

Trekking for Africa



Mark (centre) holding a rugby ball that was the team's mascot on the trek



The Ngorongoro Crater

We are approaching the busiest time of our year as the UK's fastest growing supermarket and a besuited Mark Williamson is as calm and urbane as ever as he takes on the challenges as Commercial Director for Waitrose.

It's a far call from the physical challenges he faced on Farm Africa's Tanzania Highland Challenge at the start of October. There he was one of 13 leading grocery industry figures trekking across the Great Rift Valley in the Tanzania Highlands, covering 145 kilometres in six days. This was

part of a series of events led by the grocery industry in support of the charity Farm Africa's Food for Good initiative to help end hunger in Africa.

This most recent venture by Food for Good means that the charity has now raised more than £428,000 over the course of a year.

The group described the trek as a "week of extremes" from the terrain and temperature to the wildlife and people they encountered.

Mark admits: "It was an arduous and tough experience, but a truly great trek with a great bunch for a

very worthwhile cause."

A jubilant Farm Africa Chairman Richard Macdonald, describing the trek across the Ngorongoro Crater, says: "We have walked around 150 kilometres, climbed over 4,500 metres and ascended much the same – and those figures are probably conservative.

"Most of this has been done at over 2,500 metres above sea level – high enough to make you gasp. Underfoot it's been rocky, sandy, thorny or thick tussock grass. We've been carrying seven or eight kilos on our backs and if you don't think that's enough, it's been hot, sometimes searingly hot, and most of the time windy and dusty too. Physically it's probably the toughest thing I've ever done."

The team also visited Farm Africa projects; Mark recalls the first of these was successfully reversing some of the damaging deforestation.

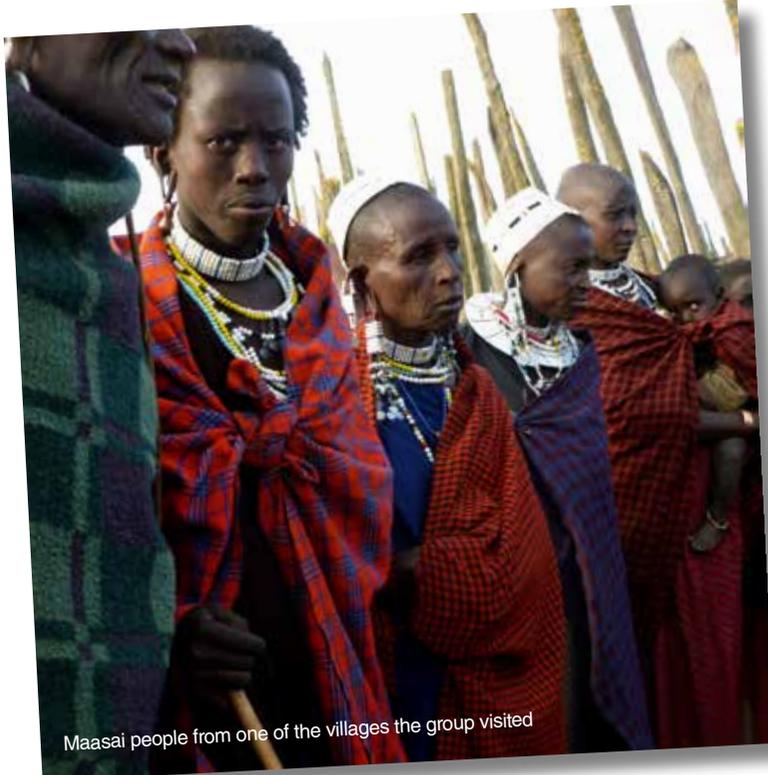
"Persuading farmers, whose main aim is to provide food for their family, to think longer term about the local environment can take time. It is important that they see the benefits quickly and also that the whole of the community makes this collective decision,

which is why it seems to be working."

The second project was a thriving honey production project. Impressed, Mark says: "Farm Africa provided funding for this apiary and has plans to roll this out to many more villages. The honey provides a better income for the villagers and has an exciting future.

"I would like to thank everyone who supported me on this trek and the team at Farm Africa for organising it."

Carol Miller



Maasai people from one of the villages the group visited



Mark with a Sendu school bell



The team at the finish – and still smiling!