

New crop with potential to end hunger in East Africa introduced

Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT) have developed a new crop which they claim can end hunger in the larger East African region.



Acclimatization of breadfruit seedlings in the greenhouse at JKUAT. COURTESY PHOTO

The new crop known as breadfruit is a staple crop grown in the Pacific Islands and is due to offer a ready answer to food insecurity as it grows on both the hot and wet weather.

The fruit has lumpy green flesh and a potato like texture.

According to World Vision, 25 million people in the Eastern African countries of Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan and Ethiopia are in dire need of food and water.

More than 3.5 million children are suffering from malnutrition, a condition that results from a diet in which nutrients are either lacking or are in excess such that the diet causes health problems.

One breadfruit weighing three kilogrammes can provide a carbohydrate portion for a family of five. The fruit can be ground into flour and used in sweet and spicy dishes, including pancakes and crisps. It is rich in vitamins and minerals. The protein in the fruit has a higher proportion of amino acids than soy.

In Africa, the crop, which reaches maturity in five years after it starts production, is only grown in the West African countries of; Benin, Ghana, Liberia and Nigeria. One tree of the crop is capable of producing over 900 fruits on a single harvest. It produces fruits two years after planting and thrice annually after it starts production.

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