

Buhweju farmers cry out for hass avocado seedlings



Mr Mwije Eriterino, the manager of BCTI Hass Avocado Farm, says a kilogramme of hass avocado comprises four fruits. PHOTO/JULIUS BYAMUKAMA

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BY JULIUS BYAMUKAMA

Smallholder farmers in Buhweju District have requested government, through the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF) to support them with hass avocado seedlings. This, they hope will increase their household income.

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which require bigger chunks of land.

According to Mr Godfrey Byamukama, a farmer who has experienced the benefits of growing the specie, once the government donates hass avocado seedlings, 'they would have answered the question of what locals can grow on a small piece of land in Buhweju.'

'I am looking at an average of 100 seedlings per household. This can help those with small pieces

of land who cannot afford to grow tea or coffee. On behalf of other farmers, we therefore seek government support in this regard even if it is a one off,' Mr Byamukama said.

Buhweju, Mr Byamukama says, has a population of about 170,000 people - about 30,000 households - which will require about 3.4m seedlings.

An acre of land can accommodate about 160 seedlings of hass avocado.

'If one has half an acre of land, that is already 80 seedlings from which one can earn more than Shs10m annually,' he said.

Although the District Woman MP-elect, Ms Nnamara Annet Oyes Byamukama says through the

Buhweju Community Transformation Initiatives Limited (BCTI), she has supported women growers by giving them pigs, coffee and hass avocado seedlings, this is not enough.

'The women are sustaining themselves and their families but we still call upon government for support,' she said.

'I am one of the farmers with a hass avocado farm and locally have been inspired to do the same. With government support of at least 100 seedlings of hass avocado more income will be generated in a short period of time,' Ms Nnamara noted.

Ms Nnamara's estimation, just like Mr Byamukama's is Shs140,000 per tree annually.

'Imagine if you have 100 trees of hass avocado, that is an income of about Shs14m. Farmers have picked interest but they cannot afford to pay for the seedlings on their own,' she said.

BCTI hass avocado farm manager Mr Eriterino Mwije, says a hass avocado plantation can easily be maintained since it does not require too much care compared to fruits such as apples.

'On this small piece of land, we have coffee, a banana plantation and hass avocado. After harvest, one kilogramme comprises four fruits which is sold at Shs3,500. One tree can yield about 40 to 80 kilogrammes,' Mr Mwije noted, adding that if harvested properly it can remain fresh for two weeks.

'This makes it easy to transport before getting spoilt. As regards intercropping, it allows for other crops to coexist in the same environment which is not feasible with ordinary avocado species.'

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