

Omoro Farmers Reaping Big

Seed is life and it forms the foundation of high yields and incomes.

Producing high-quality seeds of various crop varieties and increasing access to smallholder farmers and educating them about the benefits are central to improving food security.

As such more than 50 farmers under the Pur Ber youth group in Odek Sub-county, Omoro District have increased their income fourfold from maize after they were trained on the economic awareness of the plant.

According to a survey done by Operations Wealth Creation (OWC) and Equator Seeds Company limited in 2016, the challenge has been lack of awareness among farmers on lack of skills, knowledge on value addition, and inadequate market.

When Equator Seeds, an agro-input firm, was contracted to help mobilise and build the capacity of farmers, the profits margins tripled.



Profits and market

Jimmy Okoyo, a farmer with Pur Ber youth group says he and his colleagues are cashing in since embracing the seeds supplied by Operation Wealth Creation.

Last season when other maize farmers were counting losses, Okoyo and his colleagues were smiling all the way to the banks.

The biggest breakthrough was in 2017 when Equator Seeds enrolled them under contract farming where they would get free seeds and pay later after harvest.

The farmers were very lucky in 2018 when maize prices plunged to record lows to about Shs100 per kilogram.

Because they had signed a contract with Equator Seeds, they sold each kilogram at Shs1, 200.

“The profit margin was good. We sold each kilogram of maize at Shs1200,” says Okoyo.

Benefits

More farmers are now engaged in growing maize in Omoro District as a business.

Farmers are using the skills gained and have cultivated more maize, from which they are realising more harvest and making more value added products for increased income such as maize flour.

Okoyo for instance joined the group in 2016 and took to growing maize and soybeans.

His first born son dropped out of school because of lack of school fees. He had two other children following each other in primary school. This was before the project.

However, from the proceeds of his maize business in which he earned more than Shs22m from four acres last year, Okoyo managed to take back his first born son to school. He also managed to get two of her other children to school.

Challenges

Unpredictable climatic weather has greatly affected the farmers' harvest and this is coupled with pest and diseases.

While the groups' tillage land has increased to more than 100 acres, this too has boosted production which as subsequently caused storage shortage.

Advice

Mr. Tony Okello, the executive director of the company says young people should work in groups to empower themselves and their local communities.

“The younger generation is more informed therefore they should earn from it as they serve others,” says Okello.

Okello has also established market for Uganda cereals in Europe and China.