

# East Africa agri-industry director honoured for role in agricultural transformation

Elgon Kenya's director, Bimal Kantaria has received a Honorary Doctorate of Humanities degree by the United Graduate College and Seminary International for his efforts at promoting the agriculture sector in East Africa, working with the youth in building capacity for the future and his devoted focus on philanthropy.



Bimal Kantaria

Under his stewardship, Elgon Kenya has enveloped more youth into farming through the introduction of new technologies and projects. The annual National Farmers Awards, now in its seventh year, that seeks to reward the country's best food producers while bringing the industry under one roof, has since its pioneer edition, run a youth category that has been pivotally inspired a new generation of young farmers who are mentored by the winners.

These young soil celebrities, the majority who have dumped suits for boots and gotten their hands dirty, have turned their farms into demonstration and training plots attracting more youth who have now created a farming revolution while creating numerous jobs in a country whose youth continue to grapple with unemployment despite agriculture being the leading income generator.

Bimal Kantaria is the patron of the scheme and has previously been recognised by President Kenyatta for the role he and his company have played through the awards to motivate farmers.

## Driving agricultural innovation

As youth look to new technologies for food production, Elgon Kenya has responded with low-cost innovations that are not only making farming cool, but growing more yields under small acreages and guaranteeing year-round supplies in the wake of changing climate. This includes the globally acclaimed Magnar Water Solutions that ensure judicious use of water in the wake of biting water scarcity. They have become a hit with many smallholder farmers for their durability and affordability.

To bolster growing food from a point of information, Elgon Kenya has been running a 24/7 information centre where trained agronomists are on standby to answer all questions from farmers across the country on any aspect of their food production journey, a first-of-its-kind intervention in the country.

The company also runs an online shop selling even single units of its portfolio of products and in partnership with courier shops delivering the orders at the doorsteps of farmers.

As threats to food production, both traditional and emerging persist, and as farmers grapple with more hiccups across the value chain, Elgon Kenya has introduced plant clinics that are now in their tenth edition. The clinics, modelled along with the human health concept, allows farmers to bring their 'sick plants' for diagnosis by experts and researchers. The clinics also congregate industry players to deliberate on issues affecting the agriculture sector.

Kantaria was also feted for his philanthropy that cuts across health, agriculture and education sectors.

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