

Kenya Trip October 21-November 6, 2020

Sunday October 25

I had a good nights sleep, and when I woke up I could barely talk, sounding more frog-like than human. I decided it would be good for me to stay at home and not join the others at Destiny Church. I knew that it would be unavoidable for me to go and not have to speak, at least to introduce myself, and to greet others. Throughout the morning I drank several cups of tea with ginger and honey, and as the day progressed, my voice slowly started to return to normal.

We were supposed to attend another church that afternoon and evening, but decided not to, as I was planning on missing anyway to rest my throat. Instead, Randy fired up his new grill that he built, and we enjoyed a great supper of BBQ chicken and baked potatoes. Randy loves to cook, and he and Bonnie were great hosts, making sure that we had everything we needed and much more. Of course, as Randy kept mentioning, he was hoping that we would give them a 5 Star rating - which I think Ed and I would agree that we would do.



Monday October 26

The first place we visited was Bee Care, a business started by Jackson, who also is a pastor. He started the business in 2004, buying honey, processing it and selling it to neighbors and friends. Today they buy from over 1,200 different farmers, not only in Kenya, but in surrounding countries as well, representing over 3,500 hives.

It is a God Story that needs to be told on its own, but he shared how someone gave him a couple of magazines from a US beekeeping organization. In it was an ad to buy bees wax. He answered the ad, and found out it was a company from Wisconsin. The owners came to Kenya to meet him because they liked to meet their suppliers face to face.



At the time it was a very small business and they were doing all of the work in their home kitchen. He only had one small pack of wax, about 2 lbs worth, not having done anything with bees wax before, not knowing there was even a demand for wax. Most Kenyan small beekeepers just throw their wax away after they get the honey from the hive.

Jackson took them around to other places to show them what was happening in Kenya, took them to some of the farmers that he was buying honey from. Finally after a couple days of showing them all around, they wanted to meet in his office to talk about doing business. They

wanted to know if Jackson could supply them with a container full - 20 tons - of wax within the next 30 days.

Jackson had just rented a small space where he had only set up a desk with a couple of chairs, and hadn't even started processing honey there yet. He admitted that he was just starting out, didn't have the resources available to meet their needs, but believed that he would be able to find them enough bees wax to fill their order.

The upshot was, that the guys believed in Jackson, gave him a price beyond his expectations, and paid him for the full amount - in advance! This gave him what he needed to be able to travel throughout the countryside, buying up wax from farmers, and being able to fill the order in time.

Today, in addition to processing honey, they also build the hives, and make a loan with farmers to buy the hives. They make a contract with the farmers to buy back their honey and pay off the hives and other supplies.

They are also making their own peanut butters, smooth, crunchy, and with honey. They are also processing and packaging their own cashews. They are in the process of expanding, as both the honey and the wax business has grown a lot in the past 5 or 6 years.

While we were there, Randy got to see the hives he had ordered for several farmers they are working with through Community Empowerment. He was surprised that they were painted differently than any other hives, and had the Prepare The Way logo on the hives. It was hoped that they would be able to deliver them to those farmers late in the week when we would be in that area, but it didn't work out.

Then we had a tour of the Kenya Nut Company, visiting their macadamia nut facility. We were greatly impressed with the cleanliness and technology being used, a little disappointed by not being able to take pictures, but understood why they wanted to protect their proprietary processes and equipment.

After that we visited the Yaso Dairy Co-op, a 53 member co-op representing 180 cows. The group was larger before the pandemic, but lost about half their members during that time, as they decided to sell their milk directly to neighbors without having the restrictions of travel. The group had received a grant from the government to buy and install a generator and a milk tank.



The group was headed up by a pastor and was looking for help to buy feeds and supplements. We talked a lot about what forages the cows were eating and what other feeds they had available. I was able to convince them to record everything they were feeding their cows for the next week so that we could put together a feed that would be suitable for them.