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Westfalia Fruit Empowers 350+ Tanzanian Smallholder Avocado Growers Through India Market Exposure

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Westfalia Fruit, a global leader in the avocado industry, is working with more than 350 smallholder avocado growers in Tanzania's Njombe region through a grower development programme that started with four participants three years ago. Some of those growers have since made the step from smallholder to commercial grower. The company took a delegation of these growers to India to see firsthand how their fruit reaches Indian shoppers.

The programme runs with Kibidula, Westfalia Fruit's key partner in southern Tanzania. Growers farm between 1 and 60 hectares across the region and supply Kibidula's packhouse, which employs more than 100 people and grades and prepares the fruit for export. Kibidula helps growers improve fruit quality and meet the requirements of international markets. Overall, the programme is estimated to support more than 1,000 households.

For many families, avocados have changed the economics of their farming business. Access to export markets has created new income streams, encouraged investment in orchards and strengthened the prospects of communities across the region.

For some, the change has gone further. Through close collaboration with Westfalia Fruit and Kibidula, about 10 growers who joined the programme as smallholders have since grown into commercial growers, with larger orchards.

"Smallholders are an important part of how we build our supply base," says Zac Bard, New Sourcing Strategy Director at Westfalia Fruit. "In Njombe, the growers bring the land and the commitment, and together with Kibidula we bring technical support, a state-of-the-art modern packhouse and access to international markets. When growers do well, the wider community benefits, and growers re-invest, improve and expand their avocado orchards. That is the kind of partnership we want to keep building."

The delegation, drawn from the Ng’anda, Wanging’ombe, Kifanya, Mgodechi and Makoga clusters, visited Mumbai and Hyderabad to meet customers, walk wholesale and retail markets and tour Westfalia Fruit India’s ripening and distribution facilities. For most of the growers, it was the first time they had seen a market their fruit is sold into. The delegation included female grower representatives, reflecting the role women play in the industry’s development and helping to make sure the benefits of market access are shared widely.

India is one of the highest-potential avocado markets in the world, driven by rising consumer awareness, changing diets and demand for healthy food. Westfalia Fruit supplies it largely from African origins.

“Tanzania has enormous potential as a supplier of high-quality avocados to international markets,” says Bard. “When growers experience the market directly and understand what customers expect on quality and what consumers prefer, they make better decisions on the farm. That helps them strengthen their businesses and supports the continued growth of Tanzania’s avocado industry.”