

## **MUCH PROFITS FROM BEEKEEPING AND AS ONE BEST APPROACH TO PREVENT CUTTING TREES LOGICALLY**

*(Compiled by Robert Kibaya the Executive Director and founder of Kikandwa Rural communities Development Organization from local news papers)*

<http://www.newvision.co.ug/PA/9/37/752488>

# **Money flows into Byenkya's pockets thanks to honey**

Publication date: Monday, 18th April, 2011



## **Byenkya reorganising his beehive which has not yet been colonised**

**By Pascal Kwesiga**

FRANCIS Byenkya had been struggling to earn a living through charcoal burning for 16 years until he tried beekeeping in 2005.

"I would be better off today had I started keeping bees at the time I started burning charcoal. We have destroyed the environment," laments Byenkya, a resident of Rwbahura village in Kimengo sub-county in Masindi district.

He is among a group of farmers who were trained in beekeeping by Masindi District Farmers Association (MADIFA) in 2004.

After the training, Byenkya bought 60 locally made beehives in 2005 each at sh3,000 and placed them in strategic points on his farm to trap the bees. MADIFA also gave the farmers three modern Kenya Top Bar hives to use for demonstration purposes.

Byenkya now has 150 beehives on his farm, most of which are

colonised.

He gets an average of 30 20-litre jerrycans of honey in the main season between March and April and less in the second season between September and October every year.

In the last season, he sold 30 jerrycans at sh150,000 each and earned sh4.5m.

Using the proceeds from honey, he has built a six-room permanent house and bought 30 head of cattle, three years since he embarked on bee keeping.

"I sell 20 litters of milk everyday and my family consumes 10 litres," Byenkya says.

His children go to good boarding schools in Kampala and Hoima districts.

"I plan to educate my children up to the level they want. I am able to plan today because I get money to do so, unlike in the recent past," Byenkya adds.

When he told this neighbours he was trying his hand at beekeeping on a commercial purpose, they did not believe there was market for honey.

"When I bought a motorcycle and cattle, they said I had another source of income somewhere. They realised honey was my source of income when I started constructing my house," Byenkya says.

Impressed by his achievements, the residents organised themselves in a group, Rwabahura Nature Beekeepers Association, to encourage others to follow suit.

"We have 30 members," Byenkya adds.

Deo Katerega, another beekeeper in Kijambura village in Nyangahya division, Masindi municipality, gets between 40 to 50 litres of honey on average each season.

Katerega has also constructed a permanent house and is educating his children.

### **How to get bees in the hive**

Byenkya puts honey in a catcher box and places it in a strategic area where he can easily catch the bees. After the bees have

entered the box, he removes the wax and bees and transfers them to the main beehive.

"After transferring the bees and wax, I take back the catcher box to its position to catch more bees. Sometimes, the bees enter directly into the main beehive," Byenkya says.

### **How to feed bees**

Byenkya has planted flowers on his farm for the bees to extract nectar. Bees process the nectar to produce food. He also places jerrycans of water next to the beehives as the bees use water to produce honey.

### **Future plans**

He plans to set up a honey house with other farmers where they can keep their honey after processing it. They believe it will also serve as a storage facility as they look for better market.

Byenkya also wants to buy more beehives and expand his project. He also wants to establish a garden of flowers for the bees.

"Sometimes bees get out of the hives to look for food far away and do not come back. But if you give them food, they will stay around and produce honey for you," he says.

### **Challenges**

The biggest challenge facing beekeepers in Masindi is the lack of market.


"The people who buy our honey are exploiting us because they buy at the price they want," Katerega says.

He adds that pests attack the beehives and the beekeepers lack technical people to provide them with extension services.

## **Beekeeping for improving lives**

<http://www.newvision.co.ug/D/9/756/763890>

### **Maffu counts his blessings through bees**

Tuesday, 30th August, 2011  [E-mail article](#)  [Print article](#)



## **The raw honey is stored in air-tight containers By Richard Drasimaku**

My Way: Mophart Maffu

IN 2003, Maffu started making his own hives and registered his business as Blessed Bee for Life Company. Through the company, Maffu has trained 600 farmers, who currently supply him with honey

Visiting Mophart Maffu's office can be a scary experience. There are bees all over the place. From their hives lined up on his office veranda, the bees keep swarming in and out of Maffu's office.

The old man doesn't mind sharing his office with them, for the bees are his financial lifeline. So, he is always quick to assure clients and visitors to his office located in the centre of Yumbe town, that the bees will not harm them, as long as they remain calm.

"There is no problem living with bees," says the 62-year-old bee-keeper.

A veteran teacher and one time a mechanic in Uganda Army's Air Force wing, Maffu has invested his various skills into beekeeping. By nature, Maffu is a generous man, who is always eager to share his knowledge with others. He is using his teaching experience to train farmers in Yumbe district in bee-keeping.

The farmers become Maffu's suppliers of honey to his processing plant located in Yumbe town.

### **How he started**

Maffu first ventured into beekeeping in 1998, using three clay pots as beehives. At the time he was a teacher at Eleke Primary School, where

he had been working since he lost his job with the Air Force in 1979.

At the same time, Maffu was also doing some work with Here is Life, a local faith-based non-government organisation in Arua. It was this organisation that sent Maffu to a workshop where he learnt that beekeeping was one of the easiest income-generating projects one could engage in using locally made equipment.

This discovery prompted Maffu to abandon teaching, to concentrate on bee keeping.

“I enjoyed teaching, but I saw three of my female pupils dropout of school because they could not afford sanitary pads,” he recalls. “So, I decided to start something that would enable parents to earn money to educate their children and also meet their other needs,” he explains.

Together with five other farmers, Maffu started a bee-keeping project and the beginning was tough.

At the end of the month, each of them would get sh10,000 as returns from their investment. Discouraged by the meager returns, the other farmers dropped out, leaving Maffu alone.

It was about this time than an opportunity came up for Maffu to pursue a diploma course in rural development from the UK.

While there, Maffu wrote two concept papers; one on vocational training for youth, which resulted in the establishment of the Evangelical School of Technology in Aringa and another on beekeeping as a way of poverty alleviation.

On his return, Maffu started buying honey from local bee-keepers to make wax and other bee products.

### **Growing the business**

In 2003, Maffu started making his own hives and registered his business as Blessed Bee for Life Company. Through the company, Maffu has over the years trained 600 farmers, who currently supply him with honey.

These supplement the output from Maffu’s 120 hives installed in Eleke, Kochi, Limika, Iyete all in Yumbe and around his office.

By 2005, Maffu had saved enough money to construct a sh48m building, which he calls his trade post.

Besides his office, the building houses a tailoring and crafts room, a

honey processing room, a store and a shop, while the veranda serves as an apiary full of bee hives.

Maffu employs five permanent staff and several casual labourers to help run the bee-keeping enterprise.

With his employees, they make bee-keeping gear ranging from protective overalls, smokers and hives; both Langstroth and Kenya Top Bar.

They also process raw honey into propolis, cosmetics, pollen cakes, wax block, wax foundation sheets, candles and honey.

### **Cost of bee products**

Maffu's products cost between sh100, honey packed in drinking straws, and sh50,000 for five litres of honey.

Propolis fetches sh1,500 and above, while a kilogram of wax block goes for sh12,000. The Kenya Top Bar hive sells at sh70,000, while Langstroth goes for sh140,000.

### **Marketing**

Maffu does not have to look for market for his products since there is ready demand for them.

The demand is much higher than his production.

"Right now, an American wants 500 metric tonnes of honey a year but my annual output is just a fifth of that. There is urgent need to recruit more farmers into bee-keeping," he says.

After going through his daily routine of dispatching several salon cars loaded with honey products worth sh600,000 each, Maffu sits back and wonders why the Government is spending a lot of money importing sugar, instead of investing in honey production.

According to the veteran bee-keeper, a litre of honey which costs sh10,000 can sustain a family of five for two weeks, yet a kilogram of sugar can only last a few days.

Whenever he gets a chance, Maffu advises people to consume honey because of its health benefits like boosting immunity against a number of ailments, such as sore throat, muscle strains, cuts and wounds, skin diseases and cancer. According to Maffu, honey is the best treatment for a hangover.

On the average Maffu earns sh27m a year from selling honey products and sh35m from bee-keeping equipment such as hives and smokers.

## **Achievements**

With his earnings from bee-keeping, Maffu has put up a permanent house at his ancestral home in Eleke. Besides ploughing some of the profits back into the business, the old man is also investing into tree planting.

His objective is to eliminate poverty from West Nile by engaging as many people in beekeeping, which he describes as God-given wealth.

It is a life-time assignment he has set for himself and until that is achieved; the 62-year-old remains a restless man.

## **Challenges**

Theft of raw honey from the hives is rampant, yet yields are sometimes poor due to the vagaries of weather. This has forced the farmer to employ night watchmen to guard his hives in the jungles.

Maffu complains that persistent low output by his out growers is slowing him down, yet he wants to increase production to catch up with the runaway demand.

He advises farmers to adopt modern bee-keeping techniques to stem the high rate of abandoning their apiaries, which he believes is caused by poor hygiene.

According to him, farmers should routinely check the rate at which the queen bee is laying fresh eggs and consider caging her off or remove some of the queen's shells and look out for pests in order to keep the bees in their hives.

## **Future plans**

Maffu plans to enroll more committed farmers, who can put up over 10,000 hives and produce on average 200,000kg of honey every harvest season.

This, he believes would be sufficient to meet the prevailing demand and provide enough raw materials to expand his processing plant.

Maffu wants to start manufacturing shoe polish and develop each of the components of processing, crafts and tailoring into fully-fledged departments that support each other.

<http://www.newvision.co.ug/PA/9/35/669461>

# **I was lost in poverty but I learnt to create wealth using bees and honey**

Publication date: Tuesday, 27th January, 2009



## **Chandia shows off some of his beehives**

Everyday for the next few months, The New Vision will run a series of stories on wealth creation role models from all over the country for Ugandans who would like to learn from them to generate wealth from our natural resources.

### **By Joshua Kato**

The buzz of bees is as common as the morning dew in this family's life. Bees are every where! On the door steps, in the small courtyard, in the gardens, in the kitchen, in the drinking pots, in clothes, they can land on your food.

In this home, nobody kills them, because they are the leading income-generating activity for the family. The bees live anywhere, as long as they do not forget to go back to the at least 80 beehives scattered around the area.

"Before I got my friends, the bees, I had nothing," says Adam Chandia, the 43-year-old honey producer. He ventured into this field in 2000. Nine years later, Chandia has a lot and everything. He is widely known in Butuntumula sub-county, Luweero district, as a bee-keeper and leading honey producer. His small office, adjacent to his home is a bee-hive of activity, as he reads contract after contract. His old single-room mud and wattle grass thatched house, that passed for his abode has since disappeared, replaced with a big brick house. "What a friend I have in my bees" he murmurs.

"I was living just like any other typical village farmer up to the year 2000," he says. He had three acres of land which he used to cultivate maize and coffee.

"I was at home when I heard that agriculture extension workers were coming to Luweero to train people in making wealth through agriculture," he says.

He jumped onto his bike and headed to the seminar organised by the National Agriculture Advisory Services (NAADS).

"I listened and picked out all the knowledge they gave us. We learnt how to graft trees, how to look after cows and many other things, but what grabbed my attention most was the lesson on how to make honey."

At the workshop, he learnt how to make the various bee-hives. He learnt how to attract bees to the hives, how to maintain them there and how to harvest the honey. This was the ticket to his wealth creation.

"They did not give us money or any material thing. They only gave us knowledge," he says, and adds, "with knowledge, you can move a mountain."

He has indeed moved mountains. The poverty that was a companion in his home is no more. As soon as he reached home, he sat with his wife, Salaama Ada, and briefed her about his plan. She embraced it quickly.

Chandia did not have the materials to make modern beehives, but he had the machete and axe to cut a palm tree to make at least four ordinary traditional beehives. He stationed them at a corner of his land and after a few weeks, he saw bees coming out. His road to wealth had began.

The first harvest was less than 20kgs. But this was enough to improve his business. He sold the honey to consumers in Luweero town and earned him sh60,000. "I did not spend it on anything, other than accessories for improving my new business." "The mistake many people make is to eat all the proceeds from their produce and return nothing to the farm."

He used the money to buy several pieces of timber that he used to make three of his first modern beehives.

At the seminar, he had learnt how to make all kinds of hives. These included the Kenyan top bar hive, the more advanced Langsworth and the traditional beehive.

"I bought the hard wood mugavu and personally made the hives,

using carpentry equipment that I hired from a friend," he says. He set the hives up immediately after making them.

More bees visited, found a home in the hives and more honey was produced. Every member of the family became part of the enterprise. They loved it. "I made sure I trained everybody, including the youngest of my children, to appreciate bees. That way, I did not need to employ workers," he says.

From every seasonal harvest, he sowed more money in the business. At the moment, he has 80 beehives and produces at least 420kg of honey every year. At sh6,000 per kilogramme at the moment, this earns him over sh2.5m per year.

He sells his honey to customers in several corporate companies, including Bank of Uganda, Makerere University and Uganda Cooperative Alliance. His earnings helped him expand his land to 10 acres at the moment, including six that he bought recently. The six are a natural forest into which he wants to transfer most of the hives.

Like the expert he is, he explains why, natural forest honey is the best honey in the world. "It is thicker and heavier, compared to other honey," he says. This is why he has marked most of the 6 forested acres that he recently acquired to bees. "This is a natural forest. Bees like it," he says.

He says it has not been easy, but not so difficult. He banks on the knowledge he has on bees. He for example, knows when bees need to drink water. As a result, he strategically puts several pots of water around the beehives. "Bees live for only 40 days, so they are a scarce resource. This is why I have to make sure that I do not carelessly lose any of them," he explains. Only the queen mother lives for at least three years.

"They have got enemies, just like any other being," he says. He explains that bees are killed by birds, butterflies, geckos and red ants. Chandia stops the birds by using non-poisonous glue to trap them and an insecticide called Furedan to stop the insects.

However, that is not the only earning from the honey. With his expertise at making beehives, Chandia regularly wins contracts to construct hives for individuals and organisations.

He has set up a carpentry workshop at home. "I sell the Langsworth at sh120,000 each, the KTB at sh50,000 each and the traditional beehive at sh15,000," he says. "The Langsworth's interior elements

enable bees to produce more honey, but above all, even during harvesting you can remove the bee combs, filter out the army and return the combs," he says. This enables the bees to quickly produce more honey since they do not have to build new combs. With the KTB, there are minimal chances that the bee combs will survive the harvest, while there is no chance at all for traditional hives.

He also breeds and sells live bees to bee-keepers whose hives have failed to attract bees. "At the moment, I have a big contract to supply beehives to a top minister," he boasts. All these contracts earn him money and fame. "In Luweero district, you just have to ask for 'omulimi wenjuki' and everybody will direct you to my home," he says.

Bees do not only produce honey. They also produce other products including wax and propolis. Chandia has got use for all these. For example, while he treats his family with propolis, especially if they have flu and constant coughs, he uses wax to make shoe polish that he uses on his shows. "I do not buy shoe polish. I just mix this," he says.

A few years ago, he was only processing the honey by distilling it. He has now started packing it into containers, similar to those that many other producers sell in supermarkets. He is, however, yet to get a label. "Once I get my own labels, my dream will total," he says. This is his target this year.

The off earnings from honey have also spread into other areas. There is a well-fed friesian cow in a shelter. It gives him at least 10 litres of milk per day.

The cow's refuse will be used to produce bio-gas. "The construction cost me at least sh1.6m. As soon as it collects enough gas, we shall have power in the house," he says. His house will be the only one in the village with light bulbs. He has acquired a motor-bike that he cruises around. "I comfortably pay my children's school fees on time every term."

His house is also likely to be the largest in the village when he completes it. The new structure has at least seven rooms, including an office for him. "This was a distant dream, very distant and unrealistic," he says. His advice to farmers is to listen and learn, like he did.

In his own words: "Knowledge is power. With it, you can lift weights that physically strong people cannot lift."

## FACT FILE

- Name: Adam Chandia.
- Location of farm: Kayonza village, Kankinzi village, Butuntumula, Luweero district.
- Enterprises: Bee keeping, dairy cattle-keeping and chicken.
- !Size of farm: Over 80 beehives on 10 acres of land.
- How he started: He attended a seminar organised by the NAADS and he put what he was taught into practice.
- How did he sell his first produce: To buyers in his village area and Luweero town.
- Contact: 0782319905.

<http://www.newvision.co.ug/PA/9/756/756752>

# Okello is tasting the sweet money from honey

Publication date: Monday, 6th June, 2011



**A part from honey, Okello uses honey wax to make candles, propolis and soap**

**By Patience Aber and Chris Ocowum**

My Way: Michael Okello

A part from reaping from honey, Okello also makes wax, bee hives and gives professional counsel

When I made an appointment with Michael Okello, Gulu district's most successful beekeeper, I expected someone dressed in tattered clothes and gumboots.

To my surprise, I found Okello seated in a saloon car parked outside one of his honey outlets near Koro sub-county headquarters waiting

to drive me to his bee farm.

A former Grade III teacher, Okello is using training skills carried over from his old profession, to demonstrate how one can make money from bees. His success shows that when done the right way, bee farming can be better paying than many white collar jobs.

The veteran beekeeper has no kind words for the current education system which prepares students for white collar jobs and portrays farming as a career for failures.

The 38-year-old farmer quit teaching in 2005 to start keeping bees. Many people questioned Okello's decision to abandon a safe teaching job for an uncertain future as a beekeeper. But Okello had made up his mind and nothing would deter him. What his detractors were not aware of was Okello's keen interest in bees which dates back to his childhood.

### **How Okello started**

"I started keeping bees with one locally made bee-hive when I was 13 years old. As a child, I would see our mother buying honey from other people and I felt that this money could be used to buy other things. That is how I came up with the idea of keeping bees," Okello recalls. Later, he acquired five more local bee hives at sh25,000 to sh30,000 each.

"From the five hives I harvested three buckets of honey which I sold at sh500 per half-litre plastic cup and I got sh15,000 which I added to what I had already saved to buy more hives and books on beekeeping," Okello adds.

"Every year I would buy more beehives and currently, I have 150 hives of both local and modern Kenya Top Bar (KTB) type. My production has also gone up from five buckets to 2,500kgs per harvest," he reveals.

Inspired by the progress he has made in a short time, Okello decided to join Nyabea Agricultural College in Masindi to study a certificate course in bee keeping and later did a diploma in bee keeping at Kito Agricultural Training School in Kenya.

### **Earning from bees**

Okello first processes and packs the honey before supplying it to supermarkets and grocery shops in Gulu town. A kilogramme of unprocessed honey costs sh8,000, while the processed one goes for sh10,000.

"My customers have different needs; some want their honey processed, while others prefer it in crude form. To avoid losing customers, we offer both options," he explains.

According to Okello, everything produced by bees can be turned into

cash. The unprocessed comb is on high demand. For instance, from the comb, Okello makes wax, honey wine, wall hangings and soap. A Kilogramme of wax sells at sh40,000

“Recently a group of white people from Germany came and bought 68kg of wax from my shop. They wanted more than 100kg, but I could not raise them,” recalls Okello.

Besides selling honey and other bee products such as honey wine (mead) and propolis, Okello also makes beehives and processing equipment.

While most farmers harvest honey twice a year, Okello harvests four a times year. He attributes his higher harvests to proper apiary maintenance.

Okello packs his honey in half-Kilogramme containers which he sells at sh5,000 each.

He hopes to earn about sh12.5m from the 2,500kg of honey he harvested in March this year.

“I earn between sh17m to sh18m from selling honey alone annually,” Okello reveals.

A Kilogramme of beeswax used to make candle and soap sells at sh4,000, while a small bottle of propolis, used to treat wounds, cuts, cough and other diseases, sells at sh5,000. He sells each candle at sh500 and a cup of sweet honey wine at sh500.

Last year, Okello was contracted by National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS) to supply six sub-counties in Gulu and Amuru districts with KTB beehives at sh80,000 each. He also supplied 100 KTB hives to Watoto Church and has got an order from Wildlife Conservation Society in Kampala to supply them with 368 beehives. He has also got several orders from different organisations and individuals.

Okello, who is also the regional coordinator of The Uganda National Agricultural Development Organisation (TUNADO), carries out training under a NAADS programme and features regularly on the local radios.

### **Wide-spread markets**

Okello sells his packed honey to supermarkets within Gulu town and the neighbouring districts of Lira, Kitgum, Pader, Arua and Amuru. He also sells beehives to individuals, as well as non-governmental organisations and district institutions. A number of customers drive three kilometres from Gulu town to Okello’s shop at Koro centre on Gulu-Kampala highway to buy honey and other honey products.

### **Achievements**

Using money from honey, Okello has diversified into fruit growing. He has an orchard of grafted oranges and mangoes, plus a forest of pine trees which he planted on 180 hectares of land in Gulu. He has also fenced off part of the land for cattle keeping and has

planted 15,000 pawpaw seedlings with plans of supplying paw paws to Gulu and the neighbouring districts where they are on high demand.

The enterprising beekeeper is also building a nine-room residential house in his ancestral village of Obwola in Koro sub-county in Gulu district where the Lords Resistance Army rebels displaced them many years ago.

### **Challenges**

Weather changes always have drastic effects on honey output. The bees cannot work a lot when there is too much rain or too much heat.

With the demand for honey going up everyday, thieves are becoming another challenge. One night, thieves raided Okello's apiary and harvested honey from 50 hives.

Malicious people, domestic animals like cows and wild animals pose another challenge as they destroy the hives.

Lack of specialised equipment for honey harvesting, processing and packaging is affecting the quality of Okello's products.

Bush fires are another threat to Okello's various farming enterprises. Last year, Okello lost two acres of his seven-year-old pine to fire started by edible rat hunters.

The recent long drought destroyed some of Okello's young pine and orange trees. To save them, he had to hire people to water and mulch them.

### **Caring for bees**

Okello advises bee keepers to handle bees gently and avoid using fire and other crude methods to drive them out of their hives when harvesting honey.

"You should never give the bees the impression that you are fighting them because they will become aggressive and sting everyone around," he tips.

The veteran bee keeper encourages his colleagues to feed the bees when necessary and visit them frequently so that they get familiar with each other.

According to Okello, if you take good care of your bees, they will reward you with a bumper honey harvest.

For instance, during the first two weeks of a swarm of bees colonising one of his hives, Okello has to ensure there is a steady supply of a mixture of water, sugar, cassava or maize flour for the bees to feed on until the honey flow begins. The feeds are put in a shallow container and placed under the hive.

The feeder can only be removed after honey flow starts or when the flowers, trees, or bushes in the area where the hive is sited start to bloom to provide the bees with the nectar out of which they make honey.

“It is important to keep checking the hive to find out whether honey is flowing. One of the signs that it is flowing, is when both the queen and the worker bees have honey on their body,” he shares the tricks of his trade.

To attract bees into a new hive, Okello smokes the interior of the hive using burnt honey comb, propolis or wax.

He also has to carry out regular inspection on the hives, to ensure that there are enough bees inside to keep the queen warm. This is important since the queen has a life span of only two to three years.

In addition, Okello has to ensure that the hive is protected from strong winds and exposed to the sun for warmth especially if the hive is in a cold area.

One advantage a bee keeper enjoys over other farming enterprises, from Okello’s experience, is that bee keeping is not time consuming.

“You only need to ensure that the area around the apiary is clean to scare off predators like snakes and insects that could invade the hive,” he says.

### **Future plans**

Okello wants to start a training centre for bee keeping and other agricultural activities, secure a pick-up truck to help in transporting his honey and other farm products to the markets.

He also hopes to expand his farm and start employing youth on the farm and ensure that his children study up to university.

<http://www.newvision.co.ug/PA/9/37/491162> (still need training)

## **Ssembabule women in honey business**

Publication date: Wednesday, 5th April, 2006



**like this: Mary Ann demonstrates how a honey is harvested from a beehive.**

**By Jennifer Austin**

THE bees in Ssembabule district are so plentiful and persistent that Ann Mary Nsubuga and her fellow beekeepers have to wait for nightfall before they can process the honey they collect without being stung. However, this has not stopped them from raising bees and earning money by selling honey and wax.

In a project launched by UWESO and funded by UK Trust, Ann Mary and her fellow group members have been earning from bees since 1997. UK Trust provided them with startup capital of hives and protective gear. The most important input, the bees themselves, are collected from the wild.

With the profits so far, the group is set to build a dedicated honey-processing centre where the honey can be clarified and packed and the wax can be made into candles.

Individuals own the beehives and bring the honey they collect to the processing centre for packing and selling. They get paid based on how much honey they contribute. The profits made by the group have been invested in the processing centre and used to buy more jars and labels. The group has a chairperson, Ann Mary, with a vice-chair, treasurer and other members to manage the money.

With earnings from processed honey and wax, the women are able to support their families.

Ann Mary explains, "Most of the women are married, and before this, they used to stay at home. "

Beekeeping is simple and requires very little space and management. First, bees are collected in a catcher, a small wooden box with holes around the bottom edge. Smoked bits of honeycomb help to attract bees into the catcher.

The bees are then transferred to a larger beehive where they are left to build a nest of honeycombs. The hives can be tied to trees or put on posts in a shady area. Placing beehives near fruit trees or flowers ensures they have a source of nectar and pollen.

After six months the honey is harvested. The women use a home-made device of burning a grass which produce smoke and keep the bees on one side of the hive while they remove the honeycombs. They leave a few behind for the bees to feed on.

In the evening, when the bees are less active, the women take the honeycombs they have collected and squeeze out the honey.

The group owns a mechanical press which members use to extract honey. They also purchase raw honey from those individually practicing beekeeping. Those without access to the press squeeze the honey out of the combs using a small mesh. They strain the honey and pack in jars for sale.

The empty combs are used to produce wax. The women wash and boil the combs, squeeze out excess water and allow the wax to settle out. The wax is used to make candles.

<http://www.newvision.co.ug/PA/9/37/744784>

## **Waludde earns big from organic farming**

Publication date: Monday, 24th January, 2011



**Waludde is harvesting a lot of bananas**

**By John Masaba**

THERE is a swarm of bees buzzing around Mutwalibi Waludde's head. But the 54-year-old bee keeper is not bothered. He calmly walks through the apiary, lined with row upon row of hives.

Instead the bees attack me for disturbing their peace with my camera flash. I get away with just a sting while my host moves about unscathed. As a consolation perhaps, he assures me it could have been worse for me, if he had not stepped in to distract the bees.

We are inside Waludde's apiary, a dimly lit building, with hives hanging on the walls.

It is this deep knowledge of bees that has turned this Senior Five dropout into one of the bee keeping success stories in Mbale.

Besides the bees, he rears fish, exotic goats and cows and grows bananas, fruits and bamboo under organic farming.

Organic farming is where a farmer does not use any chemicals or artificial fertilizers.

### **How he started**

While a student in Mbale Secondary School in the 1970's , studying physics, chemistry, biology and mathematics, Waludde dreamt of becoming an engineer; a dream that was shattered by the chaos that followed the overthrow of President Idd Amin.

"My guardian disappeared without a trace, so I returned to the village in Bufumbo and started attending my father's shop," recalls the broad-shouldered farmer.

When his father got some one else to attend to the shop, Waludde took up tomato farming, like many of his peers in village were already doing. Although the harvests were often good, there was no market for his produce because there were many people involved in the enterprise.

Disappointed with tomatoes, Waludde next tried poultry but still there was no change in his fortunes. "I started with 300 broilers and they were doing well. But they all suddenly fell sick and died within a week, after eating feeds mixed with sand," he says.

The setbacks only inspired the father of five to work harder, until he succeeded. His breakthrough came through bee keeping. "As members of Young Farmers Club during my primary school days, we would visit government owned agriculture institutions. That is how I fell in love with beekeeping."

He adds: "I read a lot of agriculture literature and learnt that bees were prone to pests and diseases, if not well looked after," he says.

Starting with three hives, Waludde constructed a round mud and wattle house and thatched it with dry banana fibres. The Uganda National Farmers Federation was at the time running a competition aimed at motivating farmers to improve their farms.

With encouragement from a friend, Waludde entered the competition. During the award giving ceremony in Jinja in 1994, Waludde was declared winner in the apiculture category. In appreciation of his efforts, President Museveni offered Waludde a study tour to Egypt, in addition to a bicycle and other farm tools.

On his return from Egypt, there was another study opportunity with Kulika Charitable Trust; a UK based non governmental organisation operating in Uganda.

They sponsored him for a diploma in sustainable agriculture and farmer-to-farmer extension at University of Reading in UK, a qualification which has equipped him with skills to manage farming using organic fertilisers and pesticides.

“There is a high demand for organic food products all over the world because they are free of chemicals and healthy to eat,” he says.

Waludde earns about sh1.5m from giving professional advice to people who visit his farm, charging each of them sh15,000 and about sh10m annually from selling produce from the farm.

Waludde also gives free training to National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS) farmers tips on how to manage their farms.

He has also traveled to South Africa and Zambia to represent Uganda’s small scale farmers in sustainable development.

### **Successes**

With knowledge acquired from his travels abroad, Waludde has transformed his 23-acre farm from a rocky piece of land, only suitable for murrum excavation, into lush farmland, that is green throughout the year, without spending a penny on fertilizers.

“I manage everything using natural means,” says Waludde.

To make manure, he mixes green weeds with water and cow urine and leaves them to decompose for two weeks, after which he applies the mixture to plants. “The mixture is as good as NPK, a common commercial fertilizer,” he claims.

“While other farmers are running to agricultural shops to buy pesticides, for me a mixture of neem tree and black jack leaves is enough,” he says.

Waludde has started on a new cost effective technology of trapping water through gravity flow and solar energy. “Many farmers suffer a lot during droughts yet there is a lot of water during the rainy season, which we can use to increase the productivity of our farms,” he says.

The income from the farm has helped him educate his seven

children in good schools, two of whom have already completed university.

Waludde says his children do not suffer from nutrition related diseases because they have a balanced diet, from what he harvests from the farm.

### **Challenges**

Many people call him to their farms to advise them but later refuse to pay for his services. "Many of them do not value the time I waste while advising them," he laments.

Sometimes it is difficult to market his crops, especially the new varieties. Last year, for example, he planted 200 trees of a fast maturing avocado variety but failed to market it. He says the fruit has a longer shelf-life.

It takes two weeks to ripen after getting picked off the tree unlike the ordinary type which takes just a few days. "A prospective Indian exporter told me we would do business if I could get him a trailer truck of crop every season yet I could only manage a few bags."

Because he has no fence around the farm, people steal things on the farm, especially the fish.

### **Future plans**

He wants to construct an underground tank to store run off rain water to irrigate his garden in the dry season.

To create a supplementary income, he wants build a shelter and provide catering services to visitors.

He also wishes to fence off the farm to keep away intruders.

<http://www.newvision.co.ug/PA/9/32/663925> (unlike chicken, bees find their own food and do pollinate the crops, etc)

## **Agribusiness**

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**MODERN: Langstroth beehives being offloaded in Wera, Katakwi for IDPs. They were purchased by Soroti Environment Concern with EU funding**

**Unlike poultry, bees find their own food, pollinate crops and ...**

You have to feed hens to give you eggs and you need enough fodder for a cow to yield milk. But for bees it is a total contrast. They find own food, pollinate crops and yet feed and enrich you. This is probably why beekeeping is becoming popular in many parts of Uganda.

“The profits can be good and sweet,” says Ben Asiimwe a beekeeper in Bushenyi “When I started the venture, in 2002, it was more of continuing my childhood hobby. Today I can say it was worth the try I made.” Each year, Asiimwe harvests about 500kgs of honey from his 20 hives, fetching about sh2.5m. He is expanding his venture and has mobilised other farmers under Bushenyi Beekeepers Association to launch full scale commercial honey production.

A kilogram of honey at the farm gate goes for about sh4000, and one can harvest about 15 kilograms from a beehive in a season. For modern beekeepers, there are three seasons in a year. You can therefore bag sh200, 000 from one hive.

After the initial investment in planning, training, hives and equipment, the operational costs are very low. All you need is regular inspection of the apiary, vermin control, harvesting and selling. To set up an apiary of 10 modern hives for example, explains Mathias Nkemba the operations manager of East African Beekeepers Equipment Limited, “you need about sh1.5m. Planning and training will cost you about sh150, 000, 10 Langstroth beehives can be acquired at about sh1.2m. You will need a bee suit – a gear worn to prevent bees from stinging - bought at sh120,000 and a smoker – to surpress the aggressiveness of bees when harvesting - costing sh30,000. The initial investment can be recouped in one year and a farmer continues earning profits thereafter for more than 10 years, without additional capital investment.

Nkemba, whose firm makes langstroth beehives and other equipment says the demand for modern hives is fast growing because of the ready market for honey locally and abroad.

"Most of our customers are organizations investing in beekeeping to support rural people overcome poverty," Nkemba said. His list of clients includes Care International, Rwoho Women's project in Mbarara, The Office of the Prime Minister, Christ the King Church and the NAADS project.

"There is a large EU market where Uganda's honey is cherished. But even before talking about the European market, the local demand is already higher than the available supply," Nkemba said, adding, "We had an exhibition last month and there was so much demand for honey – you would see people buying honey with a passion."

Nkemba says the main challenge is quality – which he insists cannot be guaranteed when people are using traditional beekeeping methods.

"You cannot get good honey to take to Europeans using traditional beehives and local methods of harvesting," he explained.

He says a modern beekeeper should have Langstroth beehives – which ensure exclusion of the queen from the honey box, thus avoiding mixing eggs and larvae with honey. Because it can easily be opened, checked and closed, the langroth beehive also ensures that the farmer harvests ripe honey.

"You can detect ripe honey when you find it capped," he explains, "the bees do it naturally to prevent the honey from absorbing moisture." The modern hive also makes it possible to use a honey extractor, which pulls honey out of the combs – leaving them intact.

"When harvesting honey from a Langstroth hive, you just remove the comb frames and insert them in a machine that pulls out the honey and then return the frames with intact combs to the hive to be refilled." Nkemba says this saves the bees the time of building new combs – which would deny the farmer several liters of honey that would have been made instead.

Processing and packaging of honey is not much complicated. The whole process can be completed at the farm. "After harvesting, Nkemba explains, "the honey will be extracted using centrifugal extractor which also sieves it. You put it in a stainless tank and seal,

so it does not absorb moisture or get contaminated. Using appropriate packaging materials purchased from package manufacturers, you pack, seal and label.”

And how do I get the bees to colonise a hive? – It is a natural process, but can be influenced. You need to target a swarming season, which normally occurs during dry months.

Modern beehives are made with bait – the foundation comb - whose scent attracts the bees to enter. To attract the bees, you scatter the hives in a high altitude area and wait. When the bees enter, you transfer the hives to a prepared apiary, which should be under a tree canopy that provides shade in the mid-morning and afternoon, but lets in the early morning and evening sun. The hives should sit on a platform about two meters high made of hardwood pillars.

You should ensure availability of water in the apiary or nearby, eliminate vermin like such as lizards, spiders and some birds. To avoid interrupting the bees and causing harm to people, an apiary should be located at least 100 meters away from home.

From planning the venture to the first harvest, it can take a year. When the hives are sited, in a month’s time the bees should have entered. They then take about three months establishing the colony – multiplying and building combs. In about five to six months, they start putting honey in a honey box. About three month later, you make the first harvest. “The more vegetation flowering there is in an area, the more honey you will get,” explains Nkemba, “Plants such as eucalyptus, sunflower, avocados and coffee would make an ideal environment because of their ability to supply nectar.”

Honey aside, wax is another money minting bee product. Nkemba recommends that farmers should buy modern beehives for honey, while they retain traditional hives for wax and propolis production.

The price of a kilogramme of wax ranges between sh20,000 – 30,000. “The market is available – we need the wax for making foundation combs in the beehives, but we cannot get enough supply,” Nkemba says.

Wax is also used in making candles and jelly, while propolis is a medicinal ingredient.

With lots of money in honey, one would wonder why many of rural poor are yet to adopt the enterprise. There are a few challenges abound. Prices of modern beehives are quite high for people living on less than a dollar a day. Nkemba says the costs of material make

the modern beehive expensive. "We use dry pine, gravellier and Cyprus timber, which is scarce and costly. If you use the cheaper timber, you do not get the required outcome," he says.

Many people have also tried beekeeping, but without the required knowledge, commitment. You need good preparation, training and constant advice. Like any other venture, you need to do it right to harvest right.