

## [Innovation of the Week: Turning Agriculture into Gold](#)

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Before Kenya's independence, the Migori District's economy was driven by the Macalder Mining Company, the area's largest employer. When the company shut down in 1966, it left behind a lot of abandoned land—and a lot of unemployed miners. These miners, some of whom bought up land from the closed-mining company, continued, for the most part, to mine for gold. But the work became increasingly dangerous as gold deposits shrunk over time and miners were forced to go deep into abandoned mines to look for what little gold was left.

Many of the miners were poor in gold but rich in land. Yet, without proper training and an appreciation for the business potential of farming, they continued to return to the empty mines despite dwindling profits.

In 2007, [CNFA](#), a non-profit organization that emphasizes access to the private sector as a means of improving livelihoods and creating economic growth, and its Kenya affiliate, [Agriculture Market Development Trust](#) (AGMARK), set out to help miners develop new skills and improve their livelihoods.

CNFA provided improved seeds and fertilizers, as well as training in new methods of farming. CNFA also connected farmers with input suppliers and markets for their produce. The organization connected one former-miner-turned-farmer, James Adiang, with the Ministry of Agriculture which advised him to start growing tomatoes, watermelon, kale, butternuts, beans, soya beans, green grains, banana and potatoes. In just over two years' time, James was able to purchase more land and livestock, as well as take up bee keeping.

“I became a gold miner on a full-time basis for over 10 years, and frankly speaking, it was like chasing after the wind because there was nothing I could show off,” James said in a CNFA [case study](#). “Occasionally I used to get some unrefined gold particles which I sold to gold agents or brokers at a price of between Ksh. 150 to 500. The hope of some day digging big pieces of gold and instantaneously become rich is what kept me coming back and digging for all those years.

Now James sees the promise of financial security in agriculture. And he is sharing his new knowledge with the community. He has hosted CNFA-facilitated field days and demonstrations on his farm and hopes to use the business training he's received to become an agrodealer, providing farm inputs and information for the local area.

James hopes that he can help his “community through education and demonstration to embrace agriculture as a better and sustainable alternative [to gold mining to improve] livelihood, food security and household income.”

To read more about how access to farmer training, tools and a market can improve livelihoods, see: [Bringing Inputs to Farmers](#), [ECOVA MALI: Building Home Grown Knowledge](#), [New Frontier Farmers and Processor Group: Reviving Farmland and Improving Livelihoods](#), [The Abooman Women's Group: Working together to Improve Livelihoods](#), [It's All About the Process](#) and [Turning the Catch of the Day into Improved Livelihoods](#).