

EDITOR'S NOTE

Let us fight maize pests

Maize is the most consumed cereal in the world. In many countries of Africa, for example Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi, DR Congo, it is the staple food. In other countries such as Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi, it is the second highest consumed food.

However, in recent years, maize has suffered from endless pest attacks that may render its production difficult. The biggest threat to maize production in Africa - the armyworm - has attacked again.

With this worm reported in over 30 districts at the moment, it means that the next maize and generally food production will be lower than expected. Hunger and famine will most certainly prevail in many parts of the country.

This is why this worm must be battled with all the efforts that the world can muster. If you compare it to human diseases, the destruction that the worm leaves behind is only comparable to what Ebola does to humans. They attack so swiftly and destroy farms in a few days. This means that governments must institute the same measures adopted against Ebola and similar epidemics in order to handle this scourge. Otherwise without maize, the level of food insecurity will definitely be unmanageable.



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ANKOLE COFFEE FARMERS

In an eight-part series, *Harvest Money* shall carry stories focusing on the success of aBi interventions countrywide. In the third story, **Andrew Masinde** explores the interventions in the coffee sector in Ankole sub-region

At Nyakashamba Primary School in Sheema district, pupils are learning how to differentiate between good and bad coffee, plus the basics of mulching a plantation, among others. The school has one-and-a-half acres of a well-tended coffee plantation that is cared for by the pupils with the help of their teachers. The coffee is inter-cropped with bananas.

The headteacher, Benon Murumba, says they got the idea of planting coffee from Ankole Coffee Producers Co-operative Union (ACPCU). He says pupils and staff were trained on spacing, fertiliser application, weeding and pruning.

"We were also taught about inter-cropping for food security. We inter-cropped coffee with bananas and for the past three years, we have been harvesting bananas for consumption at school and for sale," Murumba says.

From bananas, the school earns an average of sh4.8m per season. From the coffee, he says in the last season, they sold the crop to ACPCU and earned sh5m.

"We use the money to develop the school and improve the staff and children's welfare. ACPCU has helped renovate the school blocks which were dilapidated," he says.

Individual farmers too have benefited from ACPCU. Jennifer Kateeba is a farmer in Rushamba village, Mutara sub-county in Mitooma district. She says many people in her area were growing coffee, but were not making good profit.

However, ACPCU sensitised farmers on how they could improve their coffee to make handsome profits.

"They trained farmers on land selection, fertiliser use, how to dig holes for planting the coffee, pruning, cutting old trees to rejuvenate them, post-harvest handling and market linkages, among others," she says.

Kateeba was selected as a model farmer for the village and was facilitated with sh1.2m to set up a coffee demonstration garden in 2020 and many farmers now learn from her. Besides the demonstration garden, she has three acres of mature coffee trees from which she harvests every season.

aBi



A worker of ACPCU arranging coffee sacks for export



Some of the new ACPCU coffee storage facilities

She also secured sh4m to start a briquettes business. This is to help her earn an extra income as she waits for the coffee harvest, which is seasonal. She was trained by those who supplied her the machine to make briquettes. She was also given free tarpaulins where she dries her coffee. In a season, she harvests 18 to 20 bags (80kg each) of dried coffee and she earns at least sh5m per season.

These are among the thousands of farmers and institutions that are benefiting from ACPCU.

PARTNERSHIP WITH ABI

John Nuwagaba, the general manager of ACPCU, says its growth is largely attributed to the partnership with The Agricultural Business Initiative (aBi) which dates back to 2013. aBi was jointly founded by the governments of Denmark and Uganda in 2010 as a social enterprise that channels development co-operation funding to agribusinesses and agricultural service providers.

aBi aims at building a competitive, profitable and sustainable agriculture and

ABOUT ANKOLE COFFEE PRODUCERS CO-OPERATIVE UNION

John Nuwagaba, the general manager of Ankole Coffee Producers Co-operative Union (ACPCU), says the co-operative is a farmers' organisation that was registered in 2006, but became operational in 2008. The co-operative was established to add value to coffee.

"Our initial capital was sh1.5m, contributed in terms of assets by different well-wishers. These included a weighing scale, tables, chairs and then paying rent and gradually, the co-operative has grown to a capital investment of sh26b and a turnover of sh25b," he says.

Nuwagaba explains that today, ACPCU is a second-grade producer organisation with membership of 26 primary co-operative societies and over 14,200 individual farmers.

He explains that ACPCU is certified by Organic, Fairtrade,

Rainforest Alliance (both are committed to tackling unsustainable production and market practices), ISO 22000, Naturland and Uganda National Bureau of Standards.

Stanley Maniragaba, the operations manager at ACPCU, says from 2008, the co-operative has registered a steady upward trajectory in both volumes of coffee purchases and exports, making it Uganda's leading farmer owned producer/exporter of green coffee.

He says ACPCU's footprint on the coffee industry is through its emphasis on quality improvement with an average cup score of 83% for fine robusta. "This has won us different awards, including Best of The Pearl 2021, UCDA Best Special Category 2018/2019, UCDA Most Compliant Exporter (Quality) 2012/2013," Maniragaba explains.

HELPED TO INCREASE PRODUCTION



John Nuwagaba (right) and a farmer displaying some of their various coffee products

agribusiness sector in support of equitable wealth creation in Uganda.

Nuwagaba says the key collaboration areas have largely been value-chain development support by improving coffee quality through promoting coffee processing and storage facilities.

There is also gender mainstreaming. Both men and women are encouraged to take part in coffee production. Also when it comes to selling coffee, both men and women in the family have to be involved. The others are climate change mitigation, training of farmers in modern post-harvest handling, enhancing sustainable high-quality coffee production, good coffee agronomic practices, among others.

Nuwagaba says the aBi funding was a four-year tier (2017-2021) and the budget was sh8.7b. ACPCU contributed sh2.6b, while aBi contributed sh6b.

Using those funds, ACPCU has established high-quality hulling services. Four hulling plants with stores in key strategic areas in ACPCU's areas of operation have been constructed.

Also, ACPCU has installed four silos with a total capacity of 1,600 metric tonnes at the ACPCU coffee grading plant in Kabwohe town council, which have helped to increase and improve storage of coffee.

"We also used the same funding to build the capacity of over 7,000 farmers - with knowledge in harvesting and post-harvest handling. This was majorly to help increase the quality of the product," Nuwagaba said.

He adds that after the trainings, production

increased, so they got another grant, which they have used to construct a warehouse with a capacity of 3,978 metric tonnes. It has increased ACPCU's storage capacity from 2,400 metric tonnes to 6,378 per season.

Also, construction of a warehouse of 800 metric tonnes, procurement and installation of a grading plant, have made ACPCU to achieve export volumes of 1,520 metric tonnes against the target of 1,100 metric tonnes (by end of project period).

ACHIEVEMENTS

ACPCU has been implementing the project for the last 4 years (October 2017 to December 2021) and the following have been achieved.

- The organisation has earned sh5.7m (95%) from the sale of coffee per acre/season against the project target of sh6m.

- Nuwagaba says the coffee export volumes have increased by 80% of the targeted export volumes.

- He adds that on average, there has been an increase in the number of full container loads from 132 to 150 per sales of sh25b. The sales value peaked at sh27.5b in 2018/2019, but dropped to sh23.7b (94.8%).

- "There was a consistent increase in value of price revision to a tune of about sh1b over the years such as sh1.3b in 2018/2019, sh1.4b in 2019/2020 and sh1.4b in 2020/2021," Nuwagaba says.

- He also says there has been sh800b additional income and on-average price difference of sh551b realised by farmers above the farm gate.

- ACPCU also added six more primary societies as a result of better prices to farmers.

- As a result of the project, more 32 full-time

- equivalent jobs (17 permanent and 15 casual) were created. Also 95 full-time equivalent additional jobs were created (31 permanent and 64 casual). These jobs were created at ACPCU secondary level.

- A total of 8,445 farmers have been reached, 4,784 males and 3,660 females were trained on good agronomic practices. And 88% of farmers trained have adopted at least one good agronomic practice.

- As a result of the project, one modern hulling facility at Kabwohe has been constructed, two environmentally-friendly and efficient two metric tonne/hr hullers as per Uganda Coffee Development Authority policy installed.

- Two additional modern hulling plants with in-built dust control system were constructed at Kagarama in Ntungamo district and Kitagata in Sheema district. These have led to a reduction of hulling costs from sh100 to sh80 per kilogramme processed.

- There has been improved coffee out turn from 52% to 58% and 6,000 farmers are expected to process their coffee at full operation.

- Other achievements are 800 metric tonne storage capacity, 5,578 metric tonne (1,600 metric tonne silos and 3,978 metric tonne warehouse) and 6,000 metric tonne of storage capacity.

- The hulling factories at both Kagarama and Kitagata have storage capacity of 200 metric tonne each. Four silos with capacity of 1,600 metric tonnes installed and a warehouse of 4,000 metric tonne constructed.

- There has been improved traceability of certified coffees - organic, Fairtrade, Naturland, Rain Forest Alliance, ISO 22000 and UNBS. These have increased access to niche markets.

- Increase in coffee purchases from 2,500 metric tonnes in 2016/2017 to 5,056 metric tonnes in 2019/2020. ACPCU export volumes have increased from 2,599 metric tonnes in 2016/2017 to 2,822 metric tonnes in 2020/2021.

- Maniragaba says today, coffee production has increased from 4kg per tree in 2017 to 5kg. Earnings from coffee per acre increased from sh5.2m to per season sh6m.

- Purchases have also increased from 2,500 metric tonnes in 2016/2017 to 5,056 metric tonnes in 2019/2020. On average, household income earned from coffee per season improved from sh5.2m at baseline to sh5.8m by 2020.

- Farmers testify of increased earnings from coffee and livelihood as a result of the project. There was coffee processing outturn of 54% fair average quality to 56% outturn at hulling - 58% of coffee process is fair average quality, which has increased business profitability of farmer groups.

- There was increased outturn at grading, with 88% of purchased coffee being exportable. Three specialty coffee buyers, eight buyers - at least two per year - were accessed throughout the project period. The proportion of coffee exports under specialty terms conditions increased to 45%.

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MORE ACHIEVEMENTS

- Over 7,000 farmers were trained in good agronomic practices and post-harvest handling. Eighty-eight per cent of farmers trained have adopted at least one good agronomic practice.

- Throughout the project period, 245,000 shade trees were planted by farmers, additional 15,000 shade-tree seedlings planted by farmers and 58,450 (389%) seedlings planted by farmers.

- Also, there was increased farmers awareness and appreciation of the importance of agroforestry as a measure to curb climate change.

- There was propagation of indigenous high-value tree species such as *Albizia SP*, *maesopsis (musizi)*, *graevelia* and *sebania*. These are for providing shade to coffee.

- There was a need to increase farmer access to energy-saving stoves as a climate change mitigation and adaptation measure.

- Over 1,600 energy-saving stoves were distributed for free. A total of 1,641 energy-saving stoves were distributed to farmers and are being used. Adoption of the use of energy saving stoves has increased.

- There was reduced household expenditure from sh4,000 to sh2,000 on firewood - eight to four pieces per day. A total of 7,301 farmers were trained to increase adoption of climate-smart agriculture practices.

- Because of the project, ACPCU fast-tracked gender mainstreaming as a strategy to making the coffee value chain fairer and equitable.

- As such, 60 change agents have been trained and have consequently assisted households to undertake planning, farmer climate change mitigation and adaptation monitoring and good agronomic practices training.

- ACPCU female membership has grown from 2,085 in 2017 to 4,243 members in 2021.

- The union has initiated a number of gender projects at co-operative level, including women saving scheme currently with 1,244 members united under 21 women saving groups with a combined saving portfolio of sh478 metric tonnes.

- A total of 309 youth have been mobilised into 20 youth groups and have started making organic fertiliser as a business. They, too,

PROJECT FUNDING...
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