

## Working in the Kenyan flower industry

The flower and vegetable industries directly employ 50,000 workers and support half a million Kenyans. Some workers get as little as \$25 a month.

'The flower industry provided employment in a lot of rural areas where there was no employment. Our competition in Zimbabwe are paying half a dollar a day.'

Rod Evans, Kenyan Flower Council  
Chairman.

The Fairtrade Mark guarantees that workers on flower farms are getting a better deal. Fairtrade roses come from seventeen farms in Kenya. They employ over 10,000 workers.

Many Kenyans are poor and work long hours in poor conditions for little money. The unemployment rate is around 50%.

'The flowers we produce bring a lot of money, but only to some people. We work as slaves.'

Flower picker.

'It's total exploitation. Most of the workers are women, most of them are divorcees and single mothers; they let themselves be exploited just to feed their children.'

Eunice Muthoni, monitor for the Kenyan  
Human Rights Commission.

The Kenyan Flower Council represents nearly two thirds of flower exporters. Its members pay flower pickers \$50 a month and have a code of practice for the use of chemicals and protective clothing for workers.

'It is not possible when the company is new to multiply the wages by 10 and give a car to everybody.'

Isabelle Spindler, owner of Red Lands Roses farm (founded in 1996).

'The problem, as I see it, is that a few 'bad pennies' give the industry a bad name and are difficult to supervise, especially if they do not belong to the KFC.'

Mike Morland, Executive Director of the KFC.

'Valentine's Day doesn't mean peace, it doesn't mean love; it means more pain for flower workers.'

Kathini Maloba, General-Secretary of the  
Kenyan Women Workers Organisation.

'I had skin rashes and problems with my eyes. I was sent home one day because I was unable to sit or stand. They retired me on medical grounds. All I got was a month's wages. I couldn't have any more children.'

Theresa Wawama, former flower worker.

'The African communities here are not the villages many shoppers paying a Fairtrade premium might expect but large clusters of migrants in shanty housing, sucked into the area by work.'

Felicity Lawrence, *Guardian* journalist.

## The growth of the Kenyan rose

Kenyan growers have developed a factory-style business that can deliver wrapped bunches to UK supermarkets.

Roses make up to 74% of Kenya's flower exports, followed by carnations.

Flowers are cut, wrapped and exported in cooled containers, often on chartered aircraft, to reach consumers within 48 hours.

Half of all cut flowers sold in British supermarkets come from Kenya.

The rise in supermarket flower-selling and out-of-season vegetables and flowers brings employment all year round.

Kenya supplies 85% of Britain's imported flowers.

Kenya's flower industry started in the 1970s and is the oldest and largest in Africa.

Flower growing has overtaken coffee and tourism and is second only to tea as a source of foreign exchange. Flowers earn 8% of Kenya's total export earnings per year.

Kenya exports more than 88 million tonnes of cut flowers worth \$264 million every year.

Kenya has become the European Union's biggest source of flower imports.

Flowers are often transported as air freight on planes transporting tourists from elsewhere in Europe.

Flower farms cover only 20 square kilometres of Kenya's total land area – 0.00003%