Kamasanyu: The farmer who turned goats into gold

Joy Kamasanyu started her farming project with 50 Savannah cross-breed goats in 2010.

BY DAN WANDERA

When you set foot into Nabitanga Sub-county, Lwemiyaga County in Sembabule District and ask about goat farming, the name Joy Kamasanyu features prominently.

Kamasanyu, a resident of Kyanja B Village, is quick to testify about her earlier struggles to educate her children and the sudden breakthrough when she zeroed on the improved Savannah cross-breed goats to break the chain of poverty.

Widowed in 1994 and left with school-going children who needed tuition fees, among other challenges, Kamasanyu who earlier tried several farming projects, including local cattle breeds, found solace in a goat farming project introduced by the government in 2010.

"I had no big idea about goat farming until 2010 when the goat bulking project under the Ministry of Agriculture Animal Industry and Fisheries (Maaif) was introduced to farmers in Sembabule District. I was among the first recipients of the Savannah cross-breed goats. I received 50 goats in 2010," she reveals.

Kamasanyu received the first batch of the Savannah cross breed goats from the goat breeding centre at Sembeguya Estates located at Ntuusi Sub-county, Sembabule District. Owing to the fact that the goats produce between two and three kids in a period of seven months, the farm soon expanded.

In less than two years, she was a proud farmer owning more than 250 goats at her farm. Currently, Kamasanyu has at least 300 goats on her farm, purposely for meat.

"The good side with goat farming is that they multiply quickly and are easy to maintain unlike the cattle. When you maintain hygiene and manage the feeding, the Savannah cross-breed goats can be highly paying. I managed to pay university tuition for my children, and have constructed a modest house for the family," she says.

Due to the passion for the farming projects, I undertook several farming training sessions on how to manage and care for livestock, Kamasanyu explains.



Joy Kamasanyu at her farm in Kyanja B village, Nabitanga Sub-county in Sembabule District. PHOTO BY DAN WANDERA

"I had the land to establish the farm for both the goats and cattle. My worry had earlier been on establishing a chain link fence to protect the goats from escaping, but this was resolved using locally improvised material boosted by the technical advice from farming experts," she says.

Except for periods when the goats at Kamasanyu's farm have required de-worming and regular vaccination, the goats that are now a mixture of the local cross-breeds and the Savannah breeds are a lucrative business because people love the goat meat.

For Kamasanyu, she did not only get the chance to benefit from the goat bulking project at its inception in 2010, but was also a beneficiary of the second programme under Maaif, where she received another batch consisting of 50 cross-breed goats. This was because of her exceptional performance in the initial project.

Survival tips

While Kamasanyu is not immune to setbacks like any other farmer, such as thieves who once broke into her farm and stole 70 goats, determination, knowledge sharing and acquisition of modern farming skills have been instrumental to her progress as a goat farmer.

To check break-ins at her farm, Kamasanyu has since enhanced security at her farm by investing in the security cameras.

She also invested in the solar-powered water pump to ensure that both the goats and cattle have a reliable supply of clean water at the farm.

"The goats and cattle do not move long distances in search of water because of the solar-powered water pump at my farm. This has protected the animals against diseases spread from interacting with animals from neighbouring farms that could possibly be diseased and not vaccinated," Kamasanyu says.

Because the goat farming project is commercial-based, she reveals that book-keeping at her farm is very key.

"I take record of all activities at my farm working together with my employees. I spend more than 70 percent of my time on the farm. This has helped in monitoring the animal behaviour and identifying the ones that need special attention at a particular time. I record all the different changes and ensure that the veterinary teams visit the farm," Kamasanyu says.

Kamasanyu has also diversified her farm projects to include the banana and coffee plantations, but she says the goats continue to provide most of her income.

Building a modest house

Kamasanyu says residing in a small house that had almost become dilapidated, yet many people admired her prosperous goat farm, remained a big challenge.

This was what inspired her to construct a modern house powered with a heavy-duty solar-power system, thanks to the proceeds from the goat farming project.

"I have not bought a car for myself yet, but I managed to educate my children and build a good house. I am proud to say my status as a widow that began when I was just 31 years has changed," she says.

At Nabitanga Sub-county, several farmers have picked a leaf from Kamasanyu and are now reaping the benefits of their endeavours.

Goat feeding

At Kamasanyu's farm, a variety of pastures are fed to the goats. The pasture include the high protein content fodder grasses.

The goats that are now a mixture of the Savannah cross-breeds, the Boer goats and local cross-breeds feed on the local fodder grasses planted at the farm, including napier, guinea and calliandra, among other grasses, she says.

GOAT BULKING PROJECT

In Sembabule District, the goat bulking project, according to the officials, started in 2005. The farmers that originally received 50 cross-breed goats each under the project are 450. A total of 263 of the beneficiaries have received at least 100 goats in two major cycles to boost the goat bulking project. Statistics show that a farmer who receives 50 cross breed goats will be able to get 160 kids in 14 months. When mature, each goat could earn the farmer a minimum of Shs250,000 after six months for each goat sold, but some goats fetch up to Shs450,000, according to Mr Paul Sembeguya a goat farming consultant in Sembabule. Paul Muluga, the Sembabule District Veterinary Officer, says goat rearing is among the most viable projects boosting incomes of the farmers in the district. "Goats, unlike other livestock, have a shorter gestation period, which explains why they multiply faster."

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