



Wednesday March 25, 2009

Discussion Board | Archive | Advertising | About Us | Staff | Contact Us

THE NEW VISION | BUKEDDE | ORUMURI | RUPINY | ETOP | SUNDAY VISION | BUKEDDE KU SSANDE

You are here: [Home](#) » [Weekly](#) » [Business Vision](#) » [Sorghum on high demand for ethanol and beer production](#)

NEWS SERVICE

Welcome, Guest
[Log in](#) or [Register](#)

[Need Help? Click here!](#)

DAILY

FRONT PAGE

NATIONAL

EDITORIAL

LOCAL EAST

LOCAL CENTRAL

COLUMNISTS

LETTERS

RASTOON

FEATURES

SPORT

LIFESTYLE

BUSINESS

OPINION

A'LEVEL RESULTS

WOMAN ACHIEVER

WEEKLY

WOMAN

BUSINESS VISION

HEALTH AND BEAUTY

EDUCATION

Sorghum on high demand for ethanol and beer production

Wednesday, 11th February, 2009

E-mail article Print article



PROMISING: India's sweet sorghum is being tried in some parts of the country and the results are good

By Ronald Kalyango

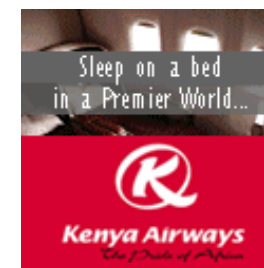
UNTIL recently, sorghum production has been trailing that of the "Big Five" cereals (rice, maize, millet and simsim in that order). It was considered a minor grain crop, with little research done to have several high-yielding varieties in place.

Other than being consumed as food, sorghum is used for production of wallboards and in biodegradable packaging materials.

However, a new sorghum variety 'sweet sorghum' mainly grown in India after it was initiated in the early 1970s by Nimbkar Agricultural Research Institute (NARI), has been successfully tested and proved to be a good crop for production of ethanol.

It is the only crop that provides grain and stem that can be used for production of sugar, alcohol, syrup, jaggery, fodder, fuel, beddings, roofings, fences and paper.

Imported into the country by Grow More Seeds Uganda Ltd, the sweet sorghum has unique features. Its demonstration plots are in Kawanda and Kakiri in Wakiso and it has adapted well to Ugandan soils.



CURRENT BUSINESS VISION STORIES

- ▶ THE SHREWDNESS IN MONEY LENDING TRADE
- ▶ MARKETING IS LOVE NOT WAR
- ▶ Collapsing buildings could injure economy
- ▶ The shilling depreciates
- ▶ What does your tenancy agreement stipulate?
- ▶ New rules for financial security
- ▶ Uganda owes \$100,000 to a locust organisation

WEEKEND
HAVE YOU HEARD
CRAZY WORLD
CAUGHT IN THE ACT
WEEKLY SPORTS
RASTOON
SPECIAL REPORT
TRAVEL
CHILDREN'S VISION
PEOPLE, PLACES
RELATIONSHIPS
VISION STYLE
INTIMATE
ENTERTAINMENT
SOCIETY
SHOWBUZZ
LOCAL LEADER
ESSENCE
NOTICE BOARD
PARLIAMENT WEEKLY
TOTAL MAN
WELLBEING
WOMAN ACHIEVER 2009
UGANDANS MAKING A DIFFERENCE
WEDDINGS
HARVEST MONEY
SERVICES
TENDERS
NOTICES

JN Agritech International Ltd is trying it out in Kayunga where five square miles of land near Kitwe trading centre have been acquired for factory construction. 200 acres of these have been cleared for its cultivation.

“Attempts are underway to set up an ethanol extracting factory in Kayunga. After setting up a factory, we shall encourage farmers to take on the crop’s cultivation on a large scale,” said Reddy Mohan, the director of JN Agritech International Ltd.

He said the Madhura hybrid variety is the one being promoted. Madhura is a major crop in India used for ethanol production. Unlike sugarcane, which is a tropical plant, sweet sorghum can be cultivated in nearly all temperate and tropical climatic areas.

The stem juice of sweet sorghum is rich in fermentative sugar and is a desirable alcoholic fermentation material. Sweet sorghum has wide adaptability is resistant to drought and saline-alkaline soils, and can grow in water-logged soils.

Its water requirement is one-third of that of sugarcane and its growing period is short enough to allow harvesting twice a year.

Sweet sorghum is propagated by use of seeds. A total of 4.5kg can plant one hectare as compared to 4,500-6,000 kg of sugarcane cuttings for the same size of land. It produces 7,000 litres of ethanol per hectare.

Uganda’s State minister for fisheries holding the portfolio of State Minister for Agriculture, Fred Mukisa, saw sweet sorghum as a key crop for sustainable agricultural development in areas that suffer from aridity and saline/alkaline soils. He said the crop would be suitable for Karamoja where it is generally dry.

Mohan said when production of ethanol is successful; it would be blended with petrol to reduce gas emissions into the environment.

It is also hoped that the price of petrol will gradually reduce by 20% or 25%.

Mohan noted that with sweet sorghum, the stem produces 75% of the juice and the 25% can be got from the grains.

It has been approved by the National Agriculture Research Organisation (NARO) and certified by the agricultural ministry. Unlike sugarcane which takes 18 months to mature, the sweet sorghum takes three months, which means it can be cultivated three times in a year.

Mohan said they intend to invest about \$25m. They would also plant about 30% of their land with sorghum to supply the factory with a view of getting the 70% from the outgrowers.

Meanwhile, NILE Breweries Ltd (NBL) has since 2002 been promoting the cultivation of Epuripur sorghum, which it uses to make Eagle Extra and Eagle Lager beers, the low-priced non-malt beer brands popular among the rural folk.

However, after four years of cultivation, the crop was suspended in 2006, but production resumed again in the second season of 2007. Farmers resumed cultivation after a one-season fallow in which they lost about sh3.7b. The fallow season was caused by over supply.

The NBL Corporate Affairs Director, Onapito Ekomoloit, believes that because of

- ▶ Benin to import upland rice seeds from Uganda
- ▶ 500 walking tractors halted
- ▶ The tempting gains in the new Vitamin A sweet potato variety launched in Mukono
- ▶ The Luweero pineapple farming
- ▶ The Capitalism's new clothes
- ▶ Uganda to host World Islamic Economic Forum
- ▶ Fatima's response to you
- ▶ Park yard vendors resume business
- ▶ Uganda stock market



OPEN BUY AIRTIME
24 HRS ONLINE

TOP UP FROM ANYWHERE ANYTIME

<http://www.airtimeguy.com>

SUPPLEMENTS

KEY DOCUMENTS

JOBS **NEW**

the market certainty and stable price, farmers rushed to cultivate epuripur, driving production from 1,700 tonnes in 2002 to 12,000 by 2006. However, NBL could only absorb 3,600 tonnes of sorghum per annum.

"We decided to suspend production for one season (2007/2008) to enable us clear the old stock. we also advised farmers not to grow the crop in the following season," Ekomoloit explained.

In August 2007, NBL issued a statement that they had resumed production and Afro-Kai, their sorghum agent, distributed 10 tonnes of seeds to farmers in Apac, Lira, Masindi, Oyam and Soroti districts.

"We have since then been buying all the sorghum produced by the farmers. this year (2009) we are likely to buy more sorghum because our production is likely to quadruple," he explained.

Ekomoloit explained that the price of Eagle beers had increased from sh800 in 2002 to the current sh1,100 for Eagle Lager and sh1200 for eagle Extra and farmers are currently earning sh400 per kilogramme.

"Traditionally, farmers are obsessed with groundnuts and simsim growing, yet they are not assured of a market. with Epuripur, the market is guaranteed," he explained.

Ekomoloit said that today, more than 8,000 farmers are involved in the growing of Epuripur sorghum across eastern, northern and mid-western Uganda.

