Carolyn Achieng'a, Senior Departmental Head, Special Projects & Plantation Quality Control (Del Monte Kenya Ltd.), Mr. Samuel Chomba (Senior Departmental Head Agronomy (Del Monte Kenya Ltd.), Dr. Nancy Cheseto, Deputy Director, Enterprise & Innovation (MKU), Dr. Peter Kirira, Deputy Director, Research & Development (MKU), Mr. Charles Muriuki, Departmental Head, Research & Development Laboratory, (Del Monte Kenya Ltd.), Dr. Samuel Karenga, HoD Pure & Applied Sciences Research Program (MKU).

1.0 Preamble

Del Monte Kenya Ltd. is located approximately 5 kilometers from MKU, off Garissa road. The company deals with pineapple farming though lately they have diversified to mango, beans and tomatoes. In order to remain competitive, Del Monte Kenya Ltd. has a research center which deals with applied research. Within the center are Analytical Chemistry and Applied Biology laboratories. These laboratories are equipped with research equipment such as Atomic Absorption Spectroscopy (AAS), UV-VIS Spectrophotometer, Autoclaves, Laminar flow hoods, etc.

In recognition of one of its core mandates, i.e. linkages and collaboration, the Research and Development team visited Del Monte Kenya Ltd. processing plant on February 6, 2014. This was necessitated by a need to identify and build up local institutional linkages and especially those involving the industries. During the visit, staff from MKU and Del Monte Kenya Ltd. deliberated on ways through which the two institutions can partner in terms of research and development. Staff from MKU briefed the staff from Del Monte Kenya Ltd. about the establishment of the Research and Development Center at MKU and the research infrastructure therein.

On its part, Del Monte Kenya Ltd. through its staff expressed their concerns with analysis being performed abroad and particularly in the USA. At times, the cost of shipping is by far more expensive than the actual cost of analysis. This is because the Transport Security Administration, USA, has banned the shipment of certain items. Del Monte Kenya Ltd. is therefore looking for a reliable alternative laboratory that can conduct these analyses locally. The company was particularly impressed to learn that the Research Center at MKU is equipped with a gas chromatography instrument. This instrument would be very appropriate for the analysis of pesticide residues. The meeting explored various ways through which collaborative research could be initiated. The call was concluded by a visit to their analytical and biological laboratories.

2.0 Outcomes

1. That the two institutions can partner in research for their mutual benefit and which could be later extended to the betterment of the local community.
2. That Del Monte Kenya Ltd. offers internships to diploma and undergraduate students from institutions of higher learning. As such, MKU students can benefit from these internships.
3. That our research center can analyze samples for Del Monte Kenya Ltd. for a fee in the following areas.

- i. Verification of product content such as in fertilizers, pesticides etc. before application on the farms
- ii. Pesticide residue analysis in finished products
- iii. Heavy metal analysis

3.0 Recommendations

1. That Mount Kenya University partnership with Del Monte Kenya Ltd. is worth being established as it would benefit both institutions.
2. That installation of equipment necessary to effect this collaboration be completed. As it is right now, the research center does not have the capacity to conduct the required analysis.
3. That a taskforce to establish and pursue the partnership be constituted. The task force should comprise of staff from both MKU and Del Monte Kenya Ltd.
4. The task force above be mandated to develop the necessary documents that will actualize the partnership including and not limited to MOUs, guidelines etc.
5. That the possibility of MKU students being offered internships at Del Monte Kenya Ltd. be immediately explored.

Report prepared and submitted by;

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