

Empowering Kenyan SMEs: KIEP 250+ and the Instaveg Story

KIEP 250+ Component 2 is a comprehensive SME Linkages and Upgrading project designed to collaborate with over 250 SMEs across various sectors in Kenya. The primary objective of KIEP 250+ is to enhance productivity and foster innovation within established Kenyan SMEs. This is achieved by supporting selected firms in improving their managerial and technical skills, as well as their access to and utilization of technology, thereby significantly boosting their operational competitiveness.

In its initial phase, KIEP 250+ has identified 23 SMEs from a pool of over 250 applications to form Cohort 1. These SMEs have been provided with an integrated package of diagnostic and advisory services. To further aid these firms in addressing identified gaps, they will also receive financial support aimed at increasing their innovation, productivity, and overall competitiveness. Among the beneficiaries of this initiative is Instaveg Ltd, a prime example of Kenya's agricultural potential.

Agriculture remains a cornerstone of Kenya's economy, contributing approximately 20% to the GDP and employing over 40% of the population (**Central Bank of Kenya, 2024**). However, the sector faces significant challenges such as dependence on bimodal rainy seasons, with frequent droughts affecting 80% of the arid and semi-arid land, outdated technology, climate change, diseases, pests, and poor infrastructure (**Kenya Agriculture Reforms and Innovations**). Despite these hurdles, opportunities lie in improving access to finance and markets, providing necessary technical assistance, and addressing other challenges facing the agricultural sector. KIEP 250+ is designed to bridge these gaps.

Instaveg, located in Kirinyaga, processes and packages fresh vegetables like French beans, baby corn, sugar snaps, and peas for both local and export markets. Their operations are rooted in sustainable farming practices, collaborating with smallholder farmers from Kirinyaga, Meru, Nyeri, and Laikipia. Instaveg's commitment to quality and sustainability has earned them a place among SMEs supported by KIEP 250+.

KIEP 250+ is not just about providing financial support; it is about enabling SMEs to overcome systemic challenges and reach their full potential. For Instaveg, this means addressing critical gaps such as:

1. **Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs):** Instaveg's absence of harmonized SOPs, aligned with global food handling standards, hampers their efficiency. KIEP 250+ supports the training of staff and farmers on these SOPs, significantly reducing weekly post-harvest losses.
2. **Product and Market Diversification:** Instaveg relies heavily on a single export client and offers a limited product range. KIEP 250+ supports the development of marketing and sales plans, expanding their product offerings. This diversification will mitigate market risk and enhance revenue.
3. **Technological Advancement:** Automation of workflow processes is crucial for scaling operations. KIEP 250+ assists in integrating advanced technology, ensuring Instaveg can compete on a global stage.

Instaveg's journey is fuelled by a passion for agriculture and community empowerment. Their research into cutting-edge vegetable production technologies ensures the highest quality produce. By partnering with farmers across East Africa, Instaveg has built a sustainable supply chain that supports local agriculture and uplifts livelihoods.

Thank you to Tom & Sherrie Solutions, a KIEP 250+ Business Development Service Provider to Instaveg Limited, for assisting Instaveg in this transformative journey.

