INTRODUCTION

Fruit drying in Uganda is a recent activity and in 2005, Uganda exported only 30 mt of dried organic fruits (mainly pineapple, mango, apple banana and papaya) while the total world demand for dried organic fruit was estimated at 164,000 mt. There are more than 185,000 ha of land under organic system and with the current market demand there is a huge room for growth. It is necessary to assess the strategies of fruit driers and the constraints associated with drying in order to realise the potentials of this sector in Uganda. The study was carried out in Kangujumira sub county of the Kayunga district of Uganda.

METHODS AND METHODOLOGIES

A total of 36 questionnaires, 14 semi-structured interviews and participatory rural appraisals (PRA) exercises with a heterogeneous group of farmers were carried out in order to understand the strategies behind fruit drying in this region.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Figure 1. Strategies of fruit drying farmers

Family
- Median age farmers around 50 years old with several children

Farm historical evolution
- The parents migrated and have shifted from coffee to pineapple and live close to a dry fruit exporter.

Family Project
- Grow and dry fruits organically (or buys from others) for selling to dry fruit export company or sell as fresh. Women mostly do the drying while staying at home

Assets
- Dried fruits have a fixed price all year round.
- Can dry small size pineapples which have no value in local market
- More return during peak pineapple season
- Can store dry fruits for selling later
- Women and old age male farmers are involved

Strategy
- Objectives: To get more income by drying pineapples and papaya during peak season and sell as fresh during off season.
- Drying fruit is an off-farm activity that supplements the income from the farm and allows avoiding renting more land
- Decisions: Dries fruits when it’s cheap and plenty. Also buys from other farmers. Sells as fresh during off season when price of fresh is high in regional markets. During other times, works in the field- weeding and turning the soil

Constraints
- Land: Insufficient amount of land to produce fruits for driers
- Labour: Need to hire labour for slicing and cutting
- Capital: Expensive to buy a drier
- Low price for dried fruits
- Other factors: Bad weather affects drying, cannot dry whole year round.
- Only one company buys the dry fruits, hence monopoly.
- Organic farming is expensive and difficult

CONCLUSIONS

- Farmers have developed a variety of strategies which rely mostly upon market and labour availability.
- Fruit drying is a value addition and a key to economic empowerment of women and a strategy for utilising cheap fruits during harvesting season.
- Un-affordability and lack of proper and better driers; low price of organic dry fruits are major bottlenecks for fruit drying.

REFERENCES


ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The generous financial assistance of IHCNATURA, DANIDA and OTICON Fonden is gratefully acknowledged for supporting this research.

Poster for Troplentag 2009 (Oct 6-8), Hamburg, Germany