

# BACK TO TZ

EGX FIELD NOTES, JULY 2020



Africa has a growing supply of driven, optimistic young scientists, many trained at US universities, who return home with a vision to bring about the agricultural productive potential they know is possible. But they often describe the continual struggle to get their work to the farmers who need it. We're continuing to build the bridge between the scientists developing new technologies, and those in position to share these innovations with communities who need them.

In the last EGX Field Notes ([Tanzania](#)), I wrote about my trip to Tanzania in July 2019, to meet with Tanzania Assemblies of God (**TAG**). TAG is developing a vision to provide agricultural training to their pastors through demonstration and training farms. During the trip, I also met with the lead scientist of a project called Africa RISING (**AR**), which is funded through the US Agency for International Development (USAID). AR aggregates recent scientific developments from major research institutions within southern and eastern Africa, and works with community organizations (such as TAG) to demonstrate the latest innovations produced by this research.

TAG's vision for agricultural training and the mission of AR seemed perfectly aligned, but these organizations were not yet working together. After returning from TZ last summer, I wrote to AR describing what the TAG had in mind, and requested they consider a partnership. Very exciting when Africa RISING agreed!

In January I returned to Tanzania to help facilitate the first meeting between the TAG and AR. The meeting went well with both groups agreeing to move forward and to begin discussing plans and design of the first training site.



*Left: Lead scientist of Africa RISING and myself at the initial meeting between TAG and AR. Right: TAG national leadership and leadership of a Pastor Training School touring the school's available land.*

In addition to the meeting between TAG and AR, the TAG hosted me on visits to several of their ministry sites: a secondary school, a home for orphaned children, and one of their pastor training schools. There was a common characteristic of each site: The directors of each site described the unused land, ranging from 25 to 75 acres, and their desire to put the land to productive use, both to produce food and to train students. They only lack a plan and guidance. Projects like Africa RISING could help make their vision a reality.

Just as with so much else, plans are on hold for the time being. The extent of infection is difficult to determine, given the low testing capacity across the continent, and there are concerns that COVID-19 is just now spreading widely across Africa. More developed nations, such as Egypt, Kenya, and South Africa, have been hit hardest, but the pandemic is now pushing its way into more rural communities, according to reports. Currently, the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA; Africa RISING's parent institution) has instructed all staff to work from home, meaning that work on the ground is delayed, and a time-table for resumption of activities uncertain.

Prior to the trip in January, I also arranged to visit some contacts at Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA), the primary ag university in Tanzania. One of my contacts is an irrigation engineer and hydrologist with a PhD from Virginia Tech; the other is a horticulturist responsible for the institution's research farm with a recent PhD from the University of Florida. By connecting these scientists and other experts to groups such as TAG who have footholds in communities throughout the country, East Gate Extension can help extend the impacts of their work far beyond the research farm. And in doing so, organizations such as TAG become equipped to offer real and lasting solutions to the communities they are attempting to reach.

Nathan Fortner - Executive Director



*Left: Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA) horticultural scientist discussing the university's research with TAG leadership (Mango research in background). Right: SUA research farm with papaya, pineapple, and banana (left, right, background) and many others.*

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