Screening of Peach Fruit Cultivars in the Southern Highlands of Tanzania

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Abstract:
The Southern Highlands of Tanzania lie between Latitudes 6° 31'S and 10° 75'S at a Longitude of 30° 30'E and 36° 30'E. More than 30% of the area is at an elevation of between 1 500 m to above 2 500 m.a.s.l. The weather is generally cool. Temperature range between a mean maximum of 23°C and mean minimum of 14°C. The coolest months May, June, July and August have mean minimum temperatures below 10°C decreasing with increasing altitude. Frost during these months is common. Rainfall totals over 800 mm, with the rainy season being between the months of November - April. The soils are generally of medium to high fertility. The potential for growing temperate fruits in the Southern Highlands of Tanzania is therefore very high.

The important temperate fruits grown in the region include peaches, plums, apples and pears produced mainly at the subsistence level of 15–30 trees per household. A few farmers and public institutions have bigger orchards of between 2 and 5 acres yielding between 10 and 20 kg per tree compared to 30–40 kg obtained in average orchards elsewhere. The main problems of temperate fruit production in the region are low fruit yield per tree and poor quality fruits as a result of poor cultivars, management practices and inadequate chilling.

Research activities have been in existence since 1973. The fields of investigation are collection of improved cultivars and screening them for adaptability as well as management trials. Research work on peaches has advanced much more than that on apples, pears and plums. The latter are still at the level of observation orchards. Of the local collection of peaches results to date are in favour of TCEC, DF no. 58, and Dabaga no. 14. Flordabelle peach and Sunred nectarine, of the cultivars imported in 1976, do well in our tropical climate.