

USAID and IREN announce winners of East Africa Postharvest Technologies Competition 2017

NAIROBI, Kenya (May 10, 2017) – Today, panelists for the East Africa Postharvest Technologies Competition 2017 selected three innovators to split \$30,000 in seed capital to scale up and disseminate their technologies to reduce postharvest food losses. Poor postharvest practices currently result in the loss of 60 percent of all food that is produced in Africa.

The competition, managed by the Inter Region Economic Network (IREN) and supported by a grant from the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) East Africa Trade and Investment Hub, attracted over 200 innovators and researchers from East Africa. The three winners' technological solutions provide the best hope for improving nutrition and food security in Africa by reducing food loss and waste.

"These young innovators hold the solutions to Africa's greatest challenges. USAID is proud to support a platform that celebrates and promotes their ingenuity," said Karen Freeman, the USAID Mission Director for Kenya and East Africa.

The three innovators were selected from a group of 25 semi-finalists during a three-day East Africa Postharvest Technologies Fair that included training sessions, networking sessions and a final competition. The innovators showcased and pitched their innovations to development partners, donors, governments, investors, and farmer and trader associations.

Grace Akumu from Uganda captured first place with a bench-type manual maize sheller. Donatus Ndungu Njoroge from Kenya came in second with a technology using plant materials to protect stored grains against postharvest pests. John Nkwabi Kirigiti from Tanzania came in third place with a solar drier for fruits and vegetables. Agribusiness corporation Syngenta contributed to the \$30,000 award in seed capital to be split among the winners: \$15,000 to first place, \$10,000 to second, and \$5,000 to third place.

"The East Africa Postharvest Technologies Fair is a great platform to showcase talent and innovations towards resolving food loss and is an additional tool to addressing perennial food security challenges in the region," said James Shikwati, Chief Executive Officer, IREN.

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About the partners

USAID: The USAID East Africa Trade and Investment Hub (the Hub) boosts trade and investment with and within Africa. The goal of the Hub is to deepen regional integration, increase the competitiveness of select regional agriculture value chains,

promote two-way trade with the U.S. under the African Growth and Opportunity Act and facilitate investment and technology that drives trade growth intra-regionally and to global markets. www.eatradehub.org

The U.S. Government's Global Hunger and Food Security Initiative, Feed the Future, strives to increase agricultural production and the incomes of both men and women who rely on agriculture for their livelihoods in rural areas. Investments in inclusive agriculture-led growth encompass improving agricultural productivity, expanding markets and trade, and increasing the economic resilience of vulnerable rural communities.

Syngenta: Syngenta is one of the world's leading companies with more than 28,000 employees in over 90 countries dedicated to our purpose: Bringing plant potential to life. Through world-class science, global reach and commitment to our customers we help to increase crop productivity, protect the environment and improve health and quality of life. www.syngenta.com

The Inter Region Economic Network, Ltd. (IREN): IREN has managed over 18 business competitions for the last 15 year years. IREN has for the last three years created screening and training platforms for Start-ups and Small and Medium Sized Enterprises across the East African region. IREN's focus areas include a Think Tank for public policy analysis targeting wealth creation in Africa and Enterprise Development to promote investor-ready enterprises and consultancy. www.irenkenya.com

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