

Lawyer milks millions from mixed farm

It was the desire to make more money that pushed Julius Batamyie, a lawyer by training to venture into the murky waters of farming, writes Sam Caleb Ople

Despite being too busy with his job with Petroleum Authority in Hoima, Julius Batamyie goes about his farming activities with ease.

He is one of the leading model farmers in Kamuli District and he earns a net profit of over Shs50m monthly from mixed farming.

Batamyie's 99 acre farm has bananas, livestock, poultry, coffee and piggery enterprises. The 48-year-old strongly believes agriculture is the way to go. "If you want to become an instant millionaire, agriculture is the key," he says.

How he started

In 2010, Batamyie then a Town Clerk of Kamuli District bought a piece of land from a friend and portioned it in four equal parts.

He was inspired by locals and his wife Lydia. "The locals kept challenging me to make use of the land I had acquired. The shame was too much so one day I spoke to my wife and we decided to invest in agriculture," Batamyie explains. The scorns from Kamuli natives would be the turning point to Batamyie, a lawyer by training.

Dairy cows

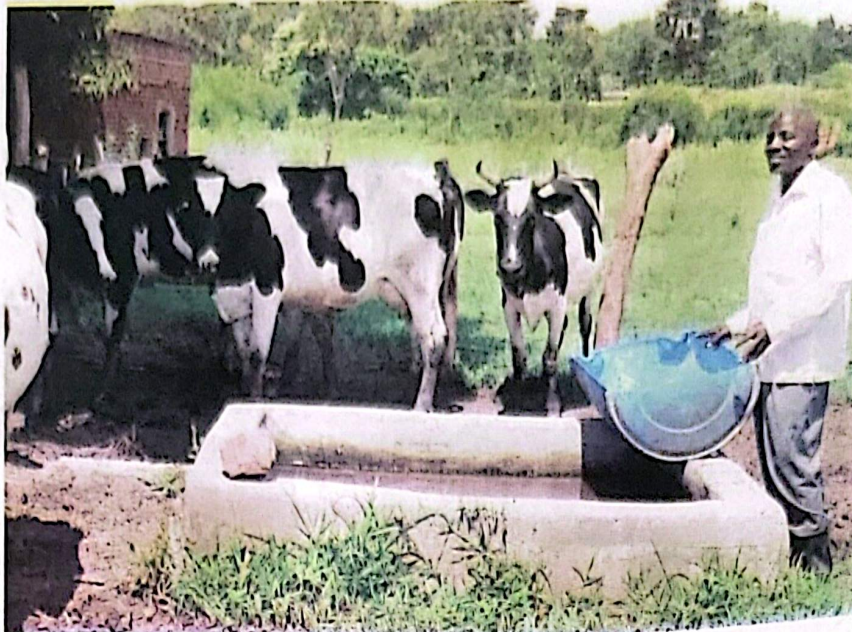
Batamyie in 2011 invited a dairy expert from the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Fisheries (MAIF) to Kamuli.

"The man gave me all the information I needed to start a dairy farm. After the consultations I did further background research and studies on farming for about five months. Convinced with the findings, I decided to buy animals and today, my dairy farm is a model in Busoga," he said.

He has a herd of 31 Friesian cows. "I want to make a difference in the society. Most of the people of Kamuli are poor yet they have vast land and hundreds of cattle which bring them no value. I want to be an example of what we can do with our resources," Batamyie further explains.

Each cow at Batamyie's farm produces an average of 30 litres of milk per day, much higher quantity than the maximum two litres which locals get, he said. Each litre is sold at Shs1,000. "The first thing one needs to do before setting up a dairy farm is to plant fodder and have sufficient animal feeds. This is the kind of information I want to give my community members," he says. He adds that milk earns him about Shs9m per month. "I discovered that I needed to transform my community and bring about change of lifestyle by demonstrating to people that there are options other than the traditional way of farming which brings few returns," he says.

He says the rural community was short of competition, innovation and ambition due to lack of mentorship.



Julius Batamyie with his dairy cows. He says each cow gives him about 30 litres of milk daily. PHOTOS SAM CALEB OPLE

WHAT THEY SAY...

REBECCA KADAGA
Speaker of parliament and Woman MP Kamuli "I was shocked and humbled when I visited his mixed farm. Julius Batamyie has what it takes to become the best farmer in Uganda. He has chased away poverty and inspired others. She said.

SALAAM MUSUMBA
Former LCV Kamuli, Modern Farming promoter "He is one guy who seeks advice, listens and is very pragmatic. He sought counsel from me. I advised him to start serious farming and he has never looked back."



The farmer holds a mature turkey set for sale. PHOTOS BY SAM OPLE

Shs50m

MONEY BATAMYIE MAKES PER MONTH FROM HIS MIXED FARM

of the best goat-keeping practices. He keeps up-to-date records that capture the breed he has on farm, ear tags, numbers, date of birth of kids, type of kidding, sire, dam, grand sire and the health record treatment. "The records also help me to curb inbreeding. As advised by the experts, the bucks only stay on the farm for a year and a-half, after which I bring in others," he explains.

Bananas

In 2012, Batamyie bought 99 acres of land from another neighbour. He bought each acre at Shs5m. On the piece of land, Batamyie says he planted improved and high varieties of bananas for commercial purposes. "Every month I harvest about 5000 bunches of banana. Most of it is sold at Kamuli market," he says. At the current average price of Shs25,000 for a medium size bunch, Batamyie expects at least Shs15m per month from bananas alone.

Coffee

Batamyie has also planted clonal coffee which rakes in Shs5m per harvest. The clonal coffee (Robusta type) sits on just an acre. "It is still a pilot project which I intend to expand next year," he says.

Poultry

Counting his profits every day, one can say Batamyie is doing booming business and is the envy of many in Kamuli. With his dairy section raking in millions, Batamyie is making more from poultry. He has more than 6,000 layers, 500 turkeys, and 200 local birds. "Poultry is another magic. I collect close to 10 crates of eggs every day with a crate selling at Shs8000," he reveals. The turkeys he sells them during festive season and he is already counting profits. "I expect to sell over 200 turkeys this festive season," he says. Each turkey at farm gate costs Shs100,000 meaning Batamyie will pocket about Shs20m.

Challenges

"A lot has to be done such as buying feeds and drugs and these must be obtained from accredited dealers to guarantee quality," Batamyie says.

He says the poultry section takes a lot of money. "In the five weeks of rearing, the layers use around five bags of starter mash which goes at Sh60,000 a bag and 17 bags of finisher pellet, with a bag selling at Sh70,000. The layers eat a lot of food," he says.

"Buying of feeds and drugs is a challenge because the prices go up but you have to feed the birds if you are to fetch better profits," he says.

Advice

According to Batamyie, a successful agri-business farmer must start with a study of the market. "Before I started this mixed farm, I studied the market and noticed that it needed the products and that returns were good," he said. Batamyie says dairy cows are like humans; the more comfortable they are the more milk they produce and the more profit one earns. He urged farmers to invest in cow mattresses if they want to increase milk output.

"I want to be a mentor and inform our people that they can try out new ideas especially in farming," he says.

Goats

Batamyie has been rearing goats since 2012, he started with 10 goats but today his farm has more than 214. "Goats have pushed me to greater heights. They are very profitable," he says. Batamyie's farm is an exhibition