

SANYU: FARMER WHO BET ON HERSELF

PHOTOS BY UMAR NSUBUGA



For the 11th year, Vision Group, together with the Embassy of the Netherlands, KLM Airlines, dfcu Bank and Koudijs Animal Nutrition, is running the Best Farmers Competition. The 2026 competition is running from April to November, with the awards in December. Every week, Vision Group platforms will publish profiles of the farmers. Winners will walk away with sh150m and a fully paid-for trip to the Netherlands.

By Umar Nsubuga

At 73 years old, Rose Sanyu stands as one of the most respected farmers in Kiwebwa, Wakiso district. Her journey from a young agricultural officer to a successful commercial farmer has inspired many people within and beyond her community. Today, her enterprise, Kevin Farm, combines poultry, crops, livestock and trees on one piece of land.

Decades ago, at only 29, Sanyu voluntarily retired from civil service to concentrate on farming and business. She says many thought she had made a risky choice, but today her success proves that careful planning and hard work can transform a dream into reality.

GENESIS

Her passion for farming led her to Bukalasa Agricultural College, where she pursued a diploma and graduated in 1974. This training became the foundation of her farming career.

Sanyu was employed as an assistant agricultural officer at Kawanda research station in 1975. The job exposed her to modern farming techniques and research-based agricultural practices.

However, despite enjoying her work, Sanyu realised her pay would not be enough to guarantee her financial security in the future.

Instead of waiting until retirement, she began preparing for her financial independence while she was still young.

While working at Kawanda, Sanyu started small income-generating activities to supplement her salary. After work each evening, she would spend two hours in her garden tending to crops such as matooke, cassava, sweet potatoes and vegetables. These were sold to neighbours and friends. She also started trading in agricultural produce such as maize and groundnuts, which she supplied to wholesalers in Kampala.

After seven years of saving and investing, Sanyu had accumulated enough capital to venture into private business.

In 1982, at only 29 years old, she resigned from the civil service for private business.

ENTERING BUSINESS

Her first business was a boutique and would import clothes from Dubai, China and Europe. She supplied these clothes to traders in Kampala.

The business was profitable and she accumulated more capital and diversified into poultry farming. She had done market research and learnt that there was a high demand for chicken and eggs, yet not many farmers engaged in poultry keeping.

Sanyu started her poultry journey in 2000 with about 1,000 birds, using an initial capital of sh300,000 due to the small scale.

Within a few years, the enterprise expanded rapidly to over 30,000 layers. Her farm became one of the largest poultry operations in the area, supplying more than 2,000 trays of eggs weekly to individuals and bakeries in Kampala.

This remarkable growth later positioned her as a trusted poultry farming consultant, guiding other farmers on best practices, improved management and scaling production sustainably for consistent income and long-term success in agribusiness.

SHARING KNOWLEDGE

From the start, Sanyu committed to sharing her knowledge with other farmers. During the late 1990s and early 2000s, she organised workshops and seminars under the defunct Kampala City Council.

At these workshops, many urban residents, who wanted to start poultry farming, were trained. Sanyu also opened her home freely to farmers who wanted to learn. Even today, visitors regularly travel to her farm to learn modern poultry practices.

Her generosity in sharing knowledge has made Sanyu a



Sanyu packing eggs for delivery to her customers. Kevin Farm produces 60 trays of eggs daily



The structures housing the piggery project. The farm has 50 pigs

The business also benefits from selling chicken droppings, which are in high demand.

respected figure in Uganda's farming community. She has trained over 500 farmers.

A DEVASTATING SETBACK

Despite her success, Sanyu's journey has faced major setbacks. In 2010, she took a bank loan of about shuom to expand her poultry business. However, disaster struck when over 20,000 birds died after consuming

feeds mixed with sand and sawdust. By 2011, the business had collapsed. "It was one of the most painful moments in my life," she recalls.

In 2015, Sanyu also ventured into rental housing in Kyanja, a Kampala suburb. Although the units generated some income, the project brought financial strain and failed to meet expectations. Even then, she refused to give up.

Through consultancy work, modest poultry operations and rental income, Sanyu gradually recovered and cleared the loan, rebuilding her life and farm.

STARTING AGAIN IN KIWEBWA

In 2022, Sanyu began rebuilding her dream farm in Kiwebwa, Wakiso district. The farm, now spanning 10 acres, is steadily transforming into a modern agricultural enterprise.

She originally bought the land in 2009 at sh2m per acre, paying in instalments over time.

Today Kevin Farm hosts more than 2,000-layer chickens. She has installed modern poultry systems,

including nipple drinkers that supply clean water to chickens efficiently. The system ensures hygiene while reducing water wastage.

Charles Lubowa, the farm manager, explains that poultry is the backbone of the enterprise, with the layers producing 45 to 60 trays of eggs every day. Each tray is sold directly to traders and consumers at sh10,500.

Lubowa adds that the business also benefits from selling chicken droppings, which are in high demand among crop farmers.

MAIZE FARMING

Since acquiring land in Kiwebwa, Sanyu has steadily grown maize, starting with an initial investment of about sh3m to clear the bushy land and prepare it for cultivation. She now plants maize on five acres, mainly to reduce poultry feed costs. On average, each acre yields 25-30 bags of 100kg each, giving her about 125-150 bags per season, with two seasons a year.

Nearly half of the harvest is milled into feed for her chickens, significantly cutting production expenses. The remaining 60-70 bags are stored and sold when prices improve, providing a reliable income and keeping the farm financially stable throughout the year.

TOMATOES

Sanyu has consistently invested in tomato growing, to the tune of sh2m, to strengthen the enterprise. She focuses on improved tomato varieties that mature quickly and attract strong market demand.

To ensure quality harvests throughout the year, Sanyu applies proper spacing, timely spraying and irrigation. She sells her tomatoes in nearby markets

IN 1982 AND IS STILL WINNING AT 73

and also supplies bulk buyers.

During peak seasons, the enterprise becomes highly profitable, enabling her to meet household needs, reinvest in the farm and support other projects.

After covering all production costs, she earns between sh500,000 and sh700,000, depending on the season, market prices and overall yield, making tomatoes one of her most dependable income streams.

PIG FARMING

Sanyu started her piggery project in 2021, investing in quality housing, feeding systems and improved breeding. She emphasises that strategic breed selection has been her most valuable investment.

Her farm has over 50 pigs for both breeding and meat production. She focuses on high-quality F1 hybrids, improved through artificial insemination using superior genetics from duroc, pietrain and P90 boars.

"Proper breed selection determines the entire productivity system," she explains. This approach has enabled faster growth, better feed conversion, and leaner, high-quality pork, which is increasingly preferred by the health-conscious market.

PINE

Sanyu started her pine tree project in early 2025 with an investment of sh2.5m. She planted two acres to secure future timber, which she plans to use for construction and expanding her farm infrastructure.

BEANS

Sanyu began growing beans in 2023 with an initial investment of sh1m, which paid off at her first harvest. Encouraged, she improved her planning in the next season and earned better profits. She now grows beans on four acres, with each acre yielding eight to 10 bags of 70-80kg, totalling about 32-40 bags per season when shelled. Part of the harvest feeds farm workers, while the rest is sold.

INVESTING IN IRRIGATION

Understanding the importance of water in agriculture, Sanyu invested over sh1m in a motorised irrigation system.

The system pumps groundwater into large storage tanks. The water is then distributed through pipes to irrigate crops across the entire farm. Although it does not yet cover the entire farm, it has significantly improved productivity.

Irrigation allows her to grow crops all year round, ensuring continuous production.

Sanyu credits many of her modern farming practices to agricultural exhibitions such as the Harvest Money Expo. She says she has attended every expo since it began.



Sanyu pumps underground water into these tanks for irrigation

ADVICE TO YOUNG FARMERS

Sanyu encourages young people to view agriculture as a profitable business rather than a last resort. She believes success begins with mindset, noting that "the brain is the most affordable capital we all have".

Sanyu advises working Ugandans to start saving early and invest wisely in productive ventures. She also stresses the importance of time management, urging people to remain accountable for how they use their 24 hours.

She encourages individuals to plant long-term investments, such as trees, early in life to secure their future.

Sanyu explains that the most transformative idea she adopted from agricultural expos is irrigation and modern poultry drinking systems.

"Irrigation has ensured consistent crop growth despite unpredictable rains, while the improved drinking technology keeps my birds healthy and reduces water wastage," she says. She adds that these innovations



Sanyu planted pine trees in 2025 to use as timber in the future

have increased productivity, lowered losses and made her farm operations more efficient throughout the year.

Through these exhibitions, she learned about modern poultry equipment, irrigation systems and integrated farming practices. These ideas have helped transform Kevin Farm into a model agricultural enterprise.

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Sanyu explains that best management practices include proper recordkeeping, timely

feeding, vaccination, hygiene, good breed selection, controlled breeding, irrigation and regular supervision of all farm activities for productivity.

She explains that she ensures bio-security by controlling farm entry, disinfecting equipment, limiting visitors, vaccinating animals, maintaining cleanliness and separating livestock units to prevent disease spread and protect productivity.

She has ensured sustainability by diversifying enterprises, recycling farm waste as manure, using irrigation, improving breeds, training workers and reinvesting profits back into farm development and expansion.

Sanyu says she has reliable workers because many have grown under her mentorship and some are children of her friends. She also employs those who did not continue with education or faced life challenges, giving them opportunity, trust and fair treatment, which helps maintain loyalty and commitment.

IMPACT ON THE COMMUNITY

Sanyu's farm has become an important learning centre for farmers from different areas who visit to learn about poultry management and modern farming techniques. The farm employs six workers, most of them young people whom Sanyu mentors in practical agricultural skills and business discipline. Through this approach, the farm is not only producing food but also creating employment opportunities and empowering young people with valuable knowledge for sustainable livelihoods.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Sanyu explains that her achievements include building her dream house on spacious farmland, enjoying fresh air away from town and living a life free from pressure.

She says she is now settled, comfortable and happy with a stable farm that allows her to work, relax and enjoy life peacefully.

CHALLENGES

Like many farmers, Sanyu faces several challenges; seasonal price fluctuations sometimes affect her earnings, while access to quality feeds and other agricultural inputs can also be difficult.

Weather changes and prolonged dry seasons occasionally disrupt crop production.

Despite these obstacles, she remains optimistic and believes that challenges are part of farming and can be managed through proper planning, resilience, and hard work.

PLANS

Sanyu says her ambitions for Kevin Farm are still growing as she plans to expand the poultry enterprise to about 50,000 birds in the coming years.

WHAT OTHERS SAY

RASHID SEKALEMA SANYU'S NEIGHBOUR

I have watched her grow into a hardworking and determined farmer. Through her dedication and persistence, she has expanded her farming activities and inspired many people in the community.

YUNUSU BUTA SANYU'S FRIEND

I admire her dedication and determination in farming. Over the years, she has worked tirelessly to grow her projects, and her success has encouraged many people in the community.

AISHA KALUMA RESIDENT, SANYU'S CLOSE FRIEND

Sanyu as a determined and innovative farmer. Sanyu's discipline, openness and mentorship have inspired many women in Kiwebwa, proving that farming can create stability, confidence, and long-term success in households.

She also intends to install additional irrigation systems to cover the entire farm and ensure year-round crop production.

Beyond farming, Sanyu hopes to transform Kevin Farm into an agro-tourism and technical training centre where farmers, students and visitors can learn modern agricultural practices, with accommodation facilities developed so guests can stay and train directly on the farm.

MISTAKES

Sanyu says her greatest mistake was trusting poor-quality feeds and weak investment choices early on. She learned to verify suppliers, prioritise quality inputs, plan carefully, and avoid shortcuts in business decisions.

BACKGROUND

Sanyu was born on December 29, 1952, in Bukomansimbi district. She grew up in a family of five children born to Kevin Nanfuka and her husband. She says her mother played a major role in shaping her character. Even at an advanced age, Sanyu recalls that her mother remained active and hardworking, a trait that influenced her life.

"Growing up, the values of hard work, perseverance and innovation were firmly entrenched in me by my mother," Sanyu says.