

The different farming ventures sitting on about 70 acres generate over sh100m per season



Kamasaka grows beans on his mixed farm



Kamasaka with his wife Evas in the onion garden



A bunch of bananas costs sh25000-sh30,000



Evas mulching tomato seedlings on the farm

MIXED FARM ENRICHES KAMASAKA

For the fourth year running, Vision Group together with the Embassy of the Netherlands, KLM Airlines, dfcu Bank and Koudjis Animal Nutrition, is running the best farmers' competition. The 2018 competition will run from February to November, with the awards in December. Every week, Vision Group platforms will publish profiles of the farmers. Winners will walk away with sh150m and a fully paid-for trip to the Netherlands

By Wilson Asimwe and Lawrence Mucunguzi

Using his retirement package, in 2012, Robert Kamasaka ventured into farming. He opted for poultry, agro-forestry, bananas, coffee and dairy farming.

The 62-year-old, who was the former LGS chairman for Kamwenge district, financed his ventures with savings. While still working with the Government, Kamasaka bought land in Ntutu village in Kamwenge district.

The farm, sits on about 70 acres. Kamasaka and his wife, Evas, run the farm. The couple grows eucalyptus trees, onions, beans, maize, coffee as well as sweet and Irish potatoes. They also grow tomatoes, eggplants, groundnuts, watermelon, mangoes, oranges, lemons, cabbages and pineapples. The farm generates over sh100m per season.

Coffee Kamasaka says he started with three acres of coffee in 2002.

He says coffee trees start yielding highly in the fourth year and will continue prime production for about 10 years.

"Coffee trees may live on for 60 years, but the plants need to be pruned often," Kamasaka says.

Today, he is growing coffee on over 20 acres and harvests twice a year. The coffee has been inter-cropped with beans and groundnuts.

Kamasaka says a coffee tree can grow to a height of 16ft-40ft. In most coffee plantations, the trees are kept at 6ft to get the best yield and for easy harvesting.

He says coffee trees can grow to 10 feet wide if given ample room, but can be pruned if the space is not enough.

"Pruning may involve pinching to produce a bushier plant, or you may cut back right down to where only two branches are left near the bottom of the trunk," Kamasaka says.

He says rainfall and sunshine should be plentiful to allow berries to mature. In addition, good drainage for the soil is a must for coffee.

The harvest

Kamasaka says coffee berries should be harvested when red and sun-dried before being processed.

"I process my coffee because we have a processing machine in our community and I use the husks in my banana plantation as

One must keep records to know how much comes in from each venture

mulch," Kamasaka says.

He believes in good post-harvest handling, which involves picking only ripe berries, drying them on clean mats or tarpaulins before sale.

Kamasaka harvests over 60 bags of coffee each season from a four-acre garden. Each bag weighs between 100kg and 110kg. Kamasaka sells his coffee to exporters at around sh6,000 per kilogramme.

His coffee garden located at Kicece along Mahyoro Road is equally productive and since it is close to a swamp, is not affected by drought. He also sprays his coffee to prevent diseases.

Trees

Kamasaka has planted eucalyptus trees on 20 acres.

"As elderly people, a eucalyptus forest is an easy enterprise to depend on as long as it is protected from bush fires. It does not require a lot of labour and one does not have to worry about pests and fertiliser application," he says.

The trees are harvested in bulk. Each mature tree sells at sh100,000, while the damaged ones and the branches cost between sh3,000 and sh5,000.

Bananas

Kamasaka's banana garden sits on four acres and he planted Mpologoma, a local breed, which he got from Kyenjojo district. He has also started selling suckers.

Kamasaka harvests between 20 and 25 bunches every week. He sells each at sh25,000-sh30,000. This translates to about



The two dairy cows produce over 60 litres of milk every day

sh750, 000 per week.

"I do not need to transport my milk to the market. Traders from Kampala and the nearby areas pick them from my farm," he says.

To ensure high productivity, he uses only organic manure comprising poultry droppings, and dung from the livestock.

"I also ensure that the plantation is clean so as to control the banana bacterial wilt disease, which recently affected many plantations in my district, but mine were spared," he says.

Fruits

Kamasaka has a 10-acre orchard on which he grows pineapples, lemons and mangoes. He earns approximately sh10m from the fruits during each of the two seasons every year.

"My fruits have ready market. Mangoes are sold at sh500 and sh1,000 depending on the size and the season, while pineapples go for sh1,500 and sh2,000," Kamasaka says.

He says he sells most of his fruits in

What others say

George Ndbabika Kamasaka has taught us a lot. We learn from his farm because he has the best farming practices.

Jovla Kabasinguzi I have also established my plantation with banana suckers from Kamasaka and I am still learning a lot from him.

Kamwenge and Ibanda markets. Kamasaka says he earns approximately sh100m per year from all the enterprises after deducting all the costs.

Kamasaka's climate-smart practices

Evas Kamasaka says they employ farming methods which conserve the environment and tap natural resources.

The couple mulch their gardens and use organic manure to retain the moisture and fertility of the soil.

"I use maize stalks and coffee husks to mulch and fertilise the soil in the banana plantation and I have also dug contours to conserve the soil by controlling soil erosion," Kamasaka says.

"There were many gulleys carrying away the top soil until I was taught how to mulch and dig trenches," Evas says.

Kamasaka has planted fodder trees such as Calliandra and Lucerne (alfalfa) in the

trenches that were dug in the fruit, banana and coffee gardens. These provide feeds for his livestock.

There are fruit trees, which act as windbreaks. There are pine trees on the hillsides to stop water run-offs.

In turn, the manure got from the animals is used in the banana, coffee and fruit gardens, which has helped to increase yields.

Kamasaka set up an irrigation system with assistance from National Agriculture Research Organization (NARO), which has helped him counter the effects of dry spells.

He says drought affected many farmers in the previous season and with the irrigation facility he will mitigate the effects of drought.

He says he has also left intact the swamps which are near his farm.



DAIRY FARMING

Kamasaka has two dairy cows, which produce over 60 litres of milk. He sells the milk to the people around his village at sh1,200 per litre, which translates to sh72,000 daily.

Kamasaka has a cooler which he uses to keep his milk fresh.

He gives his cows napier grass from his farm.

"I used to keep many cows, but I sold most of them and remained with few which are productive and manageable," he says.

SOCIAL IMPACT

1 Several farmers have visited Kamasaka's farm to learn some of the best farming practices like mulching and soil conservation.

2 He also pays school fees for the children of his farm workers and some of the residents. "I have some people who have children in higher institutions of learning, but they cannot afford to pay tuition fees. I employ such people and pay for their children and several parents have benefited through that arrangement," Kamasaka says.

3 He donates tree seedlings to farmers so that they can plant the trees to mitigate the effects of climate change.

depending on the work done," Kamasaka says. He applies pesticides to the fruits to control pests and diseases. This costs sh500,000.

Kamasaka says he does not incur any costs on fertilisers since he uses organic manure from the livestock and coffee husks.

Achievements

Kamasaka has invested in several businesses using proceeds from the sale of farm products.

"I have established Equatorial College, in Ibanda with an enrolment of over 900 students. The food the students feed on comes from my farm," he says.

He is also constructing a storeyed home. "With proceedings from my farm, I have realised that I need a much bigger house where I will be staying with my family. All the children have completed university," Kamasaka says.

Kamasaka has also bought a tipper lorry, which is used to transport farm products to the market.

Challenges

Kamasaka says monkeys destroy his fruits, coffee and maize.

"I employed people to guard my farms against monkeys which devastate our crops and at times I suffer losses," Kamasaka says.

He says the roads to his farm are in a poor state, which gets worse during rainy seasons, making it difficult for his clients to access the farm.

He also says that price fluctuation of agricultural produce also affects his earnings.

Plans

"I intend to install an irrigation plant and also

expand the tree project. I want to become the biggest supplier of electricity poles and materials in the region," he says.

"I have got irrigation equipment which I am going to install to help me during the dry spells," Kamasaka says.

Mistakes made

Kamasaka says he started with many cows, which he kept on a large piece of land and their production was low.

"I kept over 70 cows, but their milk production was very low, yet I was spending a lot of money on them. I later learnt that could just keep few cows under zero grazing and earn a lot from them," he says.

Increasing knowledge Kamasaka regularly interacts with extension workers who advise him on how to farm.

"I have extension workers who farm almost every week and help Kamasaka says.

He has visited several farms to learn best practices and how best he can be armed with technical resources like the Harvest 2 and attending all Harvest says they were compelled agricultural enterprises.

Value-addition Kamasaka has a mill to process his maize.

"We process our package it. We have the near future," he



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