

NATIONAL FORESTRY AUTHORITY

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Money does grow on trees

By Jacqueline Emodok

The fact that some bank notes are green like the colour of trees, there is no mistake: trees make money literally – they provide the raw material which is paper. Trees also make money through the products derived from them like furniture, timber, poles and even economic activities which they supplement like beekeeping and apiculture.

With the persistent unemployment problem among the youth in Uganda today, tree planting is a worthwhile business venture.

According to Margaret Adata, the Commissioner for forestry at the Ministry of Water and Environment, tree planting as a business has a big potential to mitigate the widespread poverty.

"I like to say plant trees and watch your wealth grow because as you age, the trees grow as well to earn you an income that will secure your future," she says.

Adata notes that all trees can earn an income but it depends on the objectives of tree planting.

"For example, if you are planting to produce timber in future, you can plant eucalyptus which is fast-growing and now we have the improved colonial eucalyptus in very controlled quantity and very expensive on the market," she explains.

Trees produce logs and poles which earn farmers a good income. For example, in some places, farmers are paid sh10,000 per pole.

Remarkably the prices go higher for transmission poles which can earn someone about sh70,000 per pole to sh200,000, and in some cases Adata says farmers can earn as high as sh800,000 per pole.

The trick is in the species that one chooses to plant; for teak (a tropical hardwood tree species) one might not necessarily have to wait for it to fully grow.

"It can produce poles when it is still young but when it matures at the end of the rotation, it is gold; one cubic metre of teak round wood goes for about sh1.4m," Adata says.

Typically, one can plant 400 teak trees on an acre, so if you are to sell 100 as poles before they fully grow at sh10,000 per pole you stand to earn sh1m.

However, that is not the best part, when you cut the teak tree at its final rotation, one can earn as much as sh1.4m for round wood (wood which



Women weeding pine tree seedlings in a nursery bed. Tree planting is an environment-friendly business



Grading of treated electricity poles at Busoga Forest Company. The youth can grow such trees which can put money in their pockets

has not been split into timber).

Another option is the pine. Adata says a cubic metre of round wood goes for sh180,000 if you planted high quality seeds.

She also advises the youth against underestimating the indigenous species like *musizi* because the tree is fast-growing and has a straight stem which can produce up to three logs of 15 feet at maturity.

"The other advantage of indigenous trees is that they can be integrated with other land uses," Adata notes.

Youth can also reap more benefits from tree planting by supplementing it with beekeeping.

Although tree planting can be a profitable venture for the youth, one cannot ignore the fact that it needs land for its execution which few youth have.

THE YOUTH STILL HAVE A SIZEABLE LIFESPAN OF THEIR LIVES LEFT SO WHEN THEY WORK TOWARDS MITIGATING CLIMATE CHANGE PROBLEMS NOW, THEY WILL HAVE A SECURE FUTURE

Adata urges the youth to be innovative such as planting trees to demarcate their parent's land. These are known as live markers.

One can also line the pathways that lead to their homesteads with trees on both sides for products like firewood and other benefits of trees which include providing shade and acting as wind breaks.

Recently, the ban on land allocation for tree planting and growing in central forest reserves was lifted.

"The forests which have potential sites for tree planting have been marked and demarcated and the information is on the National

Forestry Authority (NFA) website. If youth are not aware, it is not late because the deadline has been extended by two weeks," she says.

Programmes

Besides lifting the ban on the use of central forest reserves to promote tree planting among the youth, the Government has also introduced programmes to support the youth in the sector.

These are in form of inputs, technical advice and training. They include the farm income enhancement and forestry conservation project, which is implemented in 39 districts that are scattered around the identified five irrigation schemes.

"These are Doho, Mubuku, Tochi, Ngenge and Wadelai, so the youth in these areas should lookout for these programmes they can, if interested, approach their natural resources officer or district forestry officer to seek advice," Adata says.

She goes on to say the youth can also approach the Ministry of Water and Environment (forest sector support department) to seek support.

"We will always prioritise them because they need the resources more than their elders who have them," Adata states.

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