

Kabega adds value to milk, earns big

After attending a Heifer International Uganda project which mainly aims at helping farmers engage in value addition, Brian Kabega is making money by processing milk into yoghurt, writes Lominda Afedraru

45,000

MONEY THAT KABEGA STARTED WITH IN 2014

A Luwero District dairy farmer, Brian Kabega, a graduate in Dairy Industry and Business from Makerere University is reaping from milk after adding value to it to produce yoghurt.

Kabega who lives in Luwero District, says the doors of prosperity were opened to him in 2014 after completing a short course at Bukalasa Agricultural College in Animal Production and Management.

Starting

Kabega reveals he conceived the idea of producing yoghurt in 2014 after completing school and attending a short course organised by Heifer International Uganda.

The project helps smallholder farmers engage in value addition.

"After university, Heifer International Uganda through a project *Fermented Food for Life* dealing in yoghurt culture products, encouraged us to embrace the business and earn a better living," he recalls.

After that engagement, Kabega collected some money from family and friends to buy a locally made yoghurt processing plant which includes two big saucepans and a thermometer.

With the plant installed at his parent's home, Kabega was left with just Shs45,000 which he used to buy milk from dairy farmers in Luwero.

"I started small. The yoghurt made on my first attempt was distributed free of charge to town dwellers of Luwero who would return to buy when real production

started," he explains.

The process

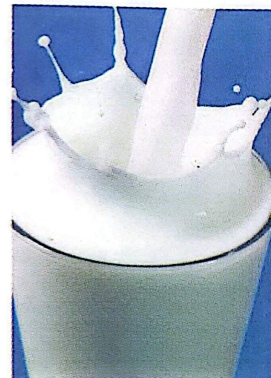
"I have since graduated to four big saucepans, two cans and a thermometer. The thermometer helps me to read the temperatures while the production process is underway," he said.

For one to process good yoghurt the milk quality must also be good and it must not be diluted with water.

It is then boiled with heat vapour from boiling water because when it is boiled directly it reduces the life span.

"Boil it up to 60 degrees Celsius and apply sugar but for sugar free yoghurt you can avoid this stage. You can then heat it up to 85 degrees Celsius and allow it to cool up to 45 degrees Celsius.

You can then apply culture which is in powder form and cover it for



Brian Kabega (R) displays his yoghurt during the Seeds of Gold Farm Clinic at Kabanyolo in Gayaza PHOTO BY LOMINDA AFEDRARU

CHOOSING MILK, STARTER CULTURE

Making yoghurt at home for you and your family is fun, easy and can save you a lot of money in the long run! To make yoghurt at home, all you need is bacteria (also known as a yogurt starter culture) and milk.

Even better, yoghurt making does not require any specialised equipment.

Choosing yoghurt milk

You have several options when it comes to selecting a yoghurt starter culture and type of milk to use to make yoghurt at home. While the

basic process for making yoghurt at home is the same for all types of yoghurt starters and milk (simply add the bacteria to the milk and let it culture) there are some degrees to using different yoghurt starters and milk.

When choosing a yoghurt starter, consider how each type works, and choose the one that best fits your lifestyle. Some starter cultures are direct-set or single-use, meaning each packet of starter will make one batch of yogurt. Other starter cultures are heirloom or reusable, meaning that you can make yoghurt over and

over again by using a bit of yoghurt from your previous batch as a starter.

Market

Kabega has established a chain of market in Luwero District. "I supply my yoghurt to supermarkets that pay on a weekly basis. We also sell big to students and walk-ins," he notes. He packs his yoghurt in 150 millilitres to five litre packs. 150 millilitres cost Shs1,000 while five litres go for Shs30,000.

Profits

Kabega reveals the business has since sprouted and today he is able to process 80 litres of milk into yoghurt.

"The business is booming every day farmers bring in milk and we buy it a subsidised fee," says Kabega who confirms he is able to save Shs200,000 per month from his smallholder processing plant.

Benefits

Kabega has been able to expand his business using the profits from monthly sales.

He is also planning to buy a car to transport his products to the various market centres in Luwero Town and Nakasongola District.

Challenges

More often, Kabega gets issues with his distributors who sell milk diluted with water. He also has challenges in debt collections. "Most supermarkets are cheats. They take our products and default on payment," he observes.

When choosing milk for making yoghurt, take into consideration how the milk will interact with the yoghurt starter culture and affect the yoghurt's final thickness and texture. For non-dairy milk you will need to use a vegan starter culture which is common on the market. Depending on the yoghurt starter culture you select, you may need to apply heat to your milk to prepare it for culturing. The procedure for culturing a batch of mesophilic yogurt with pasteurized milk does not require any heat.