

# FARMING *Innovations*

Creative solutions to the challenges you face on your farm

## USES OF SHEA NUT

- Food spice
- Improves skin conditions, including blemishes, wrinkles, eczema, and dermatitis
- Nourishes the skin with Vitamins A, E and F
- Reduces acne and scarring
- Prevent premature wrinkles and facial lines
- Heals skin wounds and cracks



# Turning shea nut oil to cash

By Patrick Okino

A shea tree takes 20 years to fruit. Ngetta Zonal Agricultural Research Development Institute (ZARDI) is conducting a research to reduce the years it takes to fruit.

Shea trees grow wildly in the equatorial belt, including northern Uganda. For the last six years, researchers at Ngetta in Lira district have been trying to domesticate the tree, with emphasis on shortening its growth span and producing seedlings that can be transplanted and commercialised. The domestication will also reduce fears of its extinction due to charcoal burning.

According to Surjit Singh, the director of Guru Nanak Oil Mills, a company that buys and adds value to the nut in Lango region, shea butter and other products are becoming expensive worldwide.

### Domesticating shea trees

Although the tree grows wildly, the National Forestry Resources Research Institute is in the final stages of domesticating it. It means one would be able to get seedlings to plant it.



Raw nut on a shea tree. The Government plans to popularise the crop

Seed propagation has so far proved 70% success rates.

Different shea tree types are being tested for genetic viability and there is a possibility of developing individuals with reduced fruiting period of four to five years. Once this is done, the tree will become commercially viable.

At the institute, the seedlings are

being grafted before transportation. These take one to two years in the nursery bed.

"The results show that shea trees can be propagated and planted, just like other trees," Moses Okao, an agro forestry scientist at Ngetta ZARDI, says.

The World Bank and the Government, are funding the

innovation.

The trial fields were set up in Otuke, Agago, Pader, Lamwo and Amuru districts to woo farmers to prepare their gardens to grow shea trees.

According to Okao, 162 shea nut trees have been planted in the demonstration field and 1,000 seedlings are to be sold to farmers at a cost of sh5,000 each.

Okao said research indicated the growth of the trees and maturity for fruiting is affected by bushfires and lack of management.

### Processors happy

Surjit Singh welcomed the initiative of reducing the maturity time of shea nut tree, saying they will sensitise farmers to embrace it.

"Last year, we spent about sh1b

on buying shea nuts. With the innovation, we shall buy the fruits easily. We are sensitising people not to cut down shea nut trees," he said.

James Onyanga, who collects the wild fruits and sells them to Guru Nanak, said if they are provided with shea nut seedlings for cultivation, farmers across the region will be in a position to end poverty.

"We realised there is a lot of money in shea nut fruits and if the National Agricultural Research Organisation is doing research to reduce the maturity time of the trees, it will help a lot," he said. Guru Nanak buys a kilo of shea nut fruits at sh2,000 from farmers.

"We have started planting the trees in nursery beds and, I think, we shall start realising the harvest soon," he added.

*Get in touch*

Are you or anyone you know using innovative methods to improve farming?

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