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Business School.

...three years, was appointed
by finance minister Matia Kasajja

Other board members include
Aphwa Ssebyala, the deputy
chairperson, Dr Charles Augustine

...example IRA regulates entities
participating in stock exchange and
retirement benefits.

...sector and government officials promoting the
city, which is home to the European Central
Bank.

New M9 improved banana variety excites traders

By Agnes Nantambi

Resty Nakidde, a matooke trader, sells an improved green banana variety called M9 in Masuulita market in Wakiso district, but she says she had not sold any other banana like it.

The businesswoman says for the year she has sold the commodity, demand has been rising rapidly as consumers learn about the variety that has been named *kiwangaazi* (durable) by the residents.

At first, customers were hesitant to buy it mistaking it for a different one called *fia*, which was not tasty. However, when they tasted, it was far superior and saved them money because it had a longer shelf life.

She says the demand could boost not only production for the local market, but for export as well.

Several other traders have echoed Nakidde's sentiment about *kiwangaazi*. The variety was introduced as a pilot in 2010, but

the banana has met overwhelming demand.

Dr Jorome Kubiriba, the head of the banana research team that developed the M9 variety, says it was introduced to address the low productivity which had been occasioned by pests and diseases.

"Black sigatoka has been causing 50% loss as it eats all the banana leaves which are the kitchen for the banana. But since 2010 when we released the new hybrid variety to farmers for demonstration, the results have been amazing," he said.

In addition to being disease-resistant, Kubiriba says M9 or *kiwangaazi* picks up faster and produces 10% more than the other varieties.

As a result, currently 10% of farmers are already growing *kiwangaazi* and more are coming on board. Traditionally, non-banana growing areas such as the northern Uganda have come on board.

The variety, according to Kubiriba also produces much bigger bunches than the other varieties. A bunch weighs as heavy as 30kg, while the majority of the varieties weigh about 15 kilogrammes, he explained.

Nakidde says she sells a bunch between sh30,000 and sh35,000.

Fred Kamoga, an agricultural officer, who also grows *kiwangaazi*, says the demand both for the suckers and the banana for consumption is currently overwhelming supply.

He says: "At first, we used to have a problem in the marketing, but right now we sensitised our people and they have embraced it."

However, the three warn that unlike some of the varieties which farmers harvest before maturity for the market, doing the same for *kiwangaazi* compromises it.

"This new variety encounters problems in the market only when it is harvested prematurely because customers will complain of the hardness," Nakidde says.



The M9 variety has a long shelf life. Photo by Agnes Nantambi