ASARECA
Transforming Agriculture for Improved Livelihoods

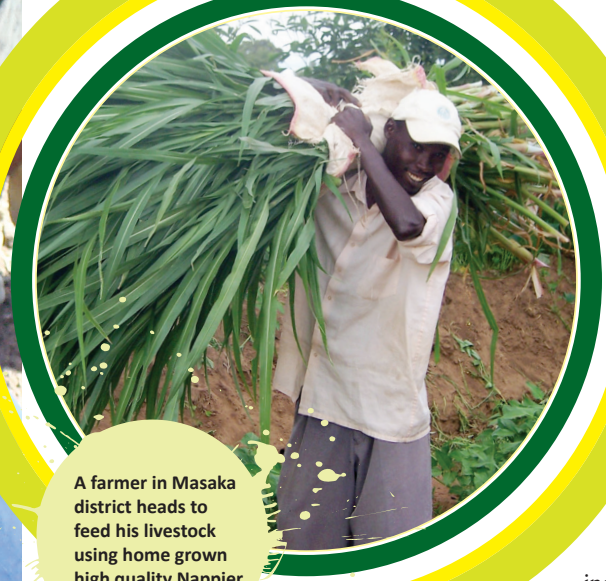
ASARECA celebrates 20 years of partnership with the EU

Over the last 20 years, the Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA) has spearheaded regional collective action to develop and disseminate innovations to address common challenges to agriculture. Established in 1994, ASARECA works in 11 countries: Uganda, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Rwanda, South Sudan, Sudan and Tanzania. ASARECA Headquarters are in Entebbe, Uganda.

Over the last five years alone, ASARECA invested US$69 million to address challenges such as climate change, transboundary pests and diseases, declining soil fertility, diminishing natural resources, restrictive agricultural policies, access to regional markets and low agricultural productivity, among others.

As a result of this investment, over 200 different agricultural innovations and management practices were either generated or improved to suit farmers' demands. In addition, over 220 innovations and management practices were availed for use by targeted stakeholders. As a result, a total of over 2.5 million individuals directly benefited from an assortment of ASARECA support initiatives. The European Union

This woman in Kumi district in Uganda was able to realise a 50% milk yield increase from her cow because she feeds it on a mixture of Nappier grass and forage legumes



A farmer in Masaka district heads to feed his livestock using home grown high quality Nappier grass

provided up to 80% of financial support to these investments from which Uganda benefited a lot. Some of the benefits specifically in Uganda are highlighted below:

Mixed livestock and crop innovations

Working with the National Agricultural Organisation (NARO), ASARECA introduced a mix of innovations, which draw complementary benefits from crops and livestock resources. Farmers in Masaka and Kumi districts intercropped Napier grass with forage legume centrosema pubescens, leading to increased fodder availability by 50% and crude protein content by 20% compared to the pure stand of Napier. The number of days a cow is able to feed on the new fodder mix per given land area also increased by about 30%.

Water for farms and kitchen

To ensure all-year-round water availability for livestock, crops and domestic use, a project by ASARECA and her partners introduced roof catchment underground water harvesting tanks on 24 farms with a capacity of 35,000 litres each. As a result, water availability increased by 46%, the area under forage production increased by 134% and fodder quantity increased by 76%. Consequently, milk yields increased by 80%, leading to a 52.4% increase in household income. Daily use of milk and milk products has contributed to improvement in the nutritional and health status of beneficiaries.

Through the project, farmers now also generate income from selling hay made from Bracharia mulato. A 20kg bale of hay costs US$5. As a result of this venture, a small-scale farmer in Mityana district, who obtained planting material from the project went into commercial production, and is currently earning about US$ 1,000 per month.

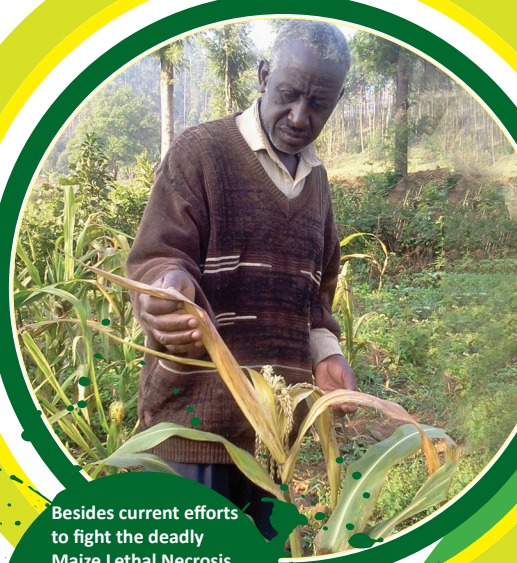
As part of an initiative to enhance diversification of income sources, the project promotes all-year-round vegetable growing through the use of harvested rain-water and application of organic manure. Through this venture, cabbage farmers in Masaka district harvested an average of 15.4t/ha after using poultry wastes as manure. This represents 157% higher productivity compared to non-manured plots (6.0t/ha). The same farmers realised fodder and grain yield increases of 26% and 6% respectively after intercropping forage legume lablab purpureus with maize.

High yielding maize

Besides latest efforts to combat the deadly Maize Lethal Necrosis (MLN) virus, ASARECA, working with research teams in Uganda, earlier introduced high yielding highland maize varieties, which are currently producing grain yields of about 9 t/ha. This is an exponential growth compared to 2.3 t/ha from the lowland varieties that are predominantly grown in Uganda. Some of the new varieties, including four hybrids, have a potential yield of 12 t/ha, which is at par with global standards. These varieties have been included in the national performance trials, pending official release. When released, they will help farmers in Uganda and the Eastern and Central Africa region to address food insecurity.

Clean planting materials

In an effort to reduce disease infestations, ASARECA and partners in Uganda and the region embarked on an initiative to apply tissue culture



Besides current efforts to fight the deadly Maize Lethal Necrosis virus, ASARECA has been involved in introducing high yielding highland maize varieties to farmers to increase the benefit from farming

interventions to mass produce disease free planting materials of cassava, sweet potatoes and banana. Over 200 farmers were served through this initiative. The tissue culture laboratories supported through this project now use more innovative and cost effective methodologies, consequently lowering the cost of production of tissue culture plantlets by 40% and contributing to 60% higher yields.

In a bid to control the spread of Banana Xanthomonas Wilt (BXW) disease, ASARECA and partners in the region introduced a wide range of disease surveillance and eradication approaches which included propagation of clean planting materials. Consequently, the proportion of farmers who managed to control BXW increased from less than 5% to over 60%, and banana production recovered from total loss to over 60% in the most affected districts of Bushenyi, Ntungamo and Mbarara. As of December 2013, the farmers were able to earn about US$300 per month, up from only US$30 during infestation. Farmers who eventually organized themselves into groups now earn US$ 600 monthly.

Thousands of disease-free, high yielding banana planting materials have been made available to farmers

Conducive policy environment

ASARECA made efforts to create a conducive environment for agricultural development by introducing policies, regulations and incentives for farmers in complex landscapes. For example, ASARECA supported Bukwo district to make laws on land use, culminating into the Bukwo District Land Care Bill. The bill now provides a suitable environment for sustainable land use management in the district. It provides incentives, penalties and punishments that have been agreed to by the communities. The district, with a population of 67,500 people faced an acute shortage of productive land following years of inappropriate land use activities prior to this intervention. Through gravity flow, the communities now depend on water from the slopes of Mt. Elgon, and the bill ensures that any further degradation of the environment or failure to enhance the eco-system is checked.

Other interventions by ASARECA in Uganda include promotion of orange sweet potato, quality protein maize, control of the cassava brown streak disease and management of striga, among others. All these interventions, which have benefited from EU support, have contributed to generation of economic returns to the targeted communities and reduction of rural poverty.

We wish the European Union fruitful Europe Day Celebrations and pray for continued development partnership in the years to come.