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HOW COLLECTIVE FARMING IS TRANSFORMING OILSEED VALUE CHAIN



Kaala Farmer Group members showing off the cooking oil they get from sunflowers

By Umar Nsubuga

Oilseed farming is reshaping rural livelihoods across Uganda as communities embrace co-operatives and market-oriented production. What began as small, scattered farmer groups is now growing into organised networks that attract stable buyers, improve productivity and strengthen household incomes. Across districts, farmers describe the same turning point. Once they received training, market linkages and institutional support from the National Oil Seeds Project (NOSP), they began to treat farming not only as a source of food, but also as a viable business.

Ambrose Ogang, the chairperson of Te-Opok Community Co-operative Society Limited in Lwala village, Kole district, recalls that their group began in 2016 with only 10 men, focused on oilseed farming. As farmers recognised the potential in sunflower, soybeans and simsim, interest grew steadily. The co-operative has 464 members, including women and youths. After receiving support from the National Oil Seeds Project (NOSP), the group registered formally in 2022.

"That opportunity changed everything. We began value addition and strengthened our systems. The project taught us that farming is a business. Our members now understand spacing, quality control and collective marketing. We are no longer guessing," Ogang explains.

Similar experiences are emerging across northern and eastern Uganda. Dickens Ekwang, a member of Okutuagwe-Ololango Co-operative Society Limited in Chegere village in Apac district, says unity has transformed their fortunes. He notes that selling as individuals made them vulnerable, but once the co-operative was strengthened through NOSP, members were able to bulk sunflower and soybeans and negotiate better prices through structured markets.

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In Soroti district, Joseph Eroju, the vice-chairperson of Ojom-Oculoi-Olwelai Joint Farmers' Co-operative Society Limited, says farmers once lacked a clear market. With NOSP support, members now grow soybeans, simsim and sunflower with confidence since they have been trained, organised and linked to reliable buyers.

The story is similar in Bukedea district. In Kamutur village, Samuel Ooni, the chairperson of Kamutur Oil Seed Farmers' Co-operative Society Limited, attributes their progress to proper guidance.

"With proper training, we grow soybeans, simsim, sunflower and groundnuts. The support improved our yields and record-keeping, which helps us manage farming as a serious business," he says.

Further north in Nakapiripirit district, Sarafina Koote, the marketing manager of Kaala Farmers Group in Lokiyengunet East, says market access has been a breakthrough. Farmers previously lacked structured buyers, but with guidance, they now understand quality standards and

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