

Vision Group, in partnership with dfcu Bank, the Netherlands Embassy in Uganda and KLM Airlines, is searching for Uganda's best farmers. Every Tuesday, we shall profile nominated farmers until November when a panel of judges shall select the best. Sh150m and a trip to the Netherlands await the best farmers to be announced in November.



Mujabi pointing at his bananas. He grows coffee and bananas on his plantation, which he says enables him earn high income

Mujabi earning big from intercropping

By Umar Nsubuga

It is not common for a farmer to drive to his garden every day. Yusufu Mujabi, 47, a coffee and banana farmer in Bukolwa village, Luwero district, drives to his "office" (garden) every morning. "This farm is my office. I engaged in business before, but, later settled to farming," Mujabi says.

How he started

When Mujabi completed his diploma in mechanics at Wobulenzi, he started by trading in maize. He saved sh500,000, which he used to buy a two-acre piece of land from his mother.

"During that time, I didn't have a lot of knowledge in coffee farming. I did research and grew coffee. I also intercropped it with matooke because I knew coffee would take long to mature. I also continued trading in maize," he says.

Seeking knowledge

Mujabi says he got an opportunity to interact with members from the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), who visited his coffee plantation.

The experts, he says, gave him knowledge on how to generate income as a smallholder farmer and how to mitigate the effects of climate change.



Mujabi

"I was taught how farmers get 50% more income from intercropping than from growing a single crop. I was not disappointed when I turned to coffee growing. I was one of the best farmers in Nakaseke district and the surrounding areas," he says.

Earnings and social impact

Mujabi says he shares his experience with the community free of charge.

Many students from Makerere University, experts, such as IITA give him more knowledge, which he shares with his villagers. Mujabi employs five permanent employees and 10 casual workers, especially during the harvest period. On average, he says, they earn between sh150,000 and sh300,000 per month.

"Every month I pocket not less than a million shillings after expenses."

He sells each bunch of matooke from sh10,000 to sh15,000.

"In terms of earnings, every month I pocket not less than a million shillings after expenses".

Tips on his success story

Mujabi says he participates in every farm activity with his workers, a move which helps him in monitoring and cutting costs.

Challenges

Mujabi says maintaining a big garden is costly since pesticides and fertilisers are expensive.

Prices for his produce are unstable. He says, the rains are unpredictable, thus prolonged drought affects his irrigation cycle, leading to low

FEEDBACK

WHAT FARMERS SAY: 'Mujabi is an asset!'



Mujabi is a selfless person. He freely shares his experience in coffee farming with us. He taught me soil conservation.
Alice Nambuya, farmer

Previously, I did not consider weeding important. However, when I started pruning, weeding and applying pesticides on the advice of Mujabi, my yields, in the two subsequent seasons tripled.
Allan Kanya, coffee farmer



harvest. He advises farmers to network to get the best prices for their produce. Mujabi also advises farmers to grow alternative crops, in case the main ones fail to attract a good market.

Does intercropping work?

David Mukasa, a researcher at IITA, says planting banana in coffee fields helps to absorb carbon dioxide from the air and the mulch enriches the soil's carbon stock.

He also says, coffee planted with banana has been found to have a 50% lower incidence of leaf rust than unshaded plants.

Seedbed preparation

Mujabi advises farmers to prepare a portion of land under a shade and conserve the soil using organic manure.

Germination

According to Mujabi, coffee seedlings take 31-42 days to sprout. He advises farmers to wait until the seedlings have four leaves, then they pot them.

Transplanting

Mujabi says, after the seedlings have been potted and carefully put under a shade, a farmer should tend to them for a period of four months, watering them before they are ready for transplanting.

"The ideal time to transplant is when the seedlings have eight leaves," Mujabi explains.

It takes two years for coffee to mature.

For planting, Mujabi says the holes should be dug one month in advance and 20 grammes of Single Super Phosphate (SSP) fertilisers be applied around the plant on the day of planting. This will help in root growth and it makes the plant stable.

According to Mujabi, after six months, a farmer should apply 20 grammes of Nitrogen, Phosphorus, and Potassium (NPK) around each plant and 20 grammes of potassium around each plant after 10 months when the plants start flowering.

Mujabi says because of the good quality of his products, clients book his coffee in advance.