

Monitor Farm Clinic inspired Ayugi to open banana and poultry farms



Farmers and students take notes during the Monitor Farm Clinic early this year. FILE PHOTO

Catherine Ayugi, a banker with Opportunity Bank, Kampala, is enjoying the fruits of Monitor Farm Clinics, writes Denis Bbosa

In starting up life changing projects, good decisions tend to lead to great achievements whereas bad decisions lead to disaster.

Catherine Ayugi, a novice farmer who works with Opportunity Bank in Kampala, has chosen to follow *Seeds of Gold* magazine and the Monitor Farm clinics for guidance in her growing farming venture in Mboga-Luweero.

"I'm the first person to venture into farming in my family. I was inspired to join the project by reading *Seeds of Gold* Magazine and watching *On The Farm* program

on NTV," says Ayugi, who has since attended two Farm clinics at Kabanyolo and Nangabo.

"Last year at Kabanyolo, we learned poultry which impressed me into starting out a business. At Nangabo, we were given piggy lessons like construction of pig sty and feeding the animals cheaply. I'm going to this weekend's Farm clinic at Kabanyolo to concentrate on banana production because I have already planted one acre of bananas on my 10 acreage land in Mboga-Luweero," Ayugi said.

Abundant expectations

Ayugi, who has also planted two acres of eucalyptus, says she plans to increase her banana plantation to five acres soon if she gets the proper advice today from the expert facilitators and experienced farmers set to attend.

"I want to learn about other types

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ACRES AYUGI INTENDS TO PLANT HER BANANAS AFTER TODAY'S MONITOR FARM CLINIC

of bananas apart from the Kisanu, Kihuzi, Mhawzirume, Mpologoma, Ndizi, Gonga and Bogoya species that I have planted so far," she reveals with great anticipation.

She intends to meet and share her experience with farmers who already have water drills on their farms to share knowledge how she can navigate through drought spells.

"I want to know how much it will cost me to set up a water pump

on my large farm and also ask the experts how I can merge piggy to banana production like the stories of successful farmers I have been reading," Ayugi, who now employs only one worker says. Even when her farming project is still in its nascent days (she started actual farming this year), challenges like commuting the 'long' distance from her work place in Kampala to Luweero and having no readily available water source tag along.

Advice to corporate farmers

"Even with a white collar job, someone with space should right away start farming because it is the way to go.

"I saved to buy the 10 acres and also got some small loans to do something I think will soon become income generating."

trending now' CALVING DETECTOR, NEW WAY TO MANAGE CALVING

Farmers can now know when their cows are about to give birth from whatever distance they are, thanks to calving detector.

Described by dairy experts as individual-cow maternity monitoring device, calving detector was developed by a French manufacturer Media and it has been tested in most parts of the world.

This system uses thermometer equipped boluses inserted interovaginally in cows, typically a week after their anticipated due date.

"With this set and connected with mobile phones, a farmer will receive a text message on activated bolus and the time and date it was inserted," said Justine Kinaro, veterinary expert.

He says text alert message can be sent to up to six pre-programmed cell-phone members.

The thermometer will detect a significant drop in temperature signaling labour time and that delivery is eminent within about 48 hours.

Another text message is sent when the animal's water breaks and the bolus expelled. This can be



programmed with allowance of time for natural labouring.

"This can help farmers at night and while away at other functions to monitor their cows which are about to give birth," said Kinaro.

Necessary assistance can therefore be arranged for the cow if need be.

Kinaro says that these gadgets are still unavailable in Kenyan market and that dairy farmers can make orders for these gadgets at \$15 which is about Shs52, 000.

Anyway for farmers who cannot afford this, it is advisable that they can monitor by themselves a number of activities exhibited by the cow when about to give birth.

These include increased lying and standing events, increased tail movements and decreased rumination. "We encourage dairy farmers to embrace this technology," said Kinaro.

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