

Mpamu started the local chicken enterprise with only 15 local birds 10 hens and five cocks, which have since multiplied to 1,882

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 December when a panel of judges shall select the best. SH150m and a trip to the Netherlands await the winners to be announced next month.



By Moses Nampala

At only 20, David Ronald Mpamu, from Bulumba, Iki-iki sub-county in Budaka district is yet to complete his studies at a tertiary institute. However, he is not just a mother hen to a day-dreamer, hoping for a white-collar job after school. The young man has entrepreneurial ideas that he has used to earn a living from poultry.

Mpamu, who is in his final year at Bukalasa Agricultural College, in Luwero district, has set aside sh30m to facilitate the construction of his parents' village house, upgrading it from once a simple modest house to a bungalow.

"For as long as I can remember, my parents have longed to own a decent house, but their wishes would always come to nothing, because of the heavy load on their shoulders, especially providing for me and my eight siblings. When my local chicken enterprise became productive, I felt it was my duty to see my parents realise their dream," observes Mpamu.

Mpamu's success story sounds like a fairytale. "If you are the kind of person who likes quick money, then, a local chicken enterprise may not be the business of taste because it demands a lot of patience that would yield after three to four years," warns Mpamu.

"Five years ago, Mpamu started the local chicken enterprise with only 15 young local chickens, 10 hens and five cocks.

The money he used to buy his first batch of poultry was a token of appreciation from his parents, also farmers in Bulumba, Iki-iki sub-county, Budaka district.

The token of appreciation that the couple gave to each of their nine children, in exchange for the family labour offered the previous season in which the family realised a bumper harvest from a seven-acre garden in which the family reared 40 bags of soybean (each bag weighing 100kg). Soybean is among the cereal crops,

on high demand, mostly by poultry and animal feeds manufacturing firms.

The family earned sh4m from soya that went for sh1,000 a kilo.

When the produce was sold off, each of the children was rewarded with sh150,000.

At his eight siblings hurried to spend their money on outings and having a good time, Mpamu invested his share in starting up a local chicken enterprise.

One day his father sent him to relay a message to James Kholianga, who lived about 200 metres away from his home. Kholianga is an agriculture teacher at the nearby Iki-iki Secondary School.

"I got surprised to find my host tending to more than 800 local chickens," narrates Mpamu. After delivering the message, a started Mpamu convinced his host to take him through how he started his poultry enterprise.

HOW 20-YEAR-OLD TURNED SH150,000 INTO A SH60M POULTRY ENTERPRISE



The house Mpamu built for his parents.

Photo by Moses Nampala

The brief interface with Kholianga inspired Mpamu to start a similar project.

"When I received a token of appreciation from my parents, I wanted for a nearby Iki-iki weekly auction market day and bought chicken.

Once the first birds had been obtained, Mpamu resolved to keep the birds indoors, utilising space of one of the three empty small rooms on the family kitchen block, but later constructed a 40-foot temporary mud-and-wattle structure. "The reason for my decision to keep my birds indoors was not to take chances with predators," recalls Mpamu.

In the beginning, he was a regular customer at the nearby market, seeking bran to feed the birds.

First egg laying cycle

Seven months later, the hens began laying eggs. At the end of the month, there were over 200 eggs.

"A typical local chicken, lays a maximum of 30-35 eggs," he observes.

Following Kholianga's advice, Mpamu took the eggs to an incubator in Mbale town.

The disadvantage of natural hatching is that a farmer is bound to 90% of egg loss.

For a local chicken - is capable of brooding 10 eggs at most if not less.

On the other hand, in the incubator, the loss count could be estimated at 1-5%.

Paying for incubation services

Proprietors of incubators in Mbale charge sh700 per egg hatched.

"I sought financial assistance from my father to foot the bill for incubating the initial 200 eggs," Mpamu recalls.

Twenty-one days later, he got 184 chicks. In the earliest stage of their growth, he continued to scavenge for food from the nearby maize mill.

However, as the birds grew, he was relieved when his mentor (Kholianga) and regular supervisor tasked his parents with helping him with feeds.

During the meeting with his parents Kholianga volunteered the feeds mixture recipe for local chicken.

Mixing feeds

With the ingredients, Mpamu says a 100kg bag of maize bran goes for sh30,000. It is then mixed with a kilogramme of

Mpamu used his appreciation token from his parents to start up a local chicken enterprise

silver fish (mukene) that goes for sh15,000. The other variables constituting the feeds mixture include 10 litres of jerrycan of blood that could be sourced from an abattoir at sh5,000. The blood has to be poured on a plastic surface and exposed to sun light for three and a half days.

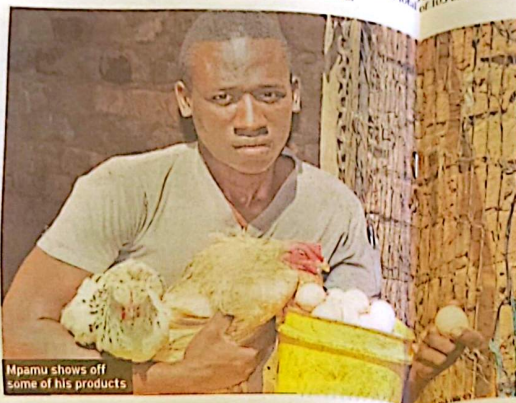
Once the blood has dried, together with silver fish, it is taken for milling and the flour is mixed with a 100kg sack of that could aid healthy growth of any local chicken.

Milling expenses of (blood and silver fish) vary, but ingredients enough for a sack of maize bran goes for sh3,000.

Expenses on feeds

A 100kg sack of maize bran costs sh10,000. sh15,000 of 1kg of silver fish 20 litres of animal blood that goes for sh10,000.

As the 184 birds obtained in the first cycle of his enterprise grew, close scrutiny revealed that a total of 103 birds were hens, while 81 were cocks.



Mpamu shows off some of his products

The hens began laying eggs, after the seventh month. Although Mpamu got over 3,000 eggs, he only earmarked 2,000 eggs for incubation.

He sold the 940 eggs.

Break-even point

In a move to suppress heavy dependency of his business on well-wishers and enabling it to expand, Mpamu sold off his entire stock.

"I sold 103 hens together with the 81 cocks to local chicken dealers from Kampala at a flat rate of sh25,000 each. I earned sh4,600,000," Mpamu explains.

Out of the proceeds from the transaction, he set aside sh1,442,000 to cater for the 2,000 eggs he had previously earmarked for incubation, keeping the rest of the money for stocking feeds.

Second incubation cycle

Out of the 2,000 taken to an incubator, he got 1,882 chicks. As the 1,882 stock grew, he got 1,015 hens, and 867 were cocks.

Seven months later the hens started to lay eggs. By the end of the month, without considering the number of eggs that the family consumed, Mpamu had 20,300 eggs.

Mpamu, who completed, Senior Six last year, joined Bukalasa Agricultural College, in Luwero district to pursue a two-year diploma course in agricultural business management.

When Mpamu reported to school, his absence created a big vacuum as the chicken enterprise demands a lot of dedication and attention.

It was then that the family reached the decision, that Mpamu temporarily dissolves his business with hope of resuming when he completes his course.

"I sold stock of 1,882 birds to Kampala chicken dealers at a flat rate of sh25,000. I got sh47,050,000," Mpamu says.

Eggs

When chicken dealers from Kampala helped him get substantive market for local chicken eggs, he was hopeful.

FEEDING

"At the time I sold 1,882 chickens, I needed 990kg of feeds to cover a period of a month, which cost me about sh1,045,000, but experience in business had taught me to always buy more maize bran during the harvest season and store it as its price around that time, usually goes down from sh30,000 for a 100kg sack to sh10,000," observes Mpamu.

Risks

Although local birds have a strong immune system, they are not immune to epidemic outbreaks. However, whenever he detected signs of an epidemic, that usually manifested in chickens appearing to droop and inactive, he would administer a local herb concoction. The herbs is a combination of three different varieties of wild plants.

"Each bird would be forced to swallow run to three drops. With this dose, no chicken would die of an epidemic," Mpamu stresses.

Mistake

In the beginning Mpamu used to feed the birds on plain maize bran, but his mentor (Kholianga) was quick to caution him on the dangers of the idea as he it extended the growth of the birds.

However, when he started feeding the birds on the proper mixture, the birds registered rapid growth.

Challenges

According to Mpamu, operating a local chicken enterprise is risky.

On six occasions, thieves had invaded the backyard of their home to steal chickens, only for their two guard dogs to alert the family.

"Remember thieves strike at the moment of their victims when they are asleep, but in all the attempts, they would confront the dogs and chase them away. Although many around the village who knew about my enterprise attributed the success of my enterprise, on the trick of stealing chickens, I must confess that running the business without any incident was because God prevailed over my business," he observes.

Local chickens are any other kind of chickens are too vulnerable to sudden waves of epidemics that could be fatal.

"At any visible sign of disease among the birds, my mentor (Kholianga) had shared the local herb that is given to all the birds. The herb mixture includes stevia and two wild plants mixed with water, and the solution given to each of the birds," attests Mpamu.

He says, if it had not been for his parents' standing by him in the beginning, the business would have crumbled prematurely because at the time, he did not have an alternative source of income.

Achievements

Out of the gross earnings of sh59, 230,000, Mpamu has saved 44% on an account he opened in a commercial bank in Mbale.

He intends to use the money as capital to resume business when he completes his course next year.

"I set aside sh30m to facilitate the work of elevating my parents' house that has since been completed, while at the same time I have also spent another sh3m in acquiring basic requirements and tuition for my siblings," he observes.

"I sold the eggs to two firms in Kampala at sh600 per egg."

Transaction of eggs gave him sh12,180,000.

His gross turnover from both stock and eggs was sh59,230,000.

WHAT OTHERS SAY

Sanyu Mpamu, 59, Mpamu's father:

When my son broached the idea of rearing local chicken, I must confess that at the beginning, I despised it until his initial stock of 13 birds turned 184.

My most humbling moment was when my son committed sh30m from the proceeds of the enterprise to upgrading the family house.

From this gesture, I consider him as a light of the family.

Jane Mpamu, 49, mother:

He would prefer me to buy him a fowl and when I bought it, he would dutifully tend to it and would sometimes feel sad the day we slaughtered it sometimes refusing to eat.

I could not see any sense in the local chicken enterprise when he started it.

If he keeps up an aggressive spirit towards work, then undoubtedly, I am inclined to believe that he will be a prosperous man.

James Mwanga, 46, resident:

Mpamu junior is a reserved young man who constantly consults his elders about farming. Just the other day he approached me to enlighten him on how best he could rear turkeys, a trait that is rare among youth.

Three things to learn from Mpamu

1. Seek incubation services when brooding time sets in.
2. A farmer ought to be informed about the effective and cheap feeds mixture formula. One should also know the local plants mixed to fend off diseases.
3. Have security for the safety of the birds, especially at night lest thieves empty your poultry house.

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