

WHERE THERE IS TEA, THERE IS A WAY!

Iringa's Mufindi District boasts a myriad of economic activities and among them, agriculture is one of the most prominent. SAGCOT had the pleasure of documenting the impact of Unilever Tanzania in the livelihood of one smallholder tea farmer enrolled in their program.

Meet Shida John Mahenge – a 48 year old mother of four and the family's sole breadwinner, who first embarked on tea farming in 2001. Armed with whatever little knowledge and resources she had, she valiantly set out on this journey but unfortunately suffered poor yields and subsequently low profits to none at times – a trend which continued on for ten whole years, after which she was introduced to Unilever Tanzania who provided her with technical expertise, certification, farm inputs and a ready market for her tea.

With this fresh dose of hope coupled with facilitation from Unilever in terms of regular and intensive training by Extension Officers on effective tea farm management principles and Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) as well as provision of farm inputs, Shida was able to see her profits skyrocket in proportion. Initially, she used to harvest about 10,000kgs of tea per acre – plucked only once a month but currently her yields are in the region of 60,000 – 80,000kgs per acre and she is able to pluck (harvest) after every 12 days. She currently owns 21.5 acres of land in total and this season alone, her yields have been 64,659 kg of tea.

"Thanks to Unilever I am now constructing a modern three bedroom house for my family and more importantly, I can now afford to take my children to affluent schools. I have more zeal than ever to keep growing in this venture and say goodbye to poverty for good!" – Shida.

Besides the profit from voluminous sales, Shida also enjoys Quality Bonus payments from Unilever – an incentive given to smallholder tea farmers under the Unilever scheme. She is also now Rainforest Alliance (RA) certified and thus is able to sustainably access the local tea market and is equally eligible for the global market.



**Shida Mahenge
at one of her tea farms**



**Shida Mahenge
at her old house**



**The new house she
is constructing**