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## ICCO invests in cricket farms

**ICCO is working together with Dutch and Kenyan partners, to set up small cricket farms in the East African countries of Kenya and Uganda. This is how we create a new way of generating income for small farmers, stimulating the local market, and increasing the access to affordable and healthy food.**

There is much experience with breeding of insects in the Netherlands, primarily as food for domestic animals. Slowly the option for human consumption is being examined. Together with other Dutch organizations from this sector, we have started the so called 'Flying Food' project in Kenya. Together with TNO (initiator), Venik, Food Factory Foundation, INNsectOVATION, BoP Innovation Centre, Jagran and KRECA, a family business that has 35 years of experience in insect breeding, ICCO is setting up small cricket farms in Western Kenya.



### Crickets are most suitable

In parts of Africa insects are already popular as food. However, they are generally harvested manually in the wild. This makes them expensive, seasonal and vulnerable to extinction. Thanks to the 'Flying Food' initiative, they are soon available throughout the year, at a reasonable price and in different forms. Crickets were chosen due to a number of advantages. Crickets are not demanding in terms of housing and food, they are suitable for consumption within eight weeks and are high in protein and micronutrients. Crickets are attractive not only from an economic point of view, but also for their ecological sustainability, because they are much more efficient in the production of animal proteins, than for example cattle.

### Why did ICCO join the 'flying food' initiative?

Access to enough and healthy food is not only a fundamental human right, but also a prerequisite for people to achieve their full physical and intellectual potential. This is also directly related to their economic opportunities. Thanks to the 'Flying Food' initiative healthy food is available for disadvantaged people, we accelerate local entrepreneurship and we create jobs. Marijke de Graaf: "With this 'Flying Food' initiative, we kill two 'crickets' with one stone. We increase both the access to nutritious food and the income of poor farmers."

### How does it work?

Currently Bondo University College in Kisumu and ADS development organization, partner of ICCO, in the Kisumu district, are engaged together in breeding crickets in a laboratory and in market research. The first results are positive. Bondo University has successfully bred local crickets, confirming that crickets in Kenya are easily bred and not demanding in terms of housing and food. The next step is to provide farmers with the technical training for establishing a cricket farm. The ultimate goal is to create a sustainable value chain with small farmers, cooperatives and / or local entrepreneurs, so that crickets would be more widely grown, dried, ground and could be processed into flour, porridge, biscuits, bread, samosas or meatballs.



We hope, of course, that they will find a market niche. The African cricket farmers will be intensively supervised. There will be a knowledge center where they can go to for additional training and knowledge about the cultivation and processing of insects using local resources. Mathilde Miedema from TNO: "Flying Food is innovatively seen as the partnership, the technology and the business model for people with low incomes. Together we are working towards a better world." Also Marian Peters from Venik, the trade association of insect breeders, is enthusiastic: "In the Netherlands, insects are bred, but not consumed. In Africa, insects are consumed, but not bred. With all involved partners we bring these worlds together."

### When will the cricket farms be there?

We do not take any risks. The partners scheduled to set up the farms in the next three years. During the next six months we set up the first 25 pilot farms, from where experiences and lessons learned will be registered. Afterwards we scale up and help farmers further with setting up a cricket farm, forming a cooperation, processing and marketing. The goal is an inclusive value chain with 250-500 cricket farms and the validation of the 'Flying Food' - concept.

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