

# COMMERCIALIZING SMALLHOLDER FARMING

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FOCUS: Dr. J.C Katongole

### AGROTOURISM: A CASH CROP FOR SUBSISTENCE FARMERS

#### Current situation

Recent months have been characterized by an increase in Covid-19 deaths and lockdowns. Subsistence farmers have consequently invested in changing the focus of their agricultural practices to one that can earn them an income.

Dr. J.C. Katongole has developed a botanical garden that has a wealth of crop-plant species

and varieties, as well as livestock breeds. He is implementing off-field and in-field methods

known to scientists as conservation strategies.

He has been preserving and conserving local crop types and varieties in his garden, back plot and in the traditional storage facilities. The family house comprises of a small store, built besides the outside kitchen, that consists of pots, gourds and a storage pit.

These represent an off-field conservation system that is probably more dynamic than the current formal gene banks.

One concept of diversification he is focusing on in his

agricultural activities is agro-tourism.

Agro-tourism can be used as an alternative to increasing income and survival of families practicing subsistence farming.

#### Justification

Agrotourism is the form of tourism which capitalizes on rural culture as an attraction.

Its primary appeal is not the natural landscape, but a cultural

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OR POPULATION IN THE DISTRICT.

landscape. Agrotourism is an attraction offered to a tourist to contribute towards the improvement of the income of the farming community or local government. In the end, the rural population itself then recognizes agrobiodiversity as valuable and worthy of protection.

With the emergence of the Corona virus pandemic, agro-ecosystems have increasingly become important sources of expertise for sustainable agriculture. Many plant species little known to people that are used to living in the urban areas

#### A Call to Action

There are conditions that must be met for one to excel in agro tourism. They include:

**An authentic natural or small-scale, well-structured landscape.** In addition to the beauty of the landscape itself, it is important to have other cultural, historical or natural attractions.

**Good transport links,** because even attractive regions can be impossible to market for tourism if they are not easily accessible.

**There must be infrastructure in place:** e.g. transport, accommodation & catering facilities.

**Stable political climate:** this is essential for marketing even major tourist attractions.

are now being used as medicinal plants.

### Emerging opportunities

The diversity and genetic traits found in the gardens of subsistence farmers today are worth protecting, and not just because they will be needed for future multiplication programs. The wealth of our indigenous plants and livestock breeds is also a valuable part of our cultural heritage.

When a farming community is conscious of this, it can use typical traditional breeds and varieties alongside other cultural assets and tourist attractions to promote itself, and earn an income.

Even if plants and animals in a community are only a subsidiary attraction, they still help create or reinforce community identity and development.



The more unusual the breed or variety, the more suitable it will be for promotional use. But less spectacular plant and livestock

diversity can also make their way on a restaurant's traditional food menu. Already many restaurants and hotels are offering these dishes to their customers.



*Joseph harvesting bamboo shoots*

Diversity is particularly interesting when it appears in its socio-cultural context. In other words, products are not simply on sale, but the visitors' experience is enriched by seeing old production processes, traditional crafts or special festivities in action. All this in the end is integrated into the communities' overall marketing concept.

### A simple testimony

When Dr. J.C Katongole retired from his teaching job at a local university ten years ago, he settled on his 3½ acre piece of

land. The land is situated near the city, and a site where the first catholic missionaries landed.

He decided not to tamper with the biodiversity and landscape apart from a small plot where he constructed the family house and animal shelter. He then embarked on a process of learning the names of all the plant and animal species on the land, their uses and interaction.

He now receives guests whom he takes around his garden and explains to them the symbiotic relationship of the fauna and flora on his land and their use to humans. "The interaction of these plants and animals in the same locality not only make the garden to look beautiful, but also give life meaning", says Dr. Katongole.

All this, he does at a fee. Part of these proceeds, have been used to build an infant day care center for the community.



*The farmer and his guest Emanuel Cardinal Wamala – the Archbishop Emeritus of Kampala Archdiocese.*



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