

# Squeezing money from banana juice

According to Aisha Nalubega making juice is tasking but you earn more money than someone who has sold bananas. Nalubega and her colleagues have seen their incomes double since ditching middlemen who make more money from the bananas than the farmers, writes Fred Muzaale.

Very few people believe they can make a lot of money by selling banana juice.

This is because many farmers, who have a few plants of "Kayinja" or "Kisubi" banana varieties on their farm, harvest the mature fruits, and wait for them to ripen and then squeeze to extract juice.

The juice is usually consumed by the family, leaving nothing for sale.

However, the proprietors of Jakana Fruits Ltd, a firm located in Kawempe in Kampala City, have discovered gold in making banana juice.

According to Aisha Nalubega, one of the directors in the company, they started making banana juice from "Kisubi" and "Kayinja" in 2002 after discovering that there was untapped demand for the juice.

"Because of this demand, we said we should a hygienic banana juice, which consumers will enjoy without any fears of getting diseases put on the market," Nalubega says, adding, "consuming banana juice comes with a number of health benefits, given the fact that it has natural sugar."

She, says, however, the challenge lay in how to get the bananas, very few farmers, were involved in growing the banana varieties used in making juice.

## Making pasteurised juice

Nalubega says they buy the mature bananas from farmers in Luwero District through agents located in the area.

However, she says they also own a



Packaged banana on display. Below is a bunch of apple banana used for making the juice. PHOTO BY FRED MUZAALE



# 20m

MONEY IN SHILLINGS  
NALUBEGA AND HER  
COLLEAGUES EARN PER  
MONTH

plantation of "Kisubi" and "Kayinja" in the same district. Below is the process right from the farm to the factory.

- They buy a bunch of Kayinja at between Shs5,000 and Shs7,000, depending on their demand and supply on the market.

- After collecting the bananas, they are ferried to the factory using trucks.

- At the factory, the mature bananas are put in a warm store, in order to shorten the ripening period from five to only three days.
- The ripe fruits are then removed and outer skin peeled off manually.
- They are then fed into a banana pulping machine.
- Here it is turned into a paste and juice squeezed out.
- The juice is then mixed with water at a ratio of 1:2. This means that two litres of water are mixed with one litre of concentrated juice.
- Thereafter, it is put into a pasteurizer to kill any form of bacteria that might have contaminated the juice.
- The juice is packaged and sealed while still hot to avoid any form contamination.
- The packaged juice is put in a sterilizer to make them free from germs or bacteria.
- It is then labeled and ready for sale.

## CHALLENGES

Their biggest challenge is getting enough fruit for making juice. Ms Nalubega says few people currently grow "Kayinja" or "Kisubi" bananas on a commercial scale.

Even then, the few plants have been damaged by the banana wilt.

But she says they are trying to encourage and mobilise farmers to grow the banana varieties on a commercial scale to boost their production.

Also, the competition for the bananas with other buyers such those that make alcohol has increased their prices, forcing them to buy at a higher price, which cuts their profit margin.

Nalubega also notes that payments from supermarkets delay, yet farmers demand cash for their banana.

This, she says, sometimes makes it hard to buy the fruits from farmers as they lack the working capital.

## The market

Nalubega says they sell most of their juice to local supermarkets, where they are paid three weeks later after delivery.

She, however, notes that they also supply their product abroad, but this is only done after their clientele place orders.

They have so far supplied to Europe and the US.

She says a 500ml bottle of juice goes for a wholesale factory price of Shs2,500 and consumers buy it at Shs3,000.

In a month, they sell about 250 cartons of their product and earn about Shs20m.

"Our sales are still low not because there is no demand but simply because we don't get enough fruits from which we extract the juice," she points out.

## Advice

Nalubega advises farmers to embrace value addition if they want to earn more from their sweat.

"Making juice is tasking but you earn more money than someone who has sold bananas. The businessmen or middlemen make more money from the bananas than the farmers," says Nalubega.



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