

Workers weed rice on a garden. David Kibumba says he started as casual labourer weeding other farmer's gardens. He is now a farmer and the returns are big. PHOTOS FRED MUZAALE

David Kibumba doubles his rice income by adding value

David Kibumba harvests 50 bags of rice per season. He then adds value doubling his income to Shs11m, writes **Fred Muzaale**

Many farmers in Uganda are taking on rice growing both as a food and cash crop. Because of its increased demand, rice growing has become a lucrative venture.

However, many farmers are not benefiting much because they sell unprocessed rice grains, as opposed to value addition through milling.

Unlike such farmers, David Kibumba, 46, a resident of Namirembe village, in Busaana sub-county, Kayunga District has discovered gold in adding value to rice.

Background

Kibumba, who says he has been growing rice since 1988 says initially, he was "ignorant" as he used to harvest his rice and sell it unprocessed to traders at a farm gate price of Shs600 then.

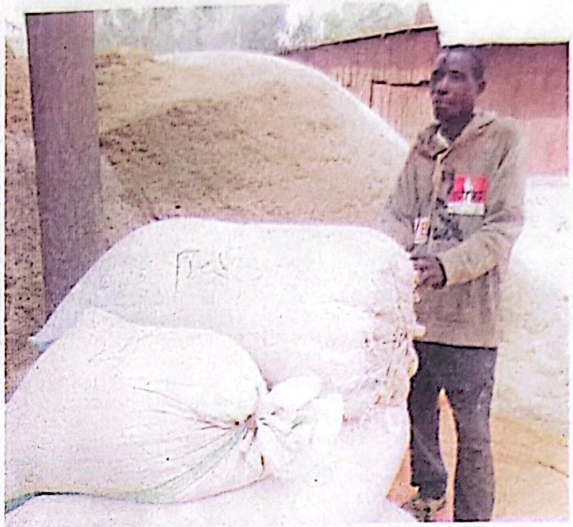
"The traders would then mill and sell it at Shs15,00 per kilogramme," Kibumba recounts, adding "By doing so, they would make a profit of about Shs800 instantly, more than me who spends about four months growing the rice."

He carries out his rice growing project on a five acre piece of land and grows lowland rice varieties such as Kaiso and Super.

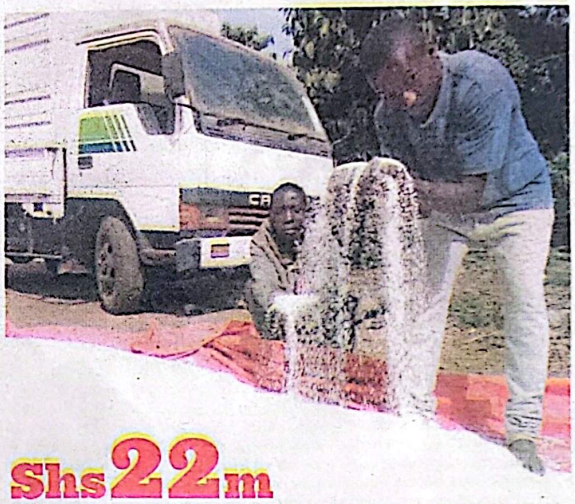
Kibumba explains that currently, he harvests about 50 bags of unprocessed rice each weighing about 100 kilogrammes.

"For instance, if I sell my 5,000 kilogrammes of unprocessed rice at the current price of Shs1,000 a kilogramme, I earn about Shs5m, well as if I process it and get about 3,500 kilogrammes of processed rice I would sell a kilo at Shs2,000 and earn about Shs7m," Kibumba says with a big smile on his face. This, he says, makes him earn Shs2m more.

He says at the mills located in Kayunga Town, he pays Shs150 for milling a kilogramme and pays about Shs1,000 per bag for transport.



Kibumba stands next to the rice before milling, and below, after adding value



Shs22m

MONEY KIBUMBA EARNS PER YEAR

Market

Kibumba says after milling the rice, he sells it immediately to the many traders who have buying centres at the mills.

He sells a kilogramme at between Shs1,800 and Shs2,000, depending on the forces of demand and supply.

They pay him cash. Since there are two rice growing season in a year, the first one from February to June while second one runs from August when its planted to November, when it is harvested, Kibumba earns about Shs22m a year from his rice.

"If the crop gets enough rain, the harvest is weighty but if it shines, the rice is light, so it doesn't fetch good money," he says.

Achievements

Among the successes Kibumba has got from rice growing include paying for education for his five children, one at university.

He has also built a permanent and good house using proceeds from his venture, exiting the one made out mud and wattle.

Challenges

Kibumba faces a big challenge in controlling weeds and has to invest much in buying herbicides to kill them. However, he complains that most herbicides on the market are fake.

Additionally, he spends a lot money on hiring people who scare away birds from the rice garden and sometimes the people he hires don't do the work effectively so the birds end up eating some of his produce.

Also, the weather changes that lead to long droughts, makes him incur loses as the grains are either light or the harvest is poor. Fluctuating rice prices also make him incur loses. Sometimes the traders buy their rice at a low price.

Process

He harvests the rice, winnows it and then puts on a tarpaulin to dry. He then takes it for milling after which he sells it.

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