

Beekeeping emerges as a game changer for Kibuku farmers

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In the quiet villages in the eastern districts of Kibuku and Pallisa, a new wave of economic transformation is taking shape not through large factories or expensive machinery, but through the gentle buzzing of bees.

For years, many farmers in Kibuku and Pallisa depended solely on subsistence farming, growing crops such as maize, cassava and millet.

However, unpredictable weather patterns, declining soil fertility and fluctuating market prices often left households struggling to meet basic needs.

Today, beekeeping is emerging as an alternative source of income, offering hope and financial stability to many families across the region.

Speaking during the celebration to mark the World Bee Day, organised by Bukedi Beekeeping Association (BUBA), Mr Isaac Gambengere, a bee farmers' coordinator

from Bukedi, explained the event was meant to promote a partnership that unites stakeholders in pollinator protection.

"This day is meant to raise awareness about the ecological and economic importance of bees and also to showcase innovations in sustainable beekeeping and honey production," he said, adding that the meeting was aimed at engaging communities in conversation through education, and cultural expressions that advocate for practices and systems that support agriculture and pollinator-friendly practices.

The World Bee Day is commemorated every May 20, and highlights the indispensable roles of bees and other pollinators in sustaining ecosystems, agriculture and human well-being.

This year's theme "Tame bees, eat honey, save environment" emphasises collective action, partnerships among communities, governments, NGOs and individuals to

WHY THIS MATTERS

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safeguard pollinators. Bees are vital for biodiversity and food security, yet they face threats from climate change, pesticides use and habitat loss.

Under the shade of mango trees, dozens of modern beehives now hang in community apiaries. Farmers who once viewed beekeeping as a minor activity are beginning to appreciate its economic value.

"I used to rely only on crop farming, but during dry seasons I earned very little," said Mr Jimmy Kamwada, a local farmer from Kibuku.

"Since I started beekeeping, I can now sell honey and support my children's education and also meet other basic needs."

Mr Gabengere, said the growing interest in apiculture has been driven by increased awareness, training programmes, and support from extension workers and development organizations.

The farmers are being trained in modern hive management, honey harvesting, processing and packaging techniques to improve both quality and productivity.

"Unlike many agricultural enterprises, beekeeping requires relatively low startup capital and minimal land. He said that this has made it especially attrac-

tive to women, youth and small-scale farmers looking for affordable ways to improve household incomes," he said.

Mr Gabengere further explained that beyond income generation, bees also play a critical role in pollination, which improves crop yields and enhances food security.

Farmers involved in beekeeping report better harvests in nearby gardens due to increased pollination of crops such as sunflower, beans and fruits.

Local leaders believe the sector has the potential to reduce poverty and unemployment if more investment is directed toward value addition and market access.

"There is a growing demand for organic honey both locally and internationally," Mr Gabengere explained. "If farmers are organised into cooperatives and supported with equipment, beekeeping can significantly transform livelihoods."

Challenges

Despite the progress, challenges remain. Some farmers still lack modern harvesting equipment, while others struggle with limited access to reliable markets, poor storage facilities and inadequate processing technology can also affect the quality of honey produced.

Nevertheless, optimism remains high among communities embracing the practice.

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However, as the sun sets across the rolling landscapes of Kibuku, the sound of buzzing bees has become more than just a part of nature—it is now a symbol of resilience, opportunity, and a sweeter future for farming communities.

Mr Gabengere also noted that

with continued support and investment, beekeeping may soon become one of Kabuku's most powerful tools for economic transformation and sustainable rural development.

The chairperson of Kadama youth beekeepers, Mr William Njeda said the benefits that members have realized from beekeeping have helped them to transform their lives.

"The farmers are able to meet their basic needs like educating their children, and other bills. It's a good enterprise which is giving hope to the farmers to move out the poverty cycle," Mr Njeda said. Adding that, "we encourage the people to embrace beekeeping as an alternative that will drive people out of poverty."

Mr Vincent Dudule, the chairperson of Abakali Tusimbe Amaka group said farmers are able to earn some good money out of this enterprise.

"The Association is able to sell honey and other by-products. At the start, we sought, it was not viable but farmers are not regretting because of the tangible results," he said.

Mr Nathan Waiswa, also the chairperson of integrated organic farmers association said that beekeeping has turned into a lucrative business that will eventually give hope to farmers.

"Farmers at the start had negative mindset about beekeeping but interesting so many farmers are yarning to embrace the project," he said.

Adding that, "We are able to earn some good money out of the project. The enterprise of beekeeping is taking a rise in the communities."

The Kibuku district production officer, Mr Michael Mbayo, challenged farmers to take on beekeeping as one of the viable enterprises.

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Mr Isaac Gambengere, the coordinator of Bukedi Beekeeping Association trains farmers on management of bees. PHOTO/MUDANGHA KOLYANGHA