



MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, ANIMAL INDUSTRY AND FISHERIES

OWC/NAADS



The Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry And Fisheries congratulate the President, the Cabinet, Members of Parliament and the People of Uganda upon celebrating 30 years of NRM Governance and facilitating the transformation process by OWC/NAADS.



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SAM OPIO OCENG: FROM SOLDIER TO FARMER

By Prossy Nandudu

The first time you go to Olelpeck village in Apac district, you may wonder if that is a special place gazetted for a cassava forest. A step further in the village, you will find sets of huts in twos or three-some until you come to pine trees that lead you to the home of Sam Opio Oceng, a retired soldier who has mastered the science of harvesting money from the cassava crop.



Sam Opio (yellow T-shirt) explaining how efficient the Cassava drying rack is

In this compound, there is a shade where women and men clad in white aprons and hats are busy peeling cassava. The men are chopping cassava using a machine, the women are peeling the tubers, while some are washing the cassava.

Meanwhile another young man accompanied by two young boys between the age of 8 to 12 are helping loading cassava chips already in a clean saucepan. They then put the saucepan on a wheel barrow and push it away. This is then wheeled to another side of the compound which has two structures that look like houses but one is actually a solar dryer while the other is a dryer but not covered. In the dryer, there are three tables covered with a clean black polythene bag, on which the cassava is spread.

Because it is too hot in there, cassava is able to dry in a space of one and half hours. From here the cassava is taken to Apac town for milling into high quality flour for both industrial use and home consumption. Besides the

above activities, the home is surrounded by a cassava shamba which according to Opio sits on 60 acres of land.

How Opio joined farming

Sam Opio Oceng, was a soldier during President Idi Amin's regime before quitting the army in 1977. He decided to settle in his village on his ancestral land.

"At home life was quite hard, I needed to look after myself and family so in 1980, I went into whole sale business where I was selling basic essentials in a home like sugar, salt, soap among others," said Opio.

Since the business wasn't bringing in good money, he ventured into mixed farming and began with mainly growing cassava, maize, sim sim, groundnuts. These enterprises were still not competitive on the market until he decided to grow cassava on a large scale. He started out with local varieties in his garden, which were giving him some money but not meeting his expectations. At that time he was operating on one acre.

The Journey into Cassava growing

While in Kampala in 2010, he visited the National Crop Resources Research Institute (NaCRRI) where he was introduced to the idea of growing cassava for sale not only the tubers but the stems as well. The type of cassava that he was given was NASE 14 as an encouragement for him to venture into multiplication of cassava cuttings for seed and sale. "I picked two

bags of cassava stems, and planted on one acre and kept on increasing until recently when acquired an extra 35 acres of land for the multiplication of the latest materials," Opio says. The two bags of cuttings that he planted first were valued at a total of shs 60,000. Further more, Sam Opio Oceng is a member of the Apac Food Security Network (AFOSEN) group.

The group benefited from 1,321 bags of NASE14 for multiplication during the second season of 2012 from NAADS in Ngetta ZARDI. The group members were trained on cassava seed multiplication and marketing by NAADS. The cassava field management exhibited by members were so good and inspection reports by NARO and MAAIF ranked the qual-

ity of their planting materials to be the best countrywide.

OWC/NAADS has hence linked many farmers from within the country and outside (Southern Sudan and Rwanda) to procure materials from AFOSEN of which Sam Opio Oceng has benefited. Members of AFOSEN belong to the Northern Uganda Cassava Multi-stakeholders platform.

The primary objective the cassava platform was to out-scale the multiplication of clean planting materials of NASE 14 and ensure its availability to most farmers within Northern Uganda. The secondary objectives of the platform was to encourage farmers to add value to cassava and access to better markets for increased household income.

Sam Opio Oceng further benefited from trainings and demonstrations conducted by NAADS in collaboration with Sesakawa Global 2000 on cassava value addition. Opio has taken lead in value addition of cassava and his facilities have demonstrated to most farmers within Apac and surrounding districts that cassava is really a high income earner and because of this, several households have adopted cassava farming and now moving towards value addition on a small scale.

This has changed the lives of benefiting households through ensuring food security and household incomes translating into construction of houses, small scale businesses, acquisition of household assets, increased access to better education and health facilities. With the Operation Wealth Creation in place today, Opio has earned much more money from cassava purchased from him by OWC/NAADS and distributed to many farmers across the region.

Production and earnings to date.

Opio was taken through the whole process of growing cassava for commercial purposes and now he is able to earn close to sh55m, every year from stems alone from 65 acres of land in Olel-

pek village, in Apac district. He also harvests 12,000 fresh roots which are processed into 4,000kgs of high quality cassava flour.

He produces 10 tonnes of high quality cassava flour of which a kilo goes for sh600 and that is 30,000 for 50kg bag. "This is good money for me, given where I was before I started growing cassava," he says. He says that after preparing the farm, most of the other expenses come during weeding and harvesting.

Labour costs

Opio depends on his family for labour and sometimes hires people who weed, however most of the time he uses a tractor. Therefore he normally spends close to sh100,000 for those who weed per day. He sometimes uses barter trade, where by some people weed and are paid inform of cassava stems which they take home for planting and also eating. A tractor charges him sh 100,000 per acre during farm preparation.

Latest development on the farm

He has acquired an additional 35 acres for multiplying more cassava of the latest variety which is NASE 10. Ijala explains that the cassava is resistant to the African Cassava Mosaic disease and is high yielding in terms of the stems hence a good variety for those in business.

Achievements

According to Opio, he has been able to grow economically and develop his life. He has been able to pay school fees for his children to university of which one is a Vet doctor, the other a teacher and others including relatives are still in school.

He is also saving for his old age. He has been able to put up some structures for commercial purposes, has of late acquired another 30 acres of land that will be used for seed multiplication of the latest variety-NASE 10.

OWC/NAADS Boosts Incomes from Banana Production in Northern Uganda

Okullo Moses Opio aged 51 years from Obed Imar Farmer Group that registered in 2010 though the group started farming in 2002. The group has a total membership of 30 with 12 male and 18 females.

Enterprises:

Banana (4 acres), citrus (1) avocado (0.5), soyabeans(4) and beans(2)
Location: Village , Okworokwor, Parish – Burlobo, S/County - Adekokwok

I began as an ordinary Banana farmer in 2007 on land acreage of 0.5 Acre using my own initiatives besides other crops production. My lifestyle was purely subsistence. In 2009 I was able to get USHS:50,000 per annum from Banana production and annual income of 120,000 that was too little for me. Because of high demand for Banana.

I increased the land acreage to 3 acres in 2010. And in 2011 I got support from OWC/NAADS worth Ushs 704,000 of inputs under market oriented farmer category. The support which I got were mainly Banana planting materials and trainings (advisory services) in Banana production

In summary, NAADS program helped me on my Banana business in the following key areas:

- Advisory services on improved banana production
- Good quality planting materials (300 suckers) which are high yielding and disease free.
- Increased level of income and I have



educated my children, built a house, bought land for expansion of my farm.

- Better linkages with NARO and other stakeholders.
- New varieties of Banana like M9 and Mbawazirume being multiplied and sold on my farm.
- A ready market where able to sell high quality planting materials in addition to good quality banana bunches in big quantities. I'm now getting over shs. 8,000,000 at this initial stage of establishment.
- Acquired five acres of Banana plantation, bought Oxen, a plough and 6 local cows.
- In the next 3years, I will be getting between fifteen and twenty million shillings per annum.
- Helping my neighbours to benefit from quality seeds/planting materials and advisory services since my farm

is a field school to them.

Challenges

- Destruction by stray animals during dry seasons.
- Pest and disease especially BBW.
- Strong winds and hail stones interfering with normal growth of the crop.
- Sometimes low market price during peak harvests and lack of group marketing arrangements for banana

Recommendations

- Simple irrigation facility to cater for adverse weather
- Enactment of byelaws and ordinances on stray animals by both higher and lower local governments respectively.