

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 George Blita

Ever since Rev. Can. Dr. Tom Tuma officially stopped being a shepherd of men, his attention has shifted to pigs.

ON his 15-acre Twiza Mixed Farm, piggyery is the main enterprise as others are in their foundation stages. In many cases, piggyery is synonymous with an offensive stench. Not the case at Tuma's farm. He explains that the daily cleaning of the concrete floor and the good feeding habits have helped to do away with a foul odour.

Genesis

In 1985, Tuma who had been impressed by farms in Europe while he was at school, purchased 10 acres in Walukuba village, Bulamogi sub-county in Iganga district.

Using savings from a lecturing job he held at one of the universities in Nairobi – while he was in exile – Tuma set up a farm.

"I set up a farmhouse in 1990 that was also the family holiday home. On weekends we would leave Jinja and stay there to enjoy the quiet of the countryside," Tuma recollects.

Almost 15 years ago, he bought 10 Friesian cows at sh15m to supply milk on the local market.

"However, I had underrated the demanding nature of the venture. The farm-keeper was not that committed and the cows got emaciated within six months," he laments. Dairy cattle need a lot of care, especially with feeding and cleanliness of the shed. Unless they are fed properly, they cannot produce enough milk.

He narrates that he opted to abandon the enterprise and sold all the cattle. Tuma then went into piggyery, almost eight years ago.

"I opted for the cambarough breed of pigs. I can confidently say that there are no regrets for choosing this profitable project," Tuma emphasises. Cambarough are a hybrid breed with both good mothering and pork traits.

To ensure success of the venture, Tuma says he undertook regular farm trips to learn from other farmers across Busoga and the rest of the country.

"I also attended farming workshops and agricultural shows regularly to update my knowledge. I kept asking myself that if those who never went to school can make profits from the farm, how about me?" Tuma notes.

Pig sales

Nicholas Matege, the farm manager, reveals that each of the 10 sows on the farm produces an average of 10 piglets on each of the three deliveries in a year.

"A one-month old piglet goes for sh100,000 at the farm. That means with 100 piglets annually, almost sh30m is earned," he discloses.

He adds that after the deduction of the monthly wages of sh150,000 for each of the workers plus expenses on feeds, a net profit of sh20m is realised from the pigs.

FRAUD ALERT!

Do not be duped! Entering the Best Farmers' competition is free-of-charge and journalists are facilitated to write the story. The winners are not chosen by an individual, but by a panel of distinguished judges of integrity. If anyone asks for money from you, it is a fraud.



Currently the piggyery section boasts of 47 pigs in separate pens. Overhanging tree branches on the farm provide the mandatory cool environment needed to keep the pigs in good health.

Labourers and farm security

There are seven workers on the farm. One of them is an askari to ensure that security is guaranteed," Matege says. He explains that incentives such as accommodation, timely payments has kept the turnover rate of labourers at a minimum.

"In 2012, a workers' block was constructed adjacent to the farm house at a cost of about sh8m. This means the workers are easily available to ensure things run smoothly," Matege says.

"Matege says although there is enough room for all workers to stay on the farm, only four do so, while the rest commute from their homes in the community.

Challenges

Sospeter Edhiruma, a farm-help, says monkeys have also been a nuisance of recent, especially after a maize garden was set up on the farm.

"These animals keep raiding young maize gardens to play and they flatten the stems. However, the presence of five dogs bought recently keeps them at bay," Edhiruma says.

Tuma argues that he still has not laid out an effective irrigation system to mitigate the effects of dry spells.

"The last dry spell left most crops dried up. In future I hope to set up a system to water the crops during such times," he insists.

TUMA EARNING FROM PIGS IN RETIREMENT



Matege, the farm manager, attending to one of the sows at the farm in Iganga district

sh30m
The amount Tuma earns from his piggyery farm annually from the sale of piglets



Some of Tuma's two-month-old piglets that he sells to other farmers. Photos by Georne Rita

WHO IS TUMA?



Tom Tuma, 78, was married to Ruth Tuma, the former Jinja district woman MP (now deceased). The couple had four children. He attended Busoga College Mwiri for O'level and Ntare School for A'level. Tuma got a bachelor's of arts degree from Makerere University before proceeding to New York seminary for a master's of divinity in 1969. In 1970, he joined the University of London School of Oriental and African studies to graduate with a PhD in 1973. He returned to Uganda in 1973 to lecture at the Makerere University department of religious studies and philosophy. In 1976, he fled to exile in Nairobi, Kenya to escape from Idi Amin's henchmen hunting down suspected anti-government elements at the Ivory Tower. As a clergy, he served the Church of Uganda for 31 years before retiring from priesthood in 2009.

"The peels are bought from local restaurants at about sh20,000 per day. The boiling process is done by the workers on the premises," Tuma adds.

A five-acre maize garden was set up this year to provide feeds for the pigs. Tuma is optimistic that the maize grown at the farm would offset some of the daily feeding expenditure as almost sh500,000 is spent on maize bran per month.

"We bought Longe 5 maize variety from a farm supplies shop in Mbale at sh250,000. The transport and labour cost sh150,000, while another sh400,000 was used to hire a tractor," he reveals.

Tuma says an attack by armyworms on the maize farm was repulsed by spraying.

Orchard

There are oranges, avocado and pawpaw fruits being grown in the orchard that was started two years ago.

"These were purchased from a nursery at the Jinja agricultural show ground. We are looking forward to our first harvest in the near future," Tuma predicts.

Banana crop

In 2013, he dedicated one acre to bananas and planted 200 suckers procured from Canaan farm in Budondo village, Jinja district at sh250,000.

"Each festive season I can get an estimated sh260,000 from 15 bunches harvested," he says.

To ensure a consistent supply of feeds for his pigs, Tuma buys the peelings from the hoteliers who purchase his bananas.

Best farm practices

• Tuma says he uses only one boar to mate with all the sows to ensure good yields.

• "Once I realise the male pig is getting old, I replace it. It is one way of maintaining the good quality piglets," he says.

• Tuma does not encourage in-breeding at the farm to limit the occurrence of genetic variation in offspring. • "Use the dung from the pigpens as manure for the gardens. Workers collect and dump it in waste bins at designated spots for subsequent application to growing plants," he says.

Community benefits

Matege notes that the locals are being assisted with knowledge on good farming practices such as mulching, pruning and thinning for better yields.

"Whoever wants to learn comes and they get tips," he says.

Matege says some farmers in the neighbourhood bring their sows for breeding at Twiza Mixed Farm.

"In such instances, I first check their pigs for traces of diseases to keep our animals safe. Once they are OK, they are allowed into the boar's sty for mating," Matege, a trained veterinary officer, narrates.

Pans

Tuma plans to start a poultry project and keep turkeys and cross-breed kuroiler layer birds.

"The crossing between kuroilers and local chicken has already been done. My target is to have a disease-resistant variety that would boost profits through egg production," he observes.

including transport, clearing the area as well as planting.

Farm water supply

A borehole was sunk at the farm at a cost of sh10m to ensure regular water supply. It feeds a 1,000-litre tank from where water is supplied to the pigpens by gravitational flow.

"Push-to-open water taps in each sty allows for efficient use of the resource. The pigs that are thirsty simply push their snouts on the valve and let off a jet of water to quench their thirst," Matege says.

He adds that apart from checking wastage, the arrangement ensures that only what is needed is released to avoid wetting the floors, which makes the pens stink as well as cause infections.

Records keeping

Tuma assures that weekly reports are drafted to indicate the expenditure against income for the last seven days.

"I keep a copy, while another remains at the farm house. These records even help us to know whether the feeding is as planned or there were deviations," he adds.

He explains that the involvement of...

FEEDBACK
WHAT OTHERS SAY: Tuma has given us both employment and knowledge

Jane Kasenene, neighbour once took my sow to his farm for mating. The breed of piglets I got was far better than...

Joel Babi, farm labourer the Twiza Mixed Farm is a source of revenue for people like me. I am...

Maj. David Banzalraki, Operation Wealth Creation official have occasionally interacted with him and advised some farm...

Three things to learn from Tuma

- 1 Always stick to quality farm inputs to mitigate risks that may come with having inferior animal or crop quality
- 2 Have services of an expert at the farm as he can identify...