

## Kenya Trip October 21-November 6, 2020

### Tuesday October 27

Alex took us to one of Kenya's most famous dairy farms. While not the largest in size - about 150 animals - it is well known for their purebred holstein dairy cows. They sell genetics all over Kenya and other countries. I had heard of this dairy - Amboni Dairy - and actually many years ago met in Lancaster County some of the Kenyans who were starting this project.

The fairly new farm manager, Dickson, graciously took us on a tour of the farm, visiting some of the nearby fields where they grow corn and naipier grass for silage. He also showed us their extremely well managed bunker silos, shared with us any information we asked about his agronomy program and other details about the operation. I think I made a favorable impression when we first arrived, having brought along disposable boots for all of us to wear before we went anywhere on the farm.

Again, it was an operation on a hillside, naipier grass planted between the small corn fields to control erosion, and the dairy facility consisting of several different levels going down the



hillside. They aren't currently processing their own milk, having done so in the past, but are in the process of starting that business again.

One of the things that impressed me in Kenya was the amount of forages they are able to harvest if they have moisture. Kenya can grow 2 corn crops per year, and they are able to get at least 4 naipier grass per year, both crops yielding 40 plus tons per acre per year. While they have room to improve, a lot of the planting, all of the harvesting done by hand because of the small hillside plots and cheap labor, I was impressed with how well they are doing.

When I left, I think I made another friend, as we exchanged contact info, and I gave Dickson a Multi-Tool as a gift for allowing us such an up-close view of this operation. I have no idea of future possibilities, but we have exchanged a couple of emails.

### Wednesday October 28

We traveled a couple hours east of Thika for an overnight stay at the farm of Bishop Titus Mbai. I enjoyed the times that Titus spoke at Petra Church, and our son Shane stayed at his house when a group of Petra's youth went to Kenya in 2007. When we first got there, Titus had Ed

and I each plant a tree. Titus was planting several trees in a new spot in the compound, and decided to save one for us to plant.

And so:

I planted a tree in Africa.  
I don't know how it will grow,  
if or when it will bear fruit.  
I won't be there to water it  
or care for it, or chart its progress.  
I don't know if I will ever see it again  
or sit under it and enjoy its shade.  
But . . .  
I planted a tree in Africa.



Titus took us around and showed us what all was going on in the compound, including the dairy which currently has 18 cows. He would like to increase the herd to 40 cows and has hired a much needed dairy consultant to help them make improvements.

One of the things they are doing is making methane gas from the manure. They are able to make enough to power the cooking stoves for the entire compound, and plan to install a generator with hopes of providing enough electricity for a number of surrounding homes in the nearby village.

The farm consists of 175 acres of very productive soil. While much of the land is on the hillside, it isn't as steep as many, and much of the area is planted in trees. There are over 1,800 newly



planted tangelo trees, and 2,600 other trees of navel oranges, mangos, with some avocados and bananas. Plans are to plant more trees, especially bananas.

One of the impressive things with Titus' operation is how he is managing water. They are collecting all of the rainwater into storage tanks to use for their own needs as well as irrigating the trees. They also have a very good well located in the bottom land. The well is 120 meters deep, has passed the required tests to be able to sell as drinking water, and when they first tested the volume produced by the well, it was reduced in volume by less than 1% after 24 hours of continuous pumping. They pump the water uphill to storage tanks in the compound and then are able to gravity feed all of the fruit trees via drip irrigation.

Titus took Ed and I around to see all of the farm while Randy and Bonnie had another nearby visit they needed to do. We got interrupted by an afternoon downpour, so weren't able to complete the tour. So we went back to the house, dried off and enjoyed some fresh oranges from their trees.

Titus' wife Jimina cooked a very good supper and we spent several hours visiting and getting to know each other. Randy and Titus have worked together and traveled all over Kenya together since Randy's first trip to Kenya in 1997. It was a great chance for Ed and I to learn more details of farming in Kenya, and to hear Titus' vision for his farm.