Mathew Kago is the head of the Soil Testing and Extension Services Department at New Down Town (S.T) Ltd in Kenya. They supply seeds and farm inputs to farmers in Kirinyaga and Embu counties. The company wanted to improve their fertilizer recommendations. Therefore they extended their services with soil testing with the Scanner, developed by SoilCares (now part of AgroCares). This tool provides their farmers with fast, reliable and affordable soil analyses resulting in better fertilizer recommendations. Now that Mathew has been able to deliver high value yields for his farmers he sees more opportunities to extend his soil testing services in the future.

Applying the wrong fertilizers can be frustrating

Mathew Kago: “When farmers grow rice, potatoes or other crops it is sometimes very frustrating for them when they apply the wrong fertilizers and see no results. Every farmer is keen on high yields and we know that applying the right inputs plays an essential role. Therefore we wanted to improve the quality of our recommendations. We realized that if we wanted to do this, we had to know more about the quality of the soil of our farmers first. Soil is the basis of everything after all. We then started to look for an affordable way of soil testing. We selected SoilCares because their Scanner provides us with the opportunity to do cheap and fast soil tests for our farmers.”
Soil testing part of the complete process of farming
With the AgroCares Scanner New Down Town (S.T) Ltd added soil testing services to their portfolio. Mathew: “New Down Town is a company that wants to help its customers with the whole process of farming from land preparation to providing the right seeds and inputs and crop management. The soil tests that we can perform with the Scanner are a perfect addition to helping our farmers in this process.”

Contacting key influencers to increase awareness of soil testing
To mobilize farmers for soil testing and market their soil testing services New Down Town set up a network of influencers. They got in touch with the local government that has improvement of agriculture as one of their main goals. But they also approached farmer groups and helped them with developing awareness about the importance of more precise data on soil status and crop nutrient needs.

Manufacturers of seeds and farm inputs & agronomists
Other groups that they talked to were manufacturers of seeds and farm inputs. This group was interested in the nutrient need of certain crops so that they could align their products to the demand. Agronomists were also an important part of the network of New Down Town. They require precise lab results to help them make informed decisions. Soil testing with the Scanner offers them information on soil status and crop nutrient requirements.

High yields after applying the right fertilizers
After working with the influencers New Down Town succeeded in getting a group of 200 farmers to get their soil tested with the Scanner. “At first we had some issues with the farmers to accept this new technology. They simply could not believe that test results that were so fast could be reliable. However after applying the fertilizers that we recommended, this changed completely. Their yields increased considerably. One of our coffee farmers even accomplished an almost six times higher yield. He went from 1200 kilos to 6000 kilos. So now an increasing amount of farmers is interested in getting our new soil testing service.”

Extended soil testing service with more Scanners
New Down Town wants to extend their soil testing service with more Scanners in the future. Mathew Kago: “As a company we also wanted to find out whether the Scanner was working as we expected. Now that we see so many positive results coming in, we want to extend this service with more Scanners in the future. The AgroCares Scanner is 100 percent recommended by us. It is fast, affordable and reliable.”