

MUNYORO MAKES MONEY FROM ONE ACRE LAND ALL-YEAR-ROUND

Robert Munyoro-Aganze's one-acre farm in Manywa Village, Kyanamukaaka Sub-county, Masaka District, is the envy of his peers because of the various agribusiness ventures he engages in, writes Michael J Ssali.

Robert Munyoro-Aganze, of Manywa Village, Kyanamukaaka Sub-county, Masaka District, and his wife Annette live on less than one acre where they have a house and a well-designed compound.

The rest of the land is where the 34-year-old farmer and his wife do most of their farming activities.

His plans

"We also own about half an acre where we have planted elephant grass for feeding the Friesian cow that we intend to get quite soon," says Munyoro.

The family lost their last cow to sickness last year but Munyoro revealed that they hope to purchase another one in a few weeks' time.

"Otherwise our entire crop farming activities and livestock keeping are carried out right here. I received some training during my early youth in how to carry out commercial farming on a small piece of land."

Starting

Having dropped out of school after Senior Two due to school fees issues, he underwent training with a Masaka Diocese supported organisation, Kitovu Mobile, in crop value addition, crop production, animal production, marketing, simple arithmetic, peer counseling and behavioral change.

Out of the various farming activities in that small space the young farmer and father of three already has a well-constructed house, complete with solar lighting, and enjoys an average weekly income of Shs150, 000# which in his home area stands out as a sign of economic progress.

Market

Munyoro also has an arrangement with some restaurants in nearby Masaka Town such as Banana Chick and Valley Cave where he sells green vegetables and his other products.

Some of the buyers go directly to his farm. He also participates in various local agricultural shows in the Greater Masaka Region where he sells both green and dry vegetables.

Some of the vegetables he grows are medicinal – the seeds mainly supplied by his overseas friends who usually come to Uganda on research projects and find themselves attracted to his beautiful compound where they enjoy sitting as they work on their laptops. He has a name for his farm – “Wakaalo Agro-farm Enterprises”--- and he is the chairman of Wakakaalo Youth Farmers’ Group.

Medicinal vegetables

Basil, bitter lemon, coriander and mint are some of the medicinal crops he started growing as he expanded his agribusiness.

“This July we will be finalising the registration process of our group as a company after which we hope to be selling our products in larger markets such as supermarkets in Kampala and other large towns. We intend to go into ginger farming and crushing dried ginger into powder. We are grateful to Dr. Joseph Sserwadda, our veterinary officer, for his insightful guidance in the formation of our youth farmers group. We also owe a lot of gratitude to Farmers Budget Shop in Masaka for providing us with advice and inputs at quite affordable prices,” he says.

One of the medicinal vegetables Munyoro grows is known as basil, which he dries up and sells in powder form. According to him, regular consumption of basil along with food is helpful in fighting cancer, and skin infections. He also claims that basil builds up general body immunity, stimulates appetite, and boosts the brain. Other medicinal herbs growing on his farm include bitter lemon which he turns into juice and he says is good in the fight against diabetes, kidney infections, obesity, stomach ulcers, high blood pressure and some skin disorders.

Other crops

He has different small gardens growing vegetables such as nakati, sukumawiki, dodo, carrots, ntula, and katunkuma.

He also has some jackfruit trees, and pineapples. He pots some ornamental tree seedlings for sale. He rears pigs, rabbits, and local chicken. Their droppings provide the manure for the crops. “The reason I have many different vegetable gardens is that in some month there is an abundance of some vegetables which reduces their prices. So if one type of vegetable loses market, I can sell another type at a good price. If one fails another one succeeds,” he says.

“It is also the reason I went into solar drying of some of my vegetables so that if the prices drop I can dry them up and sell them later at the prices of my choice. The idea is that as a farmer I should keep earning money all the time. Remember also that if I have small gardens it is easy for me to practice irrigation, using water brought to the gardens in 20-litre plastic containers.”

Advice

Munyoro says while mixed farming is beneficial, a farmer risks burning out as he spreads his resources such as time, money and labor to the limit.

“One should plan carefully lest this kind of farming turns out to be a burden as the farmer may be unable to maximise productivity. There is also a challenge with diseases, which may spread from one crop to another, but overall, this kind of farming is better than mono farming,” says Munyoro.

Value addition

He has two solar driers used to dry vegetables and some fruits like local egg-plant varieties, jack fruit and pineapples. “Many people have no opportunity to eat green vegetables or fresh fruits, which, by the way, are a lot cheaper and even more nutritive. What we do here is to dry the vegetables, crush them into powder, pack the powder into well labeled containers, and sell them out at a little higher price,” he says.